Communicative Language Teaching at two schools in Sweden and France

Some English teachers’ thoughts on their teaching

Kommunikativ språkundervisning på två skolor i Sverige och Frankrike

Några engelsklärares tankar om sin undervisning

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Abstract

The following dissertation aims to scrutinize amongst other things, some English teachers’ beliefs and thoughts concerning communicative language teaching at two schools in Sweden and France. Since the steering documents of both countries clearly promote a communicative approach to language teaching, we wanted to see how it could be applied in these two different contexts as well as how it was interpreted by some teachers. With the information obtained from qualitative interviews and classroom observations, we juxtapose what the teachers have said with the steering documents for both countries, their implementations of CLT and the teaching methods adopted in general. In order to do this, an analysis and comparison of the two syllabuses for English was necessary and we also needed to set a foundation by discussing the theories and possible complexities of CLT and teacher beliefs. This discussion could not be valid without also taking into account the status and influences of the English language in Sweden and France.

The analysis of the two steering documents showed similar ideas about language teaching. However, Sweden has a separate syllabus for English, whilst France has a joint one for foreign languages. Furthermore, from our interviews and classroom observations we found that all teachers taught grammar in their native language. We also found the French school to be more traditional in that the lessons were often teacher-centered and that the teachers did not allow for any errors in the spoken language. The difference in discipline between the schools was another finding which we found surprising. Finally, our results also indicate occasional discordance between the teachers’ thoughts and ideals and their actions in the classroom.

Keywords:

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), France and Sweden, teacher beliefs, teaching methods
Preface

This dissertation was written collaboratively by Jenny Andersson and Cimen Batak, although there are some sections over which one of us had more influence than the other. The sections more influenced by Jenny are: the first part of the introduction and of the literature review, background and procedure and selection. Cimen had more influence on the second part of the literature review, the first part of the methodology as well as the interview section which deals with each of the six teachers’ individual responses. Again, we would like to clarify that it is a cooperative piece of work, for which we met on a regular basis to discuss and exchange ideas. The sections not mentioned above, have thus been written in total cooperation where we together constructed the sentences.

We would like to thank the six teachers who agreed to participate in the interviews and who let us observe their lessons. Special thanks also go to Claudine and François Adroit for welcoming us in their home during our stay in France, as well as Annika Landberg (LUT) and Marie-Thérèse Bordet (IUFM) for arranging the visit. Many thanks to Thierry Gilles for his corrections expresses. Finally, we also want to thank Ian Heathcote, Jean Hudson and Bo Lundahl for their help during our writing process.
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1. Introduction

In 2002-2003, an investigation was carried out by the European Network of policy makers for the evaluation of education systems in eight European countries, to measure and compare the pupils’ skills and motivations in and for English as a school subject. The analysis served as a follow-up and as a basis of comparison to a parallel investigation carried out in 1995-1996 with four European countries. For the study of 2002, the participating countries were Spain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland. Through several types of methods, numerous aspects were looked upon and analyzed, such as pupils’ skills in specific elements of English, pupils’ attitudes and teachers’ views on teaching and the teacher profession. The results were presented in *The Assessment of Pupils’ Skills in English in Eight European Countries, a European Project* (2002). The document will be referred to as *8 Countries*. Looking at the results and reading the summaries and commentaries for each country, one can see that Swedish pupils performed generally well, whilst the French stood out with rather weak results. As future teachers of French as well as English, we found this information particularly interesting and we wanted to find answers to the many questions that arose concerning teaching methods and ideals.

Naturally, the purpose of *8 Countries* was multifaceted, but one argument was that “there [were] no comparable data in foreign language achievement available at a time when co-operation between EU member states [was] increasing” (Bonnet, 2002, p. 12). It was also mentioned in the report that the heads of states and governments had made inquiries for a pointer for language abilities and skills that could serve as a common ground for language teaching in Europe. This pointer is since 2001 in place as a recommendation and it is a document put together by the Council of Europe. The document is named *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), and it serves as exactly that: a common ground for language teaching in Europe. CEFR discusses language learning, language teaching and language assessment and it also gives an assessment framework with competence levels (A1 - A2 - B1 - B2 - C1 - C2), which is meant to facilitate and equalize the assessment of language learners everywhere in Europe. Hence, the CEFR can be used as a supplementary support alongside the national steering documents of each country. The ultimate goal is that all Europeans shall at least speak a mother tongue, English and another European language. Besides improving language teaching and learning in Europe, the document is needed “to achieve greater unity among its members” and “to convert […]"
diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding” (CEFR, 2001, p. 2).

CEFR places a lot of emphasis on communicative competences, such as linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic. It explains how these competences are most easily activated and developed through language activities such as reception, production, interaction and mediation. CEFR is non-dogmatic when it comes to teaching methods, but its principles and objectives can clearly be connected to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the number one approach used in language classrooms today. CLT emphasizes realistic communication and interaction, where authentic language plays a key role. Besides learning the linguistic parts of the language such as grammar and vocabulary, communication is about “knowing when and how to say what to whom” (Larsen-Freeman, 2002, p. 121). The teacher should create a desire to communicate amongst the learners and should then try to take a step back.

CLT can be problematic seeing that it is an approach that includes theories for language acquisition and therefore not so much the practical realizations of it. This poses a problem for teachers, since teachers need methods on how to implement theories in the classroom. Another problem with CLT is that it is multifaceted and open to different interpretations. It seems as though “many teachers remain uncertain about what CLT is” (Mangubhai, Marland & Dashwood, 2007, Son, p. 1).

Even though 8 Countries already provides a thorough analysis of English language teaching in many European countries, we believe that it does not take into consideration the question of CLT. Furthermore, in the investigation, teachers were only interviewed through surveys. Therefore, we wanted to go deeper, do a qualitative research, and investigate teachers’ beliefs, views and thoughts through longer and more in-depth interviews. Looking at some teachers’ beliefs and implementations of CLT in two different parts of Europe, Sweden and France, is not only relevant for us as future teachers of French and English; it could also help language teachers understand the nature of CLT.

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

This dissertation aims to investigate some English teachers’ beliefs and thoughts about the communicative approach to the teaching of English at one French school and one Swedish
school. By analyzing the national steering documents in each country and comparing them to the findings of this research, we hope to get a wider understanding of contextual and other factors that play a part in the teachers' ways of thinking about language teaching and language learning. Therefore, it is of particular interest to look at how the teachers' thoughts and ideals concerning language teaching relate to their teaching methods and the steering documents. The specific aims of this investigation are:

1. To analyze the steering documents for English language teaching in Sweden and France, and to identify similarities and differences between them.

2. To investigate how teachers' thoughts and ideals concerning communicative language teaching relate to a) the steering documents, and b) their teaching methods.

We would like to clarify that our intention is not in any way to make national comparisons between Sweden and France nor to lay out one as superior to the other one. This would be impossible, acknowledging the limited size of this paper and the fact that our investigation treats two schools only. Our ambition is merely to lay out two images of two teaching situations and present what is there. The purpose is to unite our combination of teaching subjects in an investigation with the educational field as a basis.

1.2 Organization of paper

In the literature review, we will approach Communicative Language Teaching and its connection to theories on language acquisition as well as the concept of teacher beliefs. We will also account for the empirical research that has been done within our topic and connect them to the aims of this paper. In the section on background, we will present the current situation in Sweden and in France when it comes to the status and role of English in society and schools. In the methodology section, the methods used for our investigation will be explained and justified before the schools and participants are presented. Our results are then laid out and analyzed accordingly: analysis of the steering documents, interviews and observation. The interview section will separately present each participant’s thoughts and points of view obtained from the interview questions, before comparing and analyzing them to one another. The results from the observation are presented according to an observation guide. In the discussion, some results will be further analyzed and again linked to the aims of
this dissertation. We will also critically discuss the validity of our results. The conclusion will, besides making concluding remarks, also make suggestions for possible further research.
2. Literature Review

The idea of scrutinizing CLT is not new. This literature review discusses, besides the run-through of the origin and key points of CLT, the findings of some authors who highlight the difficulties teachers might run into when implementing CLT. The chapter also includes and discusses the concept of teacher beliefs.

2.1 Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching is an approach to teaching that became mainstream in the Western world during the 1970’s. It was a response and a reaction to previous language teaching methods such as grammar translation and audio-lingual, which had derived from behaviouristic psychology (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Even though the goal of almost all these language teaching methods has been for the learners to learn to communicate in the target language, it has been established by educators and observers that this particular goal has not always been met. For example, “students could produce sentences accurately in a lesson, but could not use them appropriately when genuinely communicating outside of the classroom, […] [which means that] being able to communicate require[s] more than linguistic competence; it require[s] communicative competence” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 121).

As already mentioned, CLT is an approach, not a method, seeing that it mainly offers a number of hypotheses deriving from theories of second language teaching. It is an approach also because it actually includes and suggests several teaching methods instead of just one. David Nunan, an Australian linguist, underlines this step away from the idea that only one method should be used in teaching and stresses instead how “the focus in recent years has been on the development of classroom tasks and activities, which are consonant with what we know about second language acquisition, and which are also in keeping with the dynamics of the classroom itself” as quoted in (Richards & Renandya, 2006, p. 10). Some of the classroom tasks and activities that CLT highlights are role plays, dialogues, games and group work, seeing that these activities necessitate communication among the learners. They also allow for the teacher to take a step back and merely function as a guide, instead of as the leading role in the classroom which is another key point in CLT. The task of the teacher is also to promote cooperation and negotiation among the learners: “since the teacher’s role is less dominant than in a teacher-centered method, students are seen as more responsible managers of their
own learning” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 129). Students’ reflection on their own learning and students’ self-assessment are also important elements of CLT.

