Teaching English to newly arrived immigrant pupils

- A qualitative case study about teachers’ experiences at a Swedish secondary school
Abstract

This qualitative case study examines teachers’ perspectives on receiving and teaching newly arrived immigrant pupils. Previous research and the Swedish National Agency for Education have shown that immigrant pupils have a tendency to fail their education, and some researchers also implied that these children fail their English education. The aim of this essay has been to investigate how English teachers at a secondary school in southern Sweden deal with the growing number of newly arrived immigrants in their classes. The collected data is based on qualitative semi-structured interviews with three teachers at a secondary school in Sweden. The results indicate that the teachers considered that it was challenging to receive and teach newly arrived immigrant pupils. They do not have enough information on how they should incorporate these children into subject planning and ongoing pedagogical initiatives. Moreover, the data also show that the participants expressed the fact that the pupils often had a low level of English proficiency, and that they occasionally did not obtain a grade in English. The pupils’ low English level connected with their ongoing Swedish acquisition made it difficult for the teachers to adapt their teaching. The Results also implied that many newly arrived pupils used English as a communication language, which may have a positive impact on their learning.

Keywords
CLI, English, ELT Third language acquisition, Immigrant pupils, Lingua franca
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Appendix 1

Appendix 2
1 Introduction

Teaching English to young immigrants is a reality in Sweden today as a result of the fact that Sweden is currently undergoing a period of extensive immigration. According to the Swedish Migration Board (Migrationsverket [www]), 149 028 people applied for asylum in Sweden 2015 and these people largely came from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Many of the new arrivals are refugees that have just fled to a country that is willing to give them a friendly welcome (Migrationsverket [www]). Lundahl (2012:91) mentions that pupils who have a foreign background or newly arrived pupils have a tendency to fail English both in the primary school, but also in their final year at upper secondary school and they are often not awarded their upper secondary school leaving certificate. This is a research topic that is relevant for the English teaching profession in Sweden, because many English teachers have to face the challenge of receiving young immigrants. The Swedish school system aims to give all pupils an equal education. The teachers have to individualise their teaching to all pupils but especially to pupils that have a problem to reach the goals of the curriculum and syllabus (Skolverket [www]). It is therefore arguable that it is challenging for the teachers to receive and teach these pupils, and that this needs to be investigated. It is this study’s ambition to investigate the perspectives of English teachers on this topic.

Lundahl (2012:90) defines pupils with a foreign background as pupils who are born in Sweden but also those whose parents are born abroad. Nevertheless, this essay will focus on immigrant pupils who are ‘newly arrived’, and it is crucial to mention that this concept will include not only refugees but also other immigrants. The essay’s definition of newly arrived pupils is the same as the Swedish government’s, and according to the government, newly arrived pupils are defined as people who have started their education in Sweden after the winter term of the year that they have turned seven years of age (Regeringens proposition, 2014/15:45). Moreover, the pupil is also considered as a newly arrived person if the person has not been in the Swedish school system for more than four years (Regeringens proposition, 2014/15:45). The Swedish National Agency for Education is defined as ‘the central administrative authority for the state school system, state and municipally- administered preschooling, school-age childcare and for adult education’ (Skolverket [www]), and this national agency has the role to oversee the Swedish educational system in accordance with current educational and learning
theory. The Swedish National Agency for Education ([Skolverket 2013 [www]]) declares that children applying for asylum have the right to education, and that newly arrived children must attend compulsory school if they have been nationally registered. The agency maintains that there is a negative trend where pupils with a foreign background are more inclined to fail their education (Skolverket [www]). In conclusion, this background information explains the relevance of this topic. Sweden’s extensive immigration and immigrant pupils’ tendency to fail their English education make it important to study how English teachers are affected by this in their teaching.

1.2 Aim and research questions
The aim of this essay is to investigate how English teachers at a secondary school in southern Sweden deal with the growing number of newly arrived immigrants in their classes, and to explore different learning difficulties that occur in a classroom environment. One goal with this essay is also to research how teachers adapt their teaching based on the pupils’ English proficiency and linguistic backgrounds. A crucial aspect is to investigate what kind of knowledge that teachers claim that they lack or need in how they should receive and teach these pupils. The essay will focus on the secondary school teachers’ perspectives. This study is mainly a heuristic study, with no predetermined position or hypothesis adopted with respect to the data collected.

In this study, two main research questions will be investigated:

1. What kind of knowledge do English teachers at a chosen secondary school have in receiving and providing an education for newly arrived pupils in English, and how is their teaching affected by this knowledge?