CLT advocates and emphasizes the focus on function instead of form; a language ‘flow’ instead of separate vocabulary and grammar parts. This transformation from the focus on rules and memorizing to the focus on meaning has been much influenced by the linguist and educational researcher Stephen Krashen (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 38). Krashen contributed with a Monitor Model, where he presented five hypotheses for second language learning. In one of the hypothesis he explained the difference between learning and acquisition. According to him, rules and forms are learned, whilst acquiring takes place when learners pick up the target language through exposure. Another element in CLT is the importance of using authentic texts in the classroom, which David Nunan has listed as one of the five main features for this teaching approach. Using authentic texts naturally goes hand in hand with the pressure on a communicative purpose in CLT, since the main goal is not to learn rules or to memorize structures, but to communicate with people in everyday life. However, even though this communicative aspect is the main goal for CLT, a solid foundation of linguistic knowledge is required to obtain this communicative ‘flow’ in the target language. For example, the basic forms on how to construct questions can be of high importance: ”Would you…?” and “Could you…?” (Larsen-Freeman, 2002, p. 131). According to the same author, other features of CLT are:

- It is preferable to work in smaller groups where interaction is conducted.
- Connecting to authentic use of language, teachers should encourage students to learn several ways of expressing the same thing.
- The difference between practicing function and form. When practicing fluency, errors are not commented on. When practicing accuracy, more attention is paid to errors.

Conclusively, CLT includes suggestions and propositions for several different elements within language teaching and the elements that are highlighted and in focus differ depending on who has listed them. Therefore, it can be very difficult for teachers to understand what CLT really is and even more difficult for them to transform the ideas and thoughts into classroom practices.
2.2 Teacher beliefs

In order to understand what teacher beliefs are, it is essential to first give a definition of beliefs in general. For the past two decades, the concept of beliefs has become popular in both research and education studies. Even so, its definition remains rather vague and ambiguous. Michaela Borg (2001) lists four aspects which need to be taken into consideration when defining beliefs. The first one discusses beliefs in comparison to knowledge and the second one deals with the relationship between beliefs and behavior. The third aspect brings up the issue of conscious opposed to unconscious beliefs and finally, the fourth one discusses beliefs as value commitments. Taken all of this into account, Borg defines a belief as “a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior” (Borg, M. 2001, p. 186). Teacher beliefs naturally concern a teacher’s pedagogical ideas, thoughts and ideals. One of the most common research areas within teacher beliefs is teacher beliefs’ about teaching and learning, which is also our area of investigation. Borg advises caution when investigating beliefs, since it can be complex to research this phenomenon. For example, not all articles distinguish between actual knowledge and beliefs.

2.3 Empirical research

In the article: Framing communicative language teaching for better teacher understanding, Francis Mangubhai, Perc Marland, Ann Dashwood and Jeong-Bae Son (2007) list the many different authors that in one way or another have researched and contributed with ideas and theories to CLT. They also list the constructs used by these authors to describe CLT. Some examples of constructs are goals, classroom environment, teacher and student roles, treatment of errors and grammar instruction. Since all the authors highlight a combination of different constructs, Mangubhai et al. come to the conclusion that there is no single text that provides “a comprehensive view of what CLT is and how to implement it in foreign language classrooms” (Mangubhai et al. 2007, p. 8). They do suggest, however, a framework set up by Joyce and Weil (1994), “that may come close to satisfying” (Mangubhai et al. 2007, p. 8) the need for a collected text that also describes classroom applications. In this framework Joyce and Weil list a set of constructs and add several parallels to these constructs. They also
explain how to put the constructs into use, by “providing a description, in terms of all constructs, of a particular approach to teaching, such as role play, inquiry training, group investigation, direct instruction and non-directive teaching” (Mangubhai et al. 2007, p. 9). But Mangubhai et al. continues to say that even though this framework “provides a certain amount of conciseness, it may not capture the full complexities of events that occur in CLT classrooms” (p. 10).

Pham Hoa Hiep (2007) carried out a case study in which he aimed to find out about teachers’ beliefs and implementations of CLT. He initiated by asserting that the practices and beliefs about CLT are multifaceted and he describes CLT as such: “This broad theory has generated many different ways of understandings, descriptions, and uses of CLT, challenging what it actually means to classroom teachers” (Hiep, 2007, p. 193). Hiep interviewed three Vietnamese teachers of English and observed their English lessons during twelve weeks. The findings of his study confirm that all three teachers highlighted the potential usefulness of CLT (p. 197). When it came to the actual implementation of it, essentially they all explained “the need to create meaningful communication to support the learning process” (p. 197). Thus, all of them shared a positive attitude towards CLT in theory. Hiep affirmed however that “when [asked] about the techniques to realize these principles, the teachers were ambivalent” (p. 198). They were all fully aware of the fact that CLT could be promoted for instance through pair work, group work, role-play or simulation. However, two of them felt that these activities could not be used in their classrooms due to the lack of need to use English in Vietnam. They explained it as a lack of motivation to learn oral English on behalf of the students. The other teacher also indicated that CLT was difficult to apply, and she claimed that this was culture-related: “I wonder if this is a part of our [Vietnamese] classroom culture. People of the same status are not willing to collaborate with each other, to accept criticism from their equal, while they feel more tolerant to accept ideas and suggestions from [the teacher]” (p. 198).

Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do, written by Simon Borg (2009), discusses some of the key issues of this paper. One of them is the fact that what teachers believe and perceive as the best teaching methods does not necessarily correspond to what teaching method they actually apply in the classroom. Borg maintains that “teacher cognitions and practices are mutually informing, with contextual factors playing an important role in determining the extent to which teachers are able to implement instruction congruent with their cognitions” (Borg,
2009, p. 81). What he means by teacher cognitions is the “unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think” (p. 81). Furthermore, he points out that the classroom practices of a teacher are often reflections of their prior language learning experiences. This implies that the application of different language teaching methods is highly dependent on the experiences of the teacher, meaning that this application is at some level subconscious and thus resistant to change. The review also shows that some teachers tend to use teaching materials which they found enjoyable to work with during their own language learning such as the cultural components. Nevertheless, some teachers tend to neglect some parts of language learning that they found difficult and demanding when they themselves learned the language such as error corrections and grammar teaching (p. 88). Borg also emphasizes the impact of contextual factors on the classroom practices of teachers. Contextual factors could for example be teaching-controlled syllabuses and guidelines. This means that “the extent to which teachers have to follow a set curriculum or are free to develop their own courses seems to be crucial in understanding the decisions language teachers make” (p. 98).

The three articles referred to above discuss different complexities concerning language teaching and therefore they are highly relevant to our paper. In the first one, it is argued that CLT is extremely broad and that it is difficult for teachers to put their finger on what it actually is. Naturally, it is therefore difficult to implement it. The second article discusses culture-related problems with CLT, i.e. how CLT might not be suitable for some cultures because of its strong focus on student-student interaction. The third article does not touch upon CLT per se, but brings up the impact of the teachers’ prior language learning experiences and how they subconsciously bring these into their own teaching. This can therefore mean that what teachers believe and think does not always correspond to what they do.
3. Background

Besides English as a school subject, it is essential to step outside and also look at the external influences of English in the societies of our research area. The role of English in society will naturally also influence the role of English in schools. The role of English in schools will automatically also influence how the language is to be taught.

3.1 Status of English in Sweden and France

Swedish is a small language, spoken by barely nine million people. Due to the language being so small, Sweden is very much dependent on English in order to be able to take part in the international market. English is a solidly established language within Swedish society, used to a large extent in university text books, the IT sector, shop names and other domains. Some language researchers go as far as saying that English is on its way to becoming a second official language in Sweden, instead of just functioning as a means of communication in the international market (McKay, 2002, pp.10-11). Peter Prince, professor at the University of Provence maintains that the mastering of English in Sweden has become a norm (Prince, 2000, p. 21). The media certainly has a strong influence on the reinforcement of this norm in Swedish culture. Except for some children films which are dubbed into Swedish, all films and TV-programs are shown in their original language with Swedish subtitles. Since the American film industry is one of the most widely spread throughout the world, this naturally also affects Sweden. Between January and September 2008, American films made up 77,4% of the films shown in Swedish cinemas whilst Swedish films came in second place with 16,2% (Swedish Film Institute, 2008, p. 6). With all of this taken into account, there is no denying the importance of the English language in Sweden.

France, however, has a different relationship with the English language. Considering that French is a major language spoken in several countries of the world and that France is a large influential country, the need for a second language is not as essential and obvious in France as in Sweden. France has also on several occasions introduced laws and language policies to preserve the French language as well as preventing influences from other languages, primarily from English. One example is French radio broadcasting, where the language policy commands a certain percentage of French songs per day. In the article French attitudes toward the ideology of English as an international language, Jeffra Flaitz comments on the different
medium in France and the role of English in them. Linking back to the previous discussion concerning cinema in Sweden, one can see that in France, the amount of Anglophone films is 47% whereas French films constitute some 33%. Out of the 47%, 78% are shown in their original language with French subtitles and 22% are dubbed into French (Flaitz, 1993, p. 183). Furthermore, one language policy includes only taking in a certain amount of word borrowings from English per year. However, at a conference held in October 2009, President Sarcozy made inquiries for an emergency plan for language teaching in France (CBS news, October 13, 2009). He expressed that “a foreign language is meant to be spoken” and that the focus should be removed from grammar and instead placed upon oral and communication skills.

3.2 English in schools

In Sweden, most pupils start learning English in year three (age 9) or sooner. The subject is compulsory and it is often scheduled for three 40-minute lessons, resulting in a total of two hours per week. Together with Swedish and Mathematics, English is a so called core subject which means that it is compulsory to pass English in högstadiet (equivalent to secondary school, age 13-15) in order to proceed to gymnasiet (equivalent to upper secondary school, age 16-18). This fact reinforces the status of English in Sweden.

In France, English is not an obligatory subject. However, over 90% of the students choose English as their first foreign language (Bonnet, 2002, p. 35). Pupils usually start learning a foreign language in sixième (age 11). They have one and a half hours of language per week. In quatrième (age 13), the pupils usually start studying their second foreign language. Often they study their first foreign language (also called LVI) three hours per week and their second language (also called LVII) somewhat less. Even though it is not obligatory, most pupils study English as either their first or their second foreign language.

3.3 CLT in Sweden and France

Given the many benefits of CLT as teaching method, it has naturally been adopted by many countries as the main language teaching method. In the Swedish syllabus for English as well as the French syllabus for foreign languages, it is clearly pointed out that the goal should be to
enable students to communicate in the target language, and the all-round communicative ability is in focus in both steering documents. In order to meet the objectives of CEFR, a communicative approach in the language teaching is appropriate to be applied. Therefore, both Swedish and French teachers of English should use a communicative approach as a basis for their language teaching.
4. Methodology

This dissertation is an in-depth investigation of two single schools and it classifies thus as a case study. In case studies several methods are used to obtain a rich material for an individual case (Johansson and Svedner, 2006, p. 71). We have adopted the following methods: interviews, observations and analysis.

4.1 Data collecting methods

Due to our study dealing with teachers’ beliefs and thoughts, it was essential that the methods were of a qualitative nature. Combining qualitative interviewing with qualitative observations was the best way to extract information on teachers’ thoughts concerning CLT as well as their actual implementation of it in the classroom, because such oral sources and observations give information which is not obtainable elsewhere. Since interviews merely offer the subjective views of the participants, it was necessary to complement them with observations in order to gain a more objective picture. The interviews and observations were supplemented by critical and thorough reading of the steering documents in both countries. In Sweden, the syllabus for English at compulsory school, as presented by the National Agency for Education (Skolverket), was analyzed and in France we looked at the syllabus for foreign languages, as presented by Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale.

4.1.1 Analysis

Since the results of 8 countries indicate a significant difference in English language abilities between Sweden and France even though CLT is meant to be used as a basis for teaching in both countries, it seemed relevant to analyze the national syllabuses of both countries for English. We were already much familiar with the Swedish syllabus, due to our 4, 5 years at teacher education. Therefore, critical scrutiny of this document might be more difficult to accomplish, compared to that of the French one. Since the analysis involved two documents, the task was not only to describe and explain the content, but also to explain the differences and similarities. This is called a ‘comparative investigation’ (Johansson & Svedner, 2006). Johansson and Svedner also recommend using comprehensive thematic aspects when investigating several texts. We looked at what skills and methods within English language
teaching were emphasized in the two respective countries. We also looked at the role of CLT as well as CLT-related aspects. When analyzing the two texts, we asked ourselves whether or not the steering documents were open to different interpretations or if they were interpreted similarly by teachers. In addition, it was also of major concern to understand how the national steering documents were interpreted at the local level. This was an issue that we tried to get answers to in the teacher interviews.

4. 1.2 Interviews
We interviewed three French and three Swedish teachers of English. Qualitative interviews were carried out with two interviewers and one interviewee and the interviews were recorded. We decided to have pre-prepared interview questions but still allow the teachers to elaborate on possible topics of their interest. The interview guide helped us to remain within our area of investigation. This type of interview is referred to as ‘semi-structured’ (Dörnyei, 2007). Even though “[t]he typical qualitative interview is a one-off event [(single session)] lasting about 30-60 minutes”, the findings of this type of interviewing are seldom fully reliable (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 134). The ultimate way of carrying out interviews is to conduct three interviews (multiple sessions) with each participant in order to obtain rich and deep results. Due to the size of this paper, such a data collection was not achievable. However, one pilot interview with one of the participants was carried out to test the appropriateness of our interview questions regarding order, clarity and relevance. This pilot interview resulted in only minor changes in the interview guide.

The interviews were held in a quiet and undisturbed place and we chose to do the interviews in English with all six teachers. The reason for this choice was to give all teachers the same prerequisites\(^1\) and because we felt that our French was not sufficient for this type of interviewing. Had we carried out the interviews in Swedish and French, we probably would have received more extensive and detailed answers from the teachers. From the interviews we hoped to obtain answers as to how each individual teacher looks upon the steering documents, teaching methods, teaching ideals, CEFR, CLT and their own teaching in the classroom. The first few interview questions concerned general knowledge about the participant, to “set the tone and create initial rapport” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 137). The rest of the questions were divided

\(^1\)It needs mentioning though, that one of the interviewees - Morgan - is an exception, since he is a native speaker of English. This could lead to his answers being more thorough.
into three categories: steering documents, aspects under the teacher’s control (such as activities in the classroom) and aspects beyond the teacher’s control (external influences, such as the influence of English in society). See appendix 1 for all the interview questions. We avoided asking leading and close-ended questions.

4.1.3 Classroom observations
As a complement to our interviews, we also wanted to observe the teachers in their teaching roles in the classrooms. Therefore, we carried out qualitative observations. During one lesson per teacher, both of us participated as observers in the English lessons with the teachers mentioned above. We realize that one lesson is not enough to collect any conclusive data, but due to time constraints no further observations were possible to carry out. Consequently, the findings from the observations cannot be altogether authentic. We looked at how the teaching of English was carried out: what methods were being used, what language was being used, what skills were emphasized, the teacher’s responses to the students’ interaction, etc. We wanted to try to answer the questions as to what was being taught in the classroom and in what way. This was to see how it connected to the theories of CLT. We also wanted to try to observe pupils’ reactions and attitudes towards the lesson as a whole, in addition to individual exercises. In order to carry out observations that were as objective and valid as possible, we seated ourselves quietly at the back of the class. Our only tools were pencil, paper and our observation guide. We observed according to the method for ‘critical incidents’ and as soon as these occurred, we used ‘running observations’ to describe and take notes (Johansson & Svedner, 2006). In doing this, we could more easily observe the entire class and yet manage to obtain full descriptions of most events (Johansson & Svedner, 2006). We realize that as Swedish observers, it can be difficult to be entirely objective. The Swedish classroom is our starting point and therefore, the observations in France could not be carried out without putting them in relation to our Swedish norm, which we realize might be detrimental to our results. However, to try and maintain as neutral a position as possible, we started by observing the French school first and then going back to the Swedish school whilst the French one was still fresh in mind. It must also be acknowledged that there were two of us observing the lessons, which will increase the reliability of the results. We followed the observation guide,

2 We actually observed more than one lesson per teacher during our stay in France. This was out of personal interest and also because we are already much more familiar with the Swedish school system compared to the French.
the same one for both schools. Our observation guide included, among other things, looking at which of the four skills the teacher emphasized in his/her lesson. The questions of the guide are based on principles that are fundamental to CLT. See appendix 2 for more detailed description of the observation guide.

4.2 Procedure and selection

To get hold of a French school, at which we could carry out our observations and interviews, we contacted the international administrator at Malmö University. We had written a letter in French (see appendix 3) which explained the aim and purpose of our dissertation and she passed it on to her French colleague at teacher education (IUFM) in Paris. She contacted, in her turn, an associate at a compulsory school. After approval from the principal of this school, a convention was written for our educational visit between Malmö University, IUFM and the compulsory school. Due to the fact that the French school was situated in a rather affluent part of Paris, we contacted some Swedish schools that we imagined to be equivalent to the French one, not only when it came to the socio-economic status, but also the size and location of the school, i.e. within an urban area. However, the Swedish schools declined due to lack of time. Instead, we chose to contact one of our partner schools, and three English teachers there agreed to participate. A written agreement and an approval from the principle were not necessary here, possibly because a convention is already at place since it is a partner school of Malmö University. We are aware of the fact that the choice of school is not ideal, since one of us has rather close connections with this school and its staff. It might affect the neutrality of the paper. Hatch argues that “[i]t is just too difficult for educators to pull back from their insider perspectives and see things with the eyes of a researcher” (Hatch, 2002, p. 47). However, it can also bring out more honest responses from the participants of the interviews, since they might see one of us as an ally and not as someone who is there to judge them (Dörnyei, 2007).

The schools

The French school is located in a town of 35 000 inhabitants just outside of Paris and the Swedish school is situated in a small coastal town of some 17 000 inhabitants in southern Sweden. The main difference between the schools is that the French one is situated in an urban area in close proximity to a major European city, whereas the Swedish one is situated close to rural areas. Also, the French school has not quite 500 pupils whilst the Swedish
school has slightly more than 300 pupils. In this study, the French school will be referred to as Jean-Jacques and the Swedish school will be called Villevalla. Both schools have pupils aged 12-15 and more or less 90% of the students have Swedish/French as their mother tongue. Even though they are approximately at the same age, their levels of proficiency differ. The majority of the French students that we observed represented the level A2 (CEFR) and some of them B1. The Swedish students, however, can be assumed to represent the levels B1 and B2.