2. How is the English teachers’ teaching affected by the newly arrived pupils’ English proficiency, prior knowledge of English and their general linguistic backgrounds?

2 Theoretical background
2.1 Third language acquisition
This section of the essay will describe general studies on learning a third language and cross linguistic influence. Newly arrived pupils in Sweden generally learn Swedish as a second language and English as a third language (Lindbland and Lindbland, 1981:1).
De Angelis (2007:5) argues that researchers have different opinions on the differences between learning a second and a third language. She mentions that many researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) consider that many theories of second language acquisition can be applied to all non-native language learning (De Angelis, 2007:5). This state of affairs is also why many SLA scholars use the term ‘second language acquisition’ more frequently, even if they really mean the learning of a non-native language that could be a L3 (De Angelis, 2007:5). De Angelis (2007:6-7) comments that all non-native language learners are classified as L2 learners in language acquisition research. This view is also shared with Jessner (2006:13-14). She claims that many scholars maintain that L2 and L3 acquisition are similar. However, Jessner (2006:13-14) argues that there is a difference between these two types of acquisition. This research will adopt the concept of cross linguistic influence (henceforth CLI). De Angelis makes use of the CLI definition by Odlin and Sharwood-Smith (De Angelis, 2007:19):

Odlin, defines CLI as ‘the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired’ (1989: 27). Sharwood-Smith defines cross linguistic influence as ‘the influence of the mother tongue on the learner’s performance in and /or development of a given target language

(De Angelis, 2007:19).

In the research field of CLI, researchers suggest that language learners are affected by the correlation between the target language and the learners’ prior knowledge in languages (De Angelis, 2007:23). In other words, it is easier for learners to learn a language from a language that is similar to the target language. Ringbom (2007:2) argues that third language learners rely more on their L2 assuming that their L2 is more similar to the target language than their L1. He mentions that most learners have an overall knowledge of similarities between languages, such as the alphabet / grapheme representation, phonemes and lexical aspects (Ringbom, 2007, 20-23). Ringbom (2007:20) describes that learners’ understanding of language similarity affects their ability to learn languages.

Some research evidence shows that learners who have learnt a L2 will be affected by this when they learn a L3 (Jessner, 2006:14). Third language acquisition studies are
connected to multilingualism, because it is based on the usage of two, three or even more languages, but the term *third language acquisition* is not necessarily associated with bilingualism (Jessner, 2006:15). Jessner (2006:16) claims that the process of learning a third language can be very different:

1. three languages can be acquired simultaneously.
2. three languages can be learnt consecutively.
3. two languages are learnt simultaneously after the acquisition of the L1.
4. two languages are acquired simultaneously before learning the L3.

(Jessner 2006:16)

The learning process of the L3 can be interrupted by the learning of another language such as the L2 (Jessner, 2006:16). Jessner (2006:24) argues that L3 learners who have a lower proficiency in their L2 transfer more aspects from their L1. However, studies in CLI show that the learners’ L2 has an impact on their third language acquisition (Jessner, 2006:25). As Falk and Bardel (2010:188-190) mention, most studies on L3 acquisition claim that it exists a correlation between the learners’ prior knowledge in languages and their L3 transition. Some research evidence suggests that both the L1 and the L2 affect the lexical and the syntactic aspects of the L3. Furthermore, many researchers seem to believe that the L2 has a greater influence in the transfer to the L3.

One explanation of this could be that learners who have been taught their L2 in a more formal environment can have knowledge about the process of learning a language (Falk and Bardel, 2010:192). Falk and Bardel (2010:188) also mention that the differences and similarities between languages affect the learners’ ability to learn a new language. Germanic languages such as Swedish and English share many similarities. Swedish and English have for example the same canonical word order (SVO). It is reasonable to assume that many of the newly arrived pupils in Sweden speak the languages from the countries where most immigrants come from. The Swedish Board of Migration (Migrationsverket [www]) states that in 2015, people came to a great extent from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Iran. The official language in Iraq and Syria is Arabic. In Afghanistan, Dari is the official language and in Iran Persian is the official language (NE[www]). This does not necessarily mean that the newly arrived pupils cannot speak other languages or have other L1 than those languages that are mentioned.
2.2 English as a Lingua Franca