The participants
The teachers were selected because they are teachers of English and were willing to contribute their time. The informants are in total six teachers, three at each school. In this study, the three teachers from Jean-Jacques will be called Céline, Emilie and Genviève. They are all females and their ages vary. The three teachers from Villevalla will be called Olof, Jesper and Morgan. They are all males and approximately of the same age and they differ very slightly in teaching experience. All the participants teach adolescents between 13 and 15 years old, but the French ones also teach 11- and 12-year-olds. The French participants all teach English exclusively whilst the Swedish participants all have degrees in at least one more subject in which they also teach.

Céline is 59 years old. She received her teaching diploma in 1975 and she has worked as a teacher for 36 years. 17 of these years she has spent at Jean-Jacques. Céline spent one year in the United States in 1973-1974. Since then she has spent two weeks there every year. She has also been to England and Ireland on numerous shorter occasions.

Emilie is 45 years old. She acquired her teaching diploma in 1990 and she has also taught since then. She started working at Jean-Jacques in 1992. She spent one year in England in 1988.

Genviève is 25 years old. She graduated from teacher training education last year (2008) and consequently, she has only taught for approximately one and a half years. She teaches English at two schools, Jean-Jacques and an additional school with slightly younger pupils. She recently spent one and a half years in England.

Olof is 41 years old. He received his teaching diploma in 1999 and has worked as a teacher for ten years at the same school. Olof has not stayed in any English-speaking country for any long period of time, but has spent some holidays in Scotland, Ireland and England.
Jesper is 42 years old and acquired his diploma following teacher training education in 1999. He has worked as a teacher for a total of eleven years, as he worked as a substitute teacher prior to his graduation. Jesper spent longer periods working in the United States between 1991 and 1994.

Morgan is 45 years old. He is the only participant who has been raised in an English-speaking country and he moved to Sweden in 1998. He has a degree in Physical Education and he acquired his teaching diploma in England in 1994. To be able to teach English in Sweden, he has taken the University of Cambridge’s ESOL exam (English for Speakers of Other Languages), meaning that he has no Swedish teacher education. He taught PE in England for three years and he has taught PE, English and French in Sweden for 10 years.

4.3 Ethical considerations

Following Johansson & Svedner’s advice on research ethics, we have borne in mind the following aspects: all of our participants were informed beforehand of the aim and purpose of our research and that they at anytime could ask questions. They were also informed that they could withdraw their participation whenever they wanted without any negative consequences. Furthermore, they were told that they could see our transcriptions of the interviews and that both the recording and the transcriptions were to be destroyed after completing the paper. To keep the participants and the two schools anonymous, we have given everyone pseudonyms.
5. Results

We anticipated the teachers’ thoughts concerning teaching ideals in the Swedish and the French schools to be somewhat similar. This also turned out to be the case. During the interviews, all the teachers highlighted the importance of allowing the students to speak when practicing communication in English. Nevertheless, the observations showed rather large differences in the application of teaching methods. The most significant factor was the difference in discipline, where the French teachers maintained most order in the language classrooms. At Jean-Jacques, the lessons were very teacher-centered and the teachers remained figures of authority in the classroom whereas at Villevalla, the pupils had a larger role concerning communication in the classroom. However, naturally we also found major and minor differences as well as similarities between each individual teacher. Furthermore, our analysis of the two different steering documents showed the same goals to strive for, namely that the students should develop their communicative skills.

5.1 Analysis of steering documents

First of all, we need to mention that in Sweden, the syllabus for English is named “Syllabus for English at compulsory school”. In France, however, getting hold of such a document turned out to be complicated. Through the webpage of Ministère de l’Education Nationale, we managed to find two useful documents: Les programmes au collège, Langues vivantes (curricula for compulsory school, modern languages) and Les langues vivantes étrangères (modern foreign languages). The largest difference between the steering documents in Sweden and France is that whilst Sweden has a separate document for English as a school subject, France has a joint syllabus for the langues vivantes étrangères, the modern foreign languages. What also distinguishes the French syllabus from the Swedish one is that the French one is much influenced by CEFR. Since 2005, the goals of their syllabus correlate to CEFR, whereas in Sweden this document is not yet apparent in the syllabus. However, the following excerpt from the home page of Skolverket, demonstrates an influence by CEFR in the present syllabus and also suggests an attempt to bring it into future syllabuses: ”Dagens kursplaner i engelska och moderna språk är inspirerade av referensramen och den nya kursplanen i svenska för invandrare är i huvudsak anpassad till referensramen. Tanken är att samma anpassning ska ske med de nya kursplanerna i engelska och moderna språk, som
Skolverket kommer att arbeta fram” (Skolverket: http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2622, 2010, January 7).

In both the Swedish and the French syllabus for English, much focus is placed on communicative ability. In the Swedish one it is pointed out that “[t]he subject aims at developing an all-round communicative ability and the language skills necessary for international contacts” (Skolverket: http://www3.skolverket.se/ki03/front.aspx?sprak=EN&ar=0910&infotyp=23&skolform=11&id=3870&extraId=2087, 2010, January 7)

The French syllabus explains language learning as follows: “the communication in a foreign language implies the ability to understand, to express oneself and recognize thoughts, feelings and facts, both orally and in written form, in various situations” (Ministère de l’Education nationale: http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid21794/les-langues-vivantes-etrangeres.html, 2010, January 7) [our own translation].

In the French syllabus there are three main goals for learning a foreign language: “A more precocious period of apprenticeship, a reinforcement of the spoken and a European harmonization” (Ministère de l’Education nationale) [our own translation]. Due to the French syllabus now being developed from the CEFR, the specific goals to aim for are explained in much more detail compared to those in the Swedish one. The competences are divided into five categories: interaction, understanding, speaking, reading, and writing. In the syllabus for collège, there are two levels for each competence: A2, B1. The specific goals are then presented under these levels. For example, under the competence of speaking, the pupil at level A2 should know how to “describe their lives, tell a story, describe an event, an object, an experience, a project and finally present an explanation (comparisons, reasons for a choice)” (Ministère de l’Education nationale). [our own translation]

“In the [Swedish] syllabus for English, five main areas are in focus: receptive skills, productive skills, interactive skills, cultural awareness and reflection” (8 countries). Receptive skills concern listening and understanding; productive skills: speaking and writing, while interactive skills concern the ability to communicate with other people. Cultural awareness concerns the ability to reflect upon the cultures of English-speaking countries as well as making comparisons to one’s own culture. Finally, reflection relates to the ability to evaluate and assess one’s own learning. Instead of A2 and B1, the Swedish syllabus has goals that
pupils should have attained by the end of year five (age 11) and year nine (age 15). An example for year nine being “[to] be able to orally relate and describe something which they have seen, heard, experienced or read, as well as express and give their reasons on how they understand a topic that is of personal importance” (Skolverket: http://www3.skolverket.se/ki03/front.aspx?sprak=EN&ar=0910&infotyp=23&skolform=11&id=3870&extraId=2087, 2010, January 7).

Finally, the French document says nothing of student reflection, while this is one of the key points of the Swedish one.

5.2 Interviews

All interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. We had expected the interviews to be shorter, but since all teachers had several things of interest to add that were also relevant to the aims of our study, we naturally asked follow-up questions that were not originally in our plan for the interview. The teachers chose to bring up many teaching aspects that were shared amongst them, but also aspects that were unique. It needs to be acknowledged that the final category of our interview questions - aspects beyond the teacher’s control, external influences - has not been accounted for in the results. This is because we discovered this section to not be relevant to neither our topic nor our aims.

We have decided to present the responses from each interview, one by one instead of using a typology of the interview questions. In doing this, we can easily raise the answers that we found relevant for this paper. Since we have approximately 45 interview questions, it would be a tiresome read if we were to pile these up. Using the teachers as our starting-point is also better suited for the qualitative nature of this essay. We end this section by summarizing and analyzing the similarities and differences in answers.

5.2.1 Céline

When asked to sum up the syllabus for English, Céline highlighted the focus on grammar and building correct sentences. She returned to the importance of building correct sentence constructions several times during the interview. She was reluctant to the ‘new’ focus in teaching in France (by ‘new’ she meant the goals presented in CEFR), but yet admitted to having improved her own teaching by emphasizing spoken English a little more in her
classroom. She also claimed to have moved away from the previous teacher-centered way of instruction. Whether she actually believed that this was an improvement or if she felt she had improved only when it came to obeying the directives from steering documents, was not obvious. When asked how aware she was of CEFR, she used the phrase: “I don’t really care about that.” She mentioned that it could be because of her age that she was so reluctant and negative towards the new way of teaching. However, she admitted being aware of what CEFR is, seeing that she started her answer by saying: “I was talking about that with Michel before”. Consequently, it seemed to be a topic of immediate interest amongst teachers in the area.

When discussing the new and the old way of teaching she again stressed the importance of grammar by explaining how important it is when foreigners visit English-speaking countries: “If you speak a strange kind of language they don’t understand you and they won’t make an effort to understand you, but when you have a proper sentence – subject, verb, complement – they’re very happy about that and they make a great effort to help you.”

Céline showed some mistrust towards educational policy makers by saying that the educational reforms come and go and they usually only last for about two or three years and then another one comes along. She continued by saying that she felt as though educational theorists, whom she refers to as “those intellectuals”, seem to overestimate both the students and language learning itself. She demonstrated a feeling of too high expectations on teachers to have students developing faster than they actually can and do. Furthermore, Céline highlighted parents’ attitudes towards the ‘new’ teaching method. She explained that they (the parents) were anxious because they could not see in what direction their children were heading in English or what they were going to do next. According to Céline, they seemed to be asking for more structure within language teaching; they wanted to be able to see on paper what their children were learning in school and understand the goals. Here the ‘copy book’ is very important. She felt that the ‘new way of teaching’ did not include enough time dedicated to writing in it. According to her, this ‘new’ way of teaching was more similar to a game than to schoolwork.

She estimated to be speaking English 60 % of the time during her lessons and French 40 %, but she also pointed out that it depended on the proficiency level of the learners. She claimed

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3 For us outsiders, the concept of a copy book was unfamiliar, but at Jean-Jacques it was an obligatory part of all the lessons that we participated in. Students were supposed to write down all the information that was dealt with during the lesson, both what the teacher had written on the board and what s/he had said. The copy book makes up an important part of the lesson.
not to be using any authentic texts; instead she used the text book 90 % of the time. Céline admitted to not using any group work, saying that there were too many students in her classes and that about 40 % of the time was used for pair work, since “it’s the only way to make them speak”. For the remaining time, she made the students work individually with different tasks, such as listening or writing.

5.2.2 Emilie

Emilie was very positive towards the communicative approach and the influence of CEFR in the French steering documents. In addition, she felt that communicative ability plays the key role in the acquisition of a language. However, she explained that she had not received training in teaching accordingly. She also explained that the school did not offer them any such training, which is why it was up to them to find out how it should be applied and what the CEFR was about. Emilie emphasized that teacher trainees and those who were fresh from teacher education were equipped with the knowledge of working towards the goals of CEFR. Furthermore, she explained the difficulty of going from grammar-based lessons, to communicative lessons. But one way of going about this could be to decentralize the teacher’s role; the teacher should be considered a resource that is there to help and not the one who everything revolves around. For this particular reason, it is also important that the teacher does not correct the students whenever they produce ungrammatical sentences. Correcting them all the time can make them lose confidence in their language skills, and can result in reluctance to speak.

Emilie believed that an instructive language lesson should consist of among other things many conversations. These conversations, in turn, should be authentic. A way of practicing this she said was to allow the students to write dialogues of their own and then read them together in pairs. According to her, grammar should not play a huge role in the language classroom. In order for the students to develop their communicative ability, the following skills are crucial: understanding, speaking and being active. Emilie helps them develop these skills by trying to always speak in English, showing them English videos and by showing them pictures on the overhead for them to discuss. She was consistent in saying that the topics being dealt with, whether it was a film or a text, should be authentic and most preferably striking and appealing. In this way, she claimed, it was easier to make them react and thus speak their mind. Vital to the communicative ability is also that the students develop their own strategies
when learning a language. They already know a lot of vocabulary and many grammatical elements. Therefore the intent is for them to make use of this knowledge to develop their language even further.

When asked how she normally started her lessons, she said by warm-ups. These could involve a summary of the previous lesson or a picture on the overhead, to evoke a reaction. She tried to speak English throughout the lessons, except for when she taught grammar or gave homework. She estimated that she speaks English 80-90 percent of the time during an ordinary English lesson.

5.2.3 Genviève
First of all it needs to be said that Genviève was fresh from teacher training education and was thus very much aware of what the CEFR implied since she had received special training in working towards those goals. However she felt that she could not make as much use of it as she would have liked to, due to lack of co-operation from her colleagues, who had no training in this matter. Much like Emilie, Genviève emphasized the importance of using authentic texts and dialogues. The use of authentic materials makes it easier for the students to communicate in English. In her lessons she highlighted pronunciation because she felt that the French spoke English with “a very bizarre accent” which could lead to complications when communicating with non-French speakers, or with native speakers of English in particular. This is where she explained that English has a purpose, namely: it is a language of communication. Once again communicative ability played a central role in her beliefs about language teaching. What students need in order to develop their communicative ability was not only grammar and vocabulary but pragmatic skills, i.e. how to address someone, know the customs and the use of body language.

Genviève stood out in her way of starting a lesson. She got all the students to remain standing, and instructed them to raise their hands if they had any questions to ask their classmates. It could for example be: at what time does this lesson end? Another student was then supposed to answer the question. When they either had asked a question or answered it correctly, they were allowed to sit down. She used this activity as a warm-up since she believed in making everybody utter at least a few words in English every lesson. As mentioned before, she stressed pronunciation in her lesson, but she explained that pronunciation and speaking go hand in hand and therefore she believed that pronunciation and speaking combined were the
most important part in language learning. Genviève also recognized the importance of the teacher speaking English and she estimated that she speaks English 70% of the time during her lessons. She pointed out however, that she gave some instructions, taught grammar and assigned homework in French to avoid any possible confusion.

When asked how she encouraged students to feel comfortable with the target language, she explained that she focused a great deal on giving each and every one individual attention. By this she meant that she gave different comments to students depending on what they had done well. It could be good pronunciation or a well constructed sentence.

The materials she used included films, CDs, pictures and the textbook. She estimated using the textbook only 20% of the time and this was due to the fact that the textbook did not respect the CEF. Furthermore, she thought that she used pair work 40% of the time, group work 20% and individual work 40% of the time.

5.2.4 Olof
From the syllabus for English, Olof chose to highlight the oral part of the language, i.e. communicative ability. The written part, he felt, was not as important and he argued that “if you go to England you do not write notes when you buy things, you talk to people”. Furthermore, he had his students practicing oral skills by always speaking in English and by using communicative activities where they have to speak English. He felt that the most important skill that the students needed in order to further their communicative ability, was courage; “the students must dare to speak”. In addition, he allowed them to chat during the lessons, no matter what it concerned as long as they did it in English. He himself spoke English 98.9% during lessons. He explained that he spoke Swedish when he was obligated to, i.e. when teaching some grammatical elements or very specific things that the student would not understand in English. When asked how he encouraged his students to feel comfortable with the target language, he answered that he never forced them to speak in front of everybody. He respected the fact that some students found it intimidating to stand in front of the entire class and speak. In addition, he always reminded them that English was not their mother tongue. It is perfectly natural to make mistakes, since English is a complex language and even native speakers make mistakes.
When asked about the CEFR and how aware he was of this document, he answered: “I have seen a folder somewhere, but I have not really read it”. This meant that he was not aware of it and that the language teachers at Villevalla did not in any way include this document in their teaching.

Olof normally began his English lessons by asking the students to sit down and be quiet, and then told an anecdote or a funny story from his own life. This was a warm-up which he felt was good, because it helped the students to calm down and it captured their interest.

Out of the working methods pair work, individual work and group work, Olof estimated to use pair work 55% of the time, individual work 10% and group work the remaining 35%. For teaching materials, Olof used the text and workbook, fictional and authentic texts, film materials, music and CD-rom. The films they watched were in turn linked to the textbook. He tried to show them at least six films a year. Every lesson, the textbook or a text of some kind was used. The CD that forms part of the textbook is used by the pupils at home.

5.2.5 Jesper

When we asked Jesper what parts of the syllabus for English he wanted to highlight, he explained that it was not a specific part, but instead “language as a whole”. Students needed to practice all the skills and he described a language as a puzzle for which you needed all the pieces to complete. However, he also said that the syllabus placed most emphasis on the spoken part and demonstrated this by giving an example: “when a student can only speak, he or she can still get a pass, whilst if a student only fills in do, did, done”, he or she will probably not pass”. By this he meant that the oral skills carried more weight than grammar skills for example. Jesper perceived that all-round communicative ability concerns the ability to use the language for different purposes, such as speaking, writing, reading and understanding. When students can communicate in English, and not just verbally, then they have acquired all-round communicative ability. However, Jesper did not think that all students had to devote an equal amount of time practicing these skills. He was well aware of the fact that learners are different and for example that some are good at writing and not so good at speaking. Thus, everybody needs to develop different skills. The teaching methods that he thought were the most appropriate in order to develop an all-round communicative ability, were the ones where the students worked together with their peers in a speaking activity. But several times he pointed out that it was a very difficult question to answer and that he did not
really understand what an all-round communicative ability entailed, since it is such a broad concept.

Jesper usually started his English lessons with small talk in a very casual atmosphere where the students could join the discussion whenever they wanted to. In order to make all students comfortable with the language he uses humor and irony. When it came to working methods, Jesper spends 50-60 % on individual work, 30-40 % on pair work and 10 % on group work. Furthermore, the teaching materials he used the most were books (fictional/textbook), the overhead, communicative games and movies. He claimed that he used the textbook half of the time and that he aimed to show two films per term. In his lessons he claimed to be speaking 60 % English. He maintained that he felt obligated to teach some elements of the language, such as grammar, in Swedish in order for the students to fully understand. Furthermore, he admitted using Swedish sometimes with some classes, to be able to build amicable relationships and create a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom.

Jesper assessed his students work according to local matrices which had been developed from the national grading criteria. Since Jesper views language acquisition as a puzzle he cannot assess only one thing. He always looks at all the parts and assesses learners accordingly. In textual work, he found that the students’ major problem is their limited vocabulary and their lack of imagination. But he brought up an even bigger problem, which is the students’ lack of motivation; to make students do what they do not want to do. He thought that this was the biggest problem for teachers in Sweden today.