Rong and Preissle (2009:73-74) state that studies show that the success of immigrant pupils learning English depends on how much they have been exposed to English. Immigrant pupils have various backgrounds and cultures, and some of the pupils have had more exposure to English; this depends at least partially on the relationship of the pupils’ birth country to the English language (Rong and Preissle, 2009:73-75). English has become an international language, and it is often described as a lingua franca (Holmes, 2013:82). A lingua franca is described by Holmes as “a language serving as a regular means of communication between different linguistic groups in a multilingual speech community” (Holmes, 2013:82). Mackenzie (2013:1-3) argues that many English learners focus and should focus on English as a lingua franca, in addition to the functional and communicative aspects of learning the language. English is therefore a useful language if non-native speakers want to use it in interaction with others, and it is common for people to use English in situations where language barriers occur (Mackenzie, 2013:2-4). English is the third language in many countries, where people speak several languages and English is used as the communication language in different contexts (Jessner, 2006:3). The language is also the third language of many refugees and immigrants in countries where it is more taught as a second language than a foreign language (Jessner, 2006:3). The English language's status as a lingua franca is spread world-wide and it is, as mentioned above, used as a communication tool between people who do not share a mother tongue (Jessner, 2006:2-4). However, some countries have a closer relationship to English, for instance, countries in Northern Europe where the people are taught English almost as a second language. In other countries, English does not have an official status, and the language is instead taught and regarded as a foreign language (Jessner, 2006:2-4).

According to Education First's (EF [www]) statistics from 2015, Sweden has the highest proficiency in English as a second language. The countries in the statistics are divided into different level categories, such as very high, high, moderate, low and very low. Swedish learners score high, and the country belongs therefore to the first proficiency category, very high. It is interesting to study the English proficiency in the countries and regions where many of the newly arrived immigrants come from, such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. The index from 2015([www.EF]) does not show results for
Syria or Afghanistan, but for Iran and Iraq. Both countries are in the category of countries that have a very low English knowledge. In the report from 2015 (EF [www]) it is explained that most pupils in Iran are first taught English in secondary school. Many people in the Middle East and North Africa are reluctant to learn English because of the connection between English and Western society. Nevertheless, people in this region regard English as an important language to learn because it can be used in an international context (EF [www]).

2.3 Previous research on teaching young immigrants

Rong and Preissle (2009) present interesting facts about teaching immigrant pupils, and this research is related to this essay’s research topic about teaching newly arrived young immigrants in the Swedish schools. The study is related to this essay because it discusses some of the difficulties involved in teaching English to immigrant pupils. However, it is relevant to mention that the authors mainly discuss the situation in the United States, a situation which is not wholly relevant to Swedish immigrant pupils. Rong and Preissle (2009:57) state that the number of immigrant children has expanded in the United States and that this affects the need to prepare these pupils’ language transition. Immigrant pupils in Sweden have a different position to these pupils in the United States because the Swedish immigrant pupils have to be taught Swedish as a second language and English as a third language (Lindblad and Lindblad, 1981:1).

According to the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [www]), Swedish is the most important language to learn for a newly arrived pupil because learning Swedish is crucial for the pupil’s entry into the school system and to further education. It is vital for these pupils to learn Swedish because they also have to learn other subjects such as mathematics, history and social science, where Swedish is mainly used (Skolverket [www]). Rong and Preissle (2009:69-71) argue that it is challenging for immigrant pupils to learn a second language while at the same time, attempting to retain their mother tongue and their culture in a new country. However, this does not imply that these pupils in the United States have to be negative towards learning English as a foreign language because learning English often means that it is easier to study and find work etc. (Rong and Preissle, 2009:58-60). This is also relevant for all non-native English speakers that want to learn English because of the language’s status as a lingua franca (Mackenzie 2013:1-4).
Other factors that affect the level of English among immigrants are their mother tongue and how old they were when they first arrived in the U.S or their age when they properly started to learn English (Rong and Preissle, 2009:74-78). However, Rong and Preissle (2009:110-111) claim that immigrant children in the United States have a problem to complete an education, and they state that it is because the children have to settle in their new environment. The authors declare that it is crucial that the teachers and the administrators are well prepared for teaching immigrant children and that the school staff have experience and expertise in how they should work with these pupils (Rong and Preissle, 2009:122).

Chong (2005) has completed a study about how Hong Kong teachers handle the teaching of newly arrived children from mainland China. The study was based on semi-structured interviews with ten primary school teachers. Even though the Hong Kong situation differs from the Swedish context, there are important similarities in the impact of teacher attitudes. Chong’s (2005:126-129) conclusion was that it was a challenge for the teachers to teach the pupils from mainland China. The teachers were not prepared for this task because teachers often use teaching methods that are suitable for their target group, which is not newly arrived children. The author claims that the Hong Kong teachers were unsuccessful in looking beyond the pupils’ cultural diversity. Chong (2005:128-129) argues that the study shows that social and cultural differences as a matter of fact affect the teaching of these pupils. Educators should be taught to be more flexible and be able to adapt their teachings regardless of the pupils’ backgrounds.