5.2.6 Morgan

As mentioned before, Morgan was a little special for two reasons, one being that he was a native speaker of English, and the other that he did not acquire his teaching diploma in Sweden. When asked to sum up the syllabus for English in a few sentences, he answered that the major aim for the students was to be able to communicate with non-Swedish speakers. Consequently, speaking was very important. He claimed that he promotes ‘total English’ in the classroom and that he wants his students to be ‘flooded’ with the language. Morgan incorporated speaking in his lessons, using materials which were available to him at school, and by always speaking English. He realized that speaking and listening go hand in hand and that you cannot practice one without practicing the other.
According to Morgan, in order for the students to develop their all-round communicative ability, they need to do communicative exercises, read texts of all kinds and have a general interest in the language. They also need to hear and use a lot of English and thus develop their skills to structure the language. Furthermore, he believes that the students should constantly aim to use their knowledge of the language to make themselves understood. Besides these communicative skills, he emphasizes how important it is for the students to have learning strategies and to develop their study skills. Morgan estimated that he speaks English more than 99% of the time, and he has never uttered an entire sentence in Swedish. If there are some specific words which are hard to explain in English, he says them in Swedish. He would have liked his students to speak English all the time and encourages them to do so, but he never forces them. Out of the different working methods, Morgan spends 40% on pair work, 40% on individual work and 20% on group work and class work. Like Olof and Jesper, Morgan has seen the CEFR document but has no further knowledge of it. As mentioned before the CEFR is not used at Villevalla.

**Summary and analysis of the interviews**

To sum up the results from the interviews, we can say that there were several similarities as well as distinctive differences in the thinking among the interviewees. For example, they all believed in teaching grammar in the native language (here Morgan is a special case, since English is his native language). All the informants claimed that it is necessary to use the native language in order to make sure that all the students understand. A question that arises is why grammar in particular is the only element in their language teaching that is most relevant for the students not to miss. After all, Morgan manages to teach his grammar in English without any outstanding problems. Besides grammar, all of the six teachers claim to use at least 60% English during their lessons. We estimate this to be fair, according to our observations.

All of the teachers also mentioned, in one way or another, the importance of practicing speaking. Out of the six interviewees, five said that they emphasized speaking skills in their teaching, whereas one claimed that grammar was the most important part. Yet, this interviewee admitted to using more and more speaking exercises in her teaching.

A considerable difference between the teachers in France and the teachers in Sweden regarding material was the use of film in their language teaching. The French teachers never
used whole films, whilst the Swedish teachers show their students at least three films per term. The films even made up a great part of the chapters of the textbook. The French teachers said that there was simply no time to show any films and yet many of their students had more English lessons than most of the Swedish students. What could be the reason for this difference? Could it be because the French students represent lower levels of CEFR and that understanding an English film is too demanding? Swedish students have a different relation to English films, since these are constantly available on Swedish television and cinemas.

We noticed that all the Swedish teachers wanted to point out that they never forced students to speak. This was an interesting piece of information given that none of our questions asked this directly. The French teachers did not say anything on this matter. This may be a question of how teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of how to prompt and encourage students differ in different contexts, i.e. it could be culture-related. Consequently, this matter could be pursued as a topic of a further investigation.

French teachers are supposed to work from the goals of CEFR but not all of them had received any training in this type of teaching and therefore found it difficult to actually follow it. This drastically distinguished the Swedish teachers from the French ones, since the document was not known to them. They had only heard of CEFR, but could not say what its purpose was. However, another finding indicated a common mistrust among both the French and the Swedish teachers towards the ideas and propositions of educational theorists and policy makers. They all felt that the theories presented by them, were difficult to apply in the language classroom. Thus they maintained that it is easy for politicians and educators to come up with theories, since they themselves do not have to put them into practice. This could also indicate that it is the steering documents that the teachers find difficult to follow at the local level.

Finally, even though almost all of our six teachers had rather similar ideas and beliefs concerning skills for language learning, they all had unique ways of explaining what they all actually entailed and they highlighted different things. Jesper for example, used the interesting metaphor that language was a puzzle and that all the parts were equally important to complete the puzzle and the separate parts on their own were not what counted. Olof stressed the social aspect of learning, where confidence was the key to mastering a language. The use of strategies, where one was to use old information to obtain new information, was one of the main abilities that Emilie wished for her students and practiced a lot with them. Genviève
found it important to focus on pronunciation and she thought that this was what the French needed to work on the most, since there are such big differences in intonation and pronunciation between French and English. “The students are flooded with English” and “I promote total English in the classroom” were the phrases that sum up Morgan’s key beliefs for language learning. He also highlighted general learning skills, i.e. a structure in how to learn new things. Finally, Céline explained that the main goal in language learning should be to focus on grammar. She clarified that to utter just a few words or incomprehensible sentences could not lead to any meaningful conversation. Therefore, correct sentences containing subject, verb and complement were crucial.

5.3 Classroom observations

Comparing the French and the Swedish classrooms, the first thing that caught our attention was the difference in discipline. The French pupils showed a lot of respect towards the teacher and towards adults in general and during the lessons they only spoke when asked by the teacher. It needs to be acknowledged that French students call their teacher Madame or Monsieur and never by their first names. Furthermore, the majority of the students showed a positive attitude in the classroom and they were active in writing down in their books, what the teacher wrote on the board. As opposed to the French classrooms, the Swedish ones were very lively with a high noise level. The students spoke whenever they felt like it and the teacher-student relationship was more amicable. Also, the students addressed their teachers by their first names.

Following the questions of our observation guide, this is what we noticed in the lessons:

**How did the teacher respond to errors in the spoken language?**

**Villevalla:** Errors were not remarkably acknowledged. Now and then the teachers discretely reformulated the students’ sentences, by weaving in this correction into the conversation.

Example:

T- Tell us about your weekend!

S- Well yesterday I go to the movies.

T- Ok, so you went to the movies. What film did you see?

Some teachers would stress the word that the student got wrong, others would not.

**Jean-Jacques:** The teachers responded quickly to errors, in that they interrupted the students as soon as they uttered a word that was incorrect in the sentence. They then asked the students
to rephrase their sentences, starting from the beginning again. If this student was not able to
come up with the right answer, the other students were allowed to raise their hands and give
the right word.
Example:  \( \text{T - What does the elephant do?} \)
  \( \text{S - It have…} \)
  \( \text{T - No! It…?} \)
  \( \text{S - It has a bath.} \)
  \( \text{T - Ok. Now repeat!} \)
  \( \text{S - It has a bath.} \)

These examples also show that the questions asked by the Swedish teachers to the students
were more open-ended than those asked by the French teachers.

**How much did the students actually speak in the target language?**

**Villevalla:** The Swedish students spoke generally more than the French, but not much of what
they said was in English. The exception was Morgan’s students, who made more of an effort
to communicate with Morgan and sometimes even with each other in English. This probably
has to do with Morgan being a native speaker of English.

**Jean-Jacques:** Students generally spoke only when being called upon by the teacher, but
once they spoke it was practically always in English. When they did not know the English
word for something, they had a habit of asking for it in an English sentence. Possibly this had
been drilled by the teacher.

Example:  \( \text{S - What is the English word for voiture, or} \)
  \( \text{S - How do you say voiture in English?} \)

**Which role did the teacher have during the lesson?**

**Villevalla:** The teacher was the leader in the classroom but in a rather friendly way, seeing
that the students felt free to chat and ask general questions without hesitation. He was rather
personally involved with the students. This was evident when students lingered after the
lesson to make small-talk with the teacher, which was not uncommon.

**Jean-Jacques:** Once again, the teacher was the leader, but here in a more formal and
traditional way. It was evident that it was the teacher who possessed the knowledge that
needed to be acquired in the lesson. We noticed that the French students were not as confident
in their own knowledge as they were at Villevalla. Furthermore, the French students never made small-talk about their personal lives with their teachers at Jean-Jacques.

**How much and when was the native language used by the teacher?**

**Villevalla:** Morgan did not use any Swedish what so ever during his lesson. Olof did not use Swedish for any spontaneous speech. The Swedish that Olof used during his lesson had to do with the exercise at hand, where the students were meant to translate sentences from Swedish into English. Jesper, on the other hand, used Swedish a few times to explain some grammar to students who did not understand the explanation in English.

**Jean-Jacques:** Generally, teachers spoke their native language more than the Swedes. French was in most cases used for giving homework, explaining grammatical features and disciplining the students.

**Student-student interaction**

**Villevalla:** With the exception of Jesper’s lesson, there was no student-student interaction in the target language. Jesper arranged a game called ‘Face-to-face’, where the students worked in pairs. One student faced the board whilst the other sat with his/her back to the board. The teacher wrote a word on the board and the student who could see it had to explain it in English, using no hands, other sounds or any Swedish, to his/her partner.

**Jean-Jacques:** Generally, there was more student-student interaction in the target language at the French school. Both Céline and Genviève applied a method where they encouraged the students to ask specific questions to one another. Genviève used this method in the beginning of the lesson, when she had students spontaneously ask each other general questions.

Example: S- What are the color of …

T- No! What…?

S- What is the color of my shirt?

S2- The color of your shirt is red.

Céline used this method when going through a previous chapter in the textbook. The students were encouraged to make up questions directed to the entire class. The students who knew the answer raised their hands and the teachers gave the word.

Example: S1- What elephants do eat?

T- What elephants do eat?? No, that is not correct. S2?

S2- What do elephants eat?

T- Good! S1, repeat that please!
S1- What do elephants eat?
S3- They eat leaves.

Noticeable here was that despite the student-student interaction taking place, the teacher was very present in that she gave immediate corrections when needed.

**What teaching materials were used?**

**Villevalia:** During Olof’s lesson, he went through a handout that the students had worked with during the previous lessons. The handout included Swedish sentences that the students had to translate. After this exercise, he conducted a game where the students, in pairs, were supposed to answer questions about their partner. The teacher asked a question, the student guessed an answer (A, B or C) and the partner then gave the correct answer.

Morgan started his lesson by getting the students to write down five things they had done during the weekend. They were supposed to use verbs in the past tense, which they had been practicing before. Some students shared what they had written out loud. After this, students worked in their exercise books, on the past tense and the conjugation of regular verbs.