2.4 Swedish perspectives on teaching immigrant pupils
Lundahl (2012:90-92) maintains that pupils with a foreign background in Sweden may be subject to an unnecessarily difficult language challenge because the English teaching methods are not adapted for these pupils. Observations made by Lundahl (2012:90-92) showed that these kinds of problems also existed in Greenland. In most of the schools, the pupils were Greenlandic and their mother tongue was Greenlandic; the observations suggested that many of the pupils showed a major interest in learning English because they knew that English was crucial in order to benefit as far as possible from higher education (2012:90-92). However, the study of teaching these Greenlandic pupils sheds light on the fact that the teachers used a modern communicative approach, but that most
of the teaching materials were in Danish even if the children mainly had Greenlandic as their native language (2012:90-92).

Lundahl argues (2012:92) that the Swedish media generally mentions teenagers with a foreign background as one unified group when these pupils in reality have different native languages and cultural references. Nevertheless, newly arrived immigrant pupils are not a unified group because some pupils have not previously learnt English whereas some of them have excellent levels of English proficiency (Lundahl, 2012:92-93). Furthermore, as mentioned in the introduction, it is common that pupils who are born in another country are among those who are failing to receive a grade in English when graduating from secondary school (Lundahl, 2012:92). Additionally, pupils who are newly arrived tend to fail English in upper secondary school and are not awarded an upper secondary school leaving certificate. The Swedish English teachers are generally aware of pronunciation problems that Swedish pupils have and can as a result adapt their English teaching (Lundahl, 2012:92-93). People from other countries have other difficulties, which would be a significant teaching aspect to be aware of as an English teacher. These pupils have to learn English through Swedish, which is problematic because many of them have a very low proficiency in Swedish which is a similar situation to that of Greenlandic pupils who had to learn English by using material that was for Danish pupils (Lundahl, 2012:92-93). In considering this, it is crucial to mention that the newly arrived pupils will have problems learning English because most of the English materials are for Swedish children learning English (Lundahl, 2012:92-94)

In another study, Lindblad and Lindblad (1981) investigate pupils who learn English as a third language. The project used questionnaires to find out how English teachers at elementary schools work with immigrant pupils’ English acquisition. The authors mention that the differences and similarities between languages affect the pupils’ ability to learn a new language (Lindblad and Lindblad, 1981:1). The results showed that the pupils’ success in English depends on how long they have been in Sweden (Lindblad and Lindblad, 1981:42-43). The teachers answered that many of the pupils that achieve the goals in English had a high proficiency in Swedish. Further, the teachers mentioned that the pupils need special support to succeed in English, and that problems occur when this support does not exist (Lindblad and Lindblad, 1981:42-43). The informants in this
study responded that they as teachers do not know how they should help pupils with another mother tongue (Lindblad and Lindblad, 1981:42-43). The teachers have no proficiency in the pupils’ mother tongue and do not know the learning transition between their mother tongue and the English language. Lindblad and Lindblad (1981:43) also mentioned that the teachers lack suitable teaching materials to teach English as a third language.

2.5 The Swedish National Agency for Education and immigrants

The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [www]) has produced some material to help and guide teachers and head teachers that will receive newly arrived immigrants. This section will discuss The Swedish National Agency’s instructive guidelines by focusing on three main points, and these are ‘receiving newly arrived pupils’, ‘teaching newly arrived pupils’ and ‘aspects of success’ (Skolverket [www]). The first of the three main points discusses the importance of the pupils' first encounters with Swedish schools, and it is crucial that the school carries out an individual assessment so that the pupil can receive the right education (Skolverket, 2016:20-21). The head teacher decides where the pupil should be placed based on the pupil’s proficiency, and the pupil can be placed in a regular class or in a special class for newly arrived immigrants (Skolverket, 2016:20-23). The Agency (Skolverket, 2016:30) maintains that there is no requirement that a school has to have a special class for newly arrived pupils even if many schools seek to solve the problem by creating these kinds of classes. Furthermore, the Agency (Skolverket, 2016:21-24) comments that it is relevant to:

- evaluate the pupils’ reading and writing ability, and proficiency in Swedish and in other languages
- evaluate the pupils’ knowledge in different subjects, such as concepts, understanding and problem-solving.
- document the pupils’ knowledge
- have a dialogue with the pupils about their educational experience