Jesper opened his lesson with small-talk and questions to the class about the celebration of Lucia that had taken place during the weekend. Then he showed some pictures with questions on the overhead and encouraged the students to answer the questions in full sentences. This activity was grammar-related, since the answers necessitated the use of the past tense. He finished his lesson with the game ‘Face-to-face’, as explained above.

**Jean-Jacques:** All the French teachers had one student writing down the date on the board at each lesson. Furthermore, at the end of each lesson, all the teachers made sure that the students wrote down what the teacher had written on the board, in their so called ‘copy books’. All three French teachers made their pupils practice question constructions.

Céline started her lesson with a test on the homework. Then she encouraged the students to ask questions to the class, about a previous chapter from the textbook they had studied. Finally, the students took out their textbooks and by using the characters of a demon and an angel they were supposed to come up with negative and positive adverbs concerning these characters. This was to practice the placement of the adverb.

Example:  

S- Angel is crazy never.

T- No, Angel is…?

S- Angel is never crazy.
Emilie started her lesson by showing a restaurant menu in English on the overhead. She got the students to listen to a native speaker of English reading the menu. She asked about difficult words and they went through them together. The students were then supposed to choose what they wanted from the menu for lunch and they practiced how to order in a restaurant. Next, they used the exercise book to match words with pictures of food. Here, the teacher called upon the students to use strategies in order to connect the two, just as she claimed to do during the interview. Then the teacher used the CD again, where the native speaker asks questions such as: “what would you like to order?” and the students were meant to answer. She finished the lesson by giving the task of writing a dialogue in pairs that also dealt with ordering at a restaurant.

Genviève opened up her lesson with a communicative activity, where the students were not allowed to sit down until they asked their classmates a question and received an answer. One question that was asked concerned ‘the word of the day’. The teacher had a difficult word prepared and she explained the word in English, before letting a student guess the French translation. Then the student wrote on the board: “the word of the day is switch on/off (allumer/éteindre)”. After this, the teacher checked the students’ exercise books, to make sure they had done their homework. Then the teacher showed pictures on the overhead and the students were supposed to work out what the characters in the pictures said or thought. The second overhead had pictures of people with different professions, who were standing in various places on the street. The students were meant to come up with sentences such as: “the policeman is next to the truck”. At the end of the lesson, they practiced spelling different professions to their peers, who then guessed what they had spelled.

Which skill was emphasized - speaking, understanding, reading or writing?

**Villevalla:** During Olof’s lesson, understanding/listening was emphasized, even though there was some writing included as well. Jesper’s lesson included both speaking, understanding and writing. The most emphasized was probably speaking. In Morgan’s lesson, writing was slightly more stressed than the other skills.

**Jean Jacques:** Céline emphasized listening and understanding most, even though speaking and writing were also important parts of the lesson. Like Céline, Emilie also placed emphasis on listening and understanding. In Genviève’s lesson, speaking and understanding were given priority.
6. Discussion

Since there is no consensus regarding what CLT really is, nor any clear methods for its applications in the classroom, it is not surprising that teachers find it difficult to implement it in their teaching. As mentioned in the introduction, CLT is multifaceted and also rather vague in nature and therefore, it is impossible for us to say that one teacher applied CLT and another one did not. We found that all the teachers emphasized the importance of being able to communicate in everyday situations and that this is the main goal of language learning. Consequently, the majority of the teachers also highlighted speaking as the most important skill to practice when learning a language.

6.1 Discordance in beliefs and actions

Even though the teachers claimed to stress speaking, this was not always apparent during our observations. Simon Borg’s review on how teacher beliefs and thoughts do not always correspond to the teaching methods the teachers apply in the language classroom therefore finds support through some of the findings of our study. Emilie, for example, highlighted in the interview that grammar is not vital to a language and should therefore not play a central role in language teaching. During our observations, we discovered a certain tendency where she interrupted and corrected her students when they expressed sentences grammatically incorrect. Furthermore, Olof said that speaking was absolutely the most important skill for the students to develop. However, during the lesson that we observed, he placed most focus on listening, where he was doing most of the talking. This indicates that his teaching ideals were not in accordance with his teaching methods, although he was aware of this. In the interview he explained that even though he aims at having his students practice speaking, his lessons very often end up containing more listening activities and exercises. This could be, as Borg remarks, due to reflections of their prior language learning experiences (2009, p. 81).

6.2 Steering documents

As we mentioned before, Sweden has a separate syllabus for English and English is also a core subject, whereas France has a united syllabus for foreign languages and consequently English is neither a core subject nor obligatory. Besides this acknowledgement, both steering
documents of today, 2010, promote a communicative approach to language teaching. But with reference to our interviews with the teachers at Jean-Jacques, the communicative approach has only been at place since 2005 in France, with guidance from CEFR. According to the French teachers, this shift from grammar to oral focus was rather sudden. Bearing in mind Borg’s statement about how teachers tend to teach according to their own language learning experiences, the implementation of such a shift is destined to take time, since the teachers themselves learned English through a focus on grammar. Furthermore, the French interviewees claimed that the majority of language teachers in France had not received any training for teaching towards the goals of CEFR. During our observations we noticed that there was a significant emphasis on grammar at Jean-Jacques and the lessons appeared to be rather teacher-centered. We cannot report on previous syllabuses for English neither in Sweden nor in France, but with the information obtained from the interviews and the observations we came to the conclusion that the communicative way of teaching has played a prominent role for a long time in Sweden, whilst it has recently been introduced in France.

6.3 Culture-related CLT

When observing a classroom situation one cannot escape acknowledging the social and cultural elements that affect the teachers’ way of teaching. As already mentioned, the first thing we noticed as a difference between Villevalla and Jean-Jacques was the discipline in the classrooms. The French students showed more respect towards their teacher and more politeness in general towards everyone around them. The student-teacher roles were more traditional and the teachers got more attention from the students compared to the Swedish teachers. In Framing communicative language teaching for better teacher understanding the authors argue that CLT is not approved in some countries because it is “at odds with traditional relationships between teachers and students” (Mangubhai et al., 2007, p.) and we wonder whether or not this hypothesis to a certain extent also can be applied to the classrooms we saw at Jean-Jacques. CLT builds upon having the students communicate, negotiate and interact with each other and if the students do not trust their peers to have any valuable information, but instead are under the impression that it is only the teacher who is the holder of knowledge, a collision is inevitable. Hiep’s case study in Vietnam highlighted the same issue. Furthermore, Céline expressed a concern that regarded writing in the ‘copy book’, which she felt was being neglected in the ‘new’ way of teaching. According to her, the ‘new’
way of teaching resembles more a game where “you just have papers and drawings and [...] no real sentences”. Instead she promotes a more structured way of teaching, where students write in their ‘copy books’. In such an approach, their parents also can check the children’s progress in English.

But does a non teacher-centred classroom, a prerequisite of CLT, have to result in the loss of discipline, which seemed to be the case at Villevalla? Here, there was a lot of student-student interaction, but the communication had seldom something to do with English or the task at hand. The students did not pay the same attention to the teacher or the task. Jesper confirmed this by saying that the major problem for teachers in Sweden today, “is to make them [(the students)] do things they don’t like”, not only in English, but in all subjects.

Taking all of this into account, it is assumable that CLT is culture-related and thus, “the matter of its appropriateness in certain cultures [has] constantly been debated” (Hiep, 2007, p.193). Naturally, it cannot be applied in the same way in all places of the world. The application of CLT is highly dependent on the general organization of the educational systems; national curricula and the values presented in them as well as local policies are all contributing factors. Luc Ferry, the Minister of Education in France 2002-2004, highlighted in Lettre à tous ceux qui aiment l’école (2003), two key domains that are essential to the schooling of the French pupils: l’apprentissage de la langue (apprenticeship of the language) and la civilité⁴ (civility) (p. 43). He explained that the rules of grammar and civility are important parts of what he calls l’héritage (the heritage) and traditions which should help weaken some of the negative individualistic thoughts that permeate society of today.

Juxtaposing Ferry’s argument to the results from our observations at Jean-Jacques, we could see that these ideas were present in the teachers’ teaching. This became especially apparent when placing the results next to the findings from Villevalla.

### 6.4 Authentic texts

As English is a language of communication, it is necessary to use authentic teaching materials that can evoke authentic communication. With the exception of Céline, all teachers claimed to use authentic materials in their teaching, which is essential to CLT to “overcome the typical

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⁴This is also a compulsory subject in the French curriculum (Ministère de l’Education Nationale).
problem that students cannot transfer what they learn in the classroom to the outside world
and to expose students to natural language in a variety of situations” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000,
p. 132). Authentic texts are meant to provide a basis for real-life interaction, such as
practicing how to address someone, how to order at a restaurant or how to ask for directions.
However, the concept of authentic communication can be rather complex. What is authentic?
According to whom? Is it the language and the expressions used by native speakers only or is
the authenticity dependant on the context of the situation? We believe that Emilie
demonstrated a clear example of practicing authentic communication when she did her
exercise on the restaurant menu. Since this is actually something they will be able to make use
of in a country where English is spoken, it would classify as authentic material. Since the
general communication taking place in the classroom must also to a certain extent be
classified as authentic, it would be more complex to classify non-authentic communication.

6.5 The use of the native language

CLT encourages constant use of the target language during the language lessons, even though
it does not forbid the use of the native language. Furthermore, the target language should not
only be used during specific exercises but it should also be the language in which for example
homework is assigned (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Another reason for using consistently
English during the lessons could be because the group of learners might not all share the same
native language. However, Jesper pointed out that in using the native language he can build
relationships with his students and a good climate in the classroom which he felt would not be
equally successful to accomplish in English. The importance of building good relationships
with and among the students, points again to a non teacher-centered classroom. Another
interesting finding, related to the same issue, concerns the way in which all teachers chose to
teach grammar in their native language. In Celine’s case this was not surprising, since she
placed much focus on grammar and wanted to make sure that her students understood all parts
of it. Even though the other teachers (Morgan being an exception since he teaches grammar in
English) wanted to point out that grammar should not play a central role in language learning
and teaching and that it was not as important as other language components, they still
admitted to teaching grammar in the native language. This was to make sure that all students
understood. We found this phenomenon to be somewhat contradictory. If the teachers’ aim is
to place less focus on and diminish the importance on grammar, how come grammar in
particular is the one component taught in the native language, i.e. the component that the students must not miss?
7. Conclusions

This essay sought to investigate some teachers’ beliefs and thoughts concerning CLT and also to see how these connected to the national steering documents and the teaching methods they applied in the classroom. In order to do this, it was also relevant to look at what CLT actually is and how it is to be implemented. We discovered the many-sidedness of CLT and the various ways in which it can be interpreted. The fact that it is an approach, not a method and that it also contains and highlights different elements dependent on who has written about these, can be explanations to why it is complex.

In preparation for our interviews with the teachers, we analyzed and compared the steering document of each country. We discovered that Sweden has a separate syllabus for English, whilst France has a syllabus that covers all foreign languages. Another large difference was that CEFR played an important role in the French syllabus, whereas in Sweden, the teachers were not familiar with this document. All teachers except for Céline showed a positive attitude towards using a communicative approach in their teaching, i.e. to focus on speaking and interaction skills. However, our observations did not always indicate such an aim. At Villevalla, listening was most often highlighted and at Jean-Jacques the major focus was still on grammar. Therefore, it has occurred to us that teachers’ ideals of language teaching and what they aim to do in the classroom do not always correspond to their actions. As Simon Borg also discusses, what the teacher does in the classroom can be reflections of his/her own language learning experiences, instead of knowledge obtained from teacher education. Thus, this can result in teachers claiming to do one thing, when in reality do something differently.

Another finding from our observations - which in the beginning was not intended to be given any attention- was the difference in discipline at Jean-Jacques and Villevalla respectively. At Villevalla, the teacher and the students had a more amicable relationship in comparison to Jean-Jacques, where the roles were more traditional. On the other hand, the students at Villevalla did not show the same ambition and enthusiasm towards the tasks and towards using the target language. We are highly aware that our investigation has only covered six teachers’ teaching and classrooms and therefore does not in any way provide a general image of schools in Sweden and France. Even so, we wonder if the question of discipline can be connected to the difficulty in applying CLT since it seems to go against the traditional roles of students and teacher. This was the result that Hiep found, doing his case study in Vietnam. However, we also acknowledge the fact that Jean-Jacques is situated in a prosperous area and
maintains a high socio-economic status, whilst Villevalla is located in a middle-class town near rural areas. This might also be a contributing factor to why the students at Jean-Jacques seemed to be more disciplined and had we done our investigation at a French school situated in a less affluent area, we probably would have ended up with different results. Still, the matter of discipline within the CLT classroom could be an interesting topic for further investigation, acknowledging that CLT is applied differently according to cultural context. For such an investigation, a more profound study would be necessary, including more schools, more teachers and more observations.

Our interviews were of a semi-structured nature and we used single sessions. Had we used multiple sessions, it is possible that we would have gotten deeper and broader answers. Moreover, the fact that the interviews were held in English as opposed to the teachers’ native languages may also have altered our results. However, if we would have done the interviews in the respective native languages, we presumably would have come across the difficulty of translating the French interviews into exact words and thus, lose some pieces of data that actually were relevant to our investigation. As already mentioned, this is not an image of a general school in Sweden or in France, but it does provide a rich and thorough description of these teachers’ teaching situations and how they perceive CLT as teaching approach.
References

Primary sources

Interviews with the French teachers Céline, Emilie and Genviève [2009, December 2-4]

Observations at French school [2009, December 1 - 4]

Interviews with the Swedish teachers Olof, Jesper and Morgan [2009, December 7-9]

Observations at Swedish school [2009, December 7 – 9, 14]

Analysis of the steering documents [2009, December 18]

Secondary sources


Appendices

Appendix 1: The interview questions

What is your name and age?

What year did you graduate?

How many years of experience as a teacher do you have?

Have you spent any time in an English speaking country? Where? How long?

What is the age of your present English pupils and how many years have they been studying English?

Legislative aspects= Steering documents

1. If you were to sum up the syllabus for English in Sweden in a few sentences, what parts would you choose to highlight, i.e. what are the key elements for you?
   a) How do you incorporate these elements in your every-day lesson planning?

2. How do you understand the concept of “an all-round communicative ability”?
   a) What skills do you think the students need to be able to develop their all-round communicative ability?
   b) Which teaching methods do you perceive as the most appropriate to promote their all-round communicative ability?
   c) How do you use these methods in your own teaching?

3. You could say that there are five areas within language teaching that are in focus in the syllabus: receptive skills, productive skills, interactive skills, cultural awareness and reflection. Name a few exercises and activities in the language classroom that you think would be crucial to your pupils development of:
   a) receptive skills
   b) productive skills
   c) interactive skills
   d) cultural awareness
   e) reflection, e.g. student’s self-assessment

(For France, number 2 and 3 look like this):

2. How do you understand the concept of a communicative ability?
   a) What skills do you think the students need to be able to develop their all-round communicative ability?
   b) Which teaching methods do you perceive as the most appropriate to promote their all-round communicative ability?
c) How do you use these methods in your own teaching?

1. According to your steering documents for foreign languages there are three objectives that are in focus: linguistic skills, cultural skills, intellectual skills.
   a) What do these objectives signify?
   b) How are these objectives visible in your classroom?

2. How is the syllabus present in your thinking process, when assessing a student’s work or when assessing students? Give examples.

3. How aware are you of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for languages)?
   a) How do you deal with this document at your school?
   b) How do you deal with it in your language teaching?

**English in your classroom, things under your control**

**General**
1. How do you usually start your language lessons?
2. Generally speaking, which skill do you feel you emphasize the most in the classroom? (Speaking, Reading, Understanding or Writing?)
3. What do you do to encourage students feeling comfortable with the target language?
4. If you were to measure the percentage of all the different working methods you use in the language classroom (ex. group work, individual work, etc), what would it look like? (You are free to demonstrate with an image)

**Speaking**
1. How much English do you use during a lesson, compared to your native language? (Please estimate a percentage or a fractional number)
2. Are there specific moments in your teaching where you choose to speak in Swedish instead of English?
   a) If so, which are they?
3. How do you encourage shy students to speak in class?
4. Do you place emphasis on a particular English accent in your classroom?

**Material**
1. What types of texts do you use? Give percentages. (texts including everything)
2. How often do you use English films in your teaching?
3. a) If you work with films, how do you work with them?
   b) If you work with films, do you use subtitles- which language?
4. To what extent do you use the textbook and in what way?
5. Do you ever use authentic texts, such as newspaper articles, etc.? If you do: how?
**Assessing**

1. What types of examination do you use?
2. When correcting students’ texts, which errors do you find to be more severe/less severe?

**English in general, things beyond your control**

1. Generally, tell us a little bit about the role of English in Sweden.
   a) Outside the language classroom- how much do you think students come in contact with English?
   b) How do you think your students look upon the English language?
   c) How do you look upon the role of English?

2. How do you perceive your students attitudes to English as a school subject?
Appendix 2: The observation guide

How did the teacher respond to errors in the spoken language?

How much did the students actually speak in the target language?

Which role did the teacher have during the lesson?

How much and when was the native language used by the teacher?

How did the student-student interaction function?

What teaching materials were being used?

Which skill was emphasized- speaking, listening, understanding or writing?
Appendix 3: The letter sent to IUFM de Paris

Cimen Batak et Jenny Andersson

Adresses...

Malmö, le 19 octobre 2009

Cher(e) Monsieur/Madame,

Nous nous appelons Cimen et Jenny et nous sommes deux étudiantes suédoises, qui faisons la formation des professeurs à l’université de Malmö. Notre orientation est dirigée vers le collège et le lycée avec l’anglais comme matière principale et le français comme matière secondaire. En ce moment, nous faisons le dernier semestre et notre mémoire de maîtrise, où l’on doit faire une recherche dans le domaine d’éducation et d’apprentissage de la langue anglaise.

En ayant le français comme matière secondaire, nous nous intéressons particulièrement à la façon dont l’anglais est enseigné et appris en France et en Suède. Il s’agit de détecter des différences éventuelles. L’objet avec une telle analyse serait aussi de saisir les aspects culturels qui concernent la langue, plus en profondeur.

Nous vous écrivons en espérant trouver une école dans laquelle nous pourrions faire des recherches pour notre mémoire. Comme l’école où nous avons accompli notre stage est un collège, il est fondamental que l’école française dans laquelle nous pourrions observer cet enseignement soit aussi un collège.

Nous vous serions extrêmement reconnaissantes si vous pouviez nous donner la possibilité d’assister et d’observer quelques leçons dans votre école, la possibilité d’interviewer quatre ou cinq professeurs d’anglais qui sont d’origine française et la possibilité de laisser les élèves de ces professeurs remplir des enquêtes qui traitent de l’acquisition d’anglais.

Nous vous remercions d’avance pour accorder un peu de temps à notre requête en espérant que vous puissiez y répondre favorablement

Veuillez recevoir nos sincères salutations

Cimen Batak et Jenny Andersson