The Agency (Skolverket, 2016:18) argues that it is significant that the teacher and the head teacher have extensive relevant expertise. The teacher’s role is to be flexible and support the pupil’s individual development in learning a new language and at the same time helping the pupil to accomplish the remainder of the school's goals as stated in the
The Agency (Skolverket [www]) mentions some aspects that are important for the newly arrived pupils’ success in the school, and these aspects are similar to the conditions above relating to the reception and teaching of newly arrived immigrants (Skolverket [www]). It is crucial that the teachers carefully evaluate the pupils’ proficiency in the language and other subjects so that the teachers can adapt their teaching depending on the children’s knowledge (Skolverket [www]). In the end, the goal is that these pupils develop enough proficiency to achieve the common goals in all the subjects or alternatively in the school’s main subjects (Skolverket, 2016:28-30). Furthermore, it is therefore necessary at the beginning of the children’s schooling that their learning situation is taken seriously and that the teachers and the head teacher try to structure their schooling accordingly (Skolverket [www]). Other aspects that are essential are not only motivation, good relationships and high expectations for the pupils (Skolverket [www]). It is also important that the pupil establishes social connections in the school with Swedish pupils and not just with other newly arrived immigrants. The building of relationships with Swedish pupils is extremely important because other adolescents can facilitate the newly arrived pupils’ integration (Skolverket [www]).

3 Method and Material

In this section there will be a description of the method and an explanation of the procedure. The method used in this project is qualitative interviews. These interviews are tools to investigate how teachers at a secondary school deal with newly arrived immigrant pupils. This section will move on to discuss research ethics and limitations and problems of this essay while gathering the data.

3.1 Method

The essay has adopted the approach of a case study. This means that the study is a small scale project with just a few participants, but the case study can bring a more in-depth understanding of the research topic (Dörnyei, 2007:151-152). Dörnyei (2007:152) mentions that there are different kinds of case studies in existence. The essay is mainly related to the ‘intrinsic case study’, which means that the case itself is unique and therefore important to study. This research focuses on the importance of reaching a more qualitative understanding of these three teachers’ perspectives on teaching English to newly arrived pupils.
This essay will mainly make use of the qualitative method because it is the most appropriate method for this type of research. In a qualitative research project, the researcher has to analyse the data in depth and the conclusion is based on the main features of the extensively-studied results (Dörnyei, 2007: 25-26). Denscombe (2007: 367-368) states that the qualitative method is grounded in inductive reasoning, which means that the conclusion is based on the researcher’s experience while analysing the data. In this essay, it is important that the researcher’s conclusions are established in the data and that the researcher’s explanations of the data have to be based on extensively-analysed material. Additionally, a qualitative research method will always come to a stage where the researcher has to interpret and read into the data and this does not mean that the conclusion is undeniable at once, but the author of the study has to be able to process the interpretation. The analysis of the data should be repetitive, which means that the development of theories, concepts and generalizations should be grounded in a process where the data develops and changes (Denscombe, 2007:367-368). This essay will, as mentioned before, use interviews in accordance with the recommendations of Denscombe (2007:367). A qualitative method is the most appropriate if a researcher is using semi-structured interviews as a method. The reason for the adoption of this position is that the researcher has to find and analyse certain patterns in the interviews, which will in the end lead to a conclusion.

It is not always appropriate to carry out interviews as a method in a research because the use of an interview has to be applicable to the study, and Descombe (2007:233) argues that interviews are more appropriate in studies where the subject is more complex and subtle. An interview is preferable in a study where it is relevant to investigate people’s opinions, attitudes, thoughts and experiences (Denscombe, 2007:233). In this essay, interviews will be used in order to meet demands for the incorporation of teacher’s personal experiences and thoughts, as critical aspects in regard to immigrant pupils’ language acquisition. Interviews can be organized differently; for example, some can be structured interviews and some can be semi-structured interviews. The characterization of a semi-structured interview is that these interviews have an interviewer who adopts a guiding role but is at the same time flexible (Denscombe, 2007:234-235). Additionally, the interviewer should start by having prepared questions, and the interviewed person is allowed to answer freely about the topic, and the idea is that the interviewed person can
give a detailed response. It is the structure of semi-structured interview’s that makes it suitable for this essay because the aim of this essay will be easier to complete with this kind of ‘open minded’ method. In this essay, to give the participants the opportunity to develop their answers as much as possible, it was important to ask the interviewed person follow up questions. The interviewer followed up interesting comments made by the participants that were relevant for the purpose of this essay. The semi-structured interview method allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the data, but because of the amassment of data from extended and probing interviews this led to a smaller number of interviewees. In a qualitative study, a smaller number of participants is generally not a problem because the focus is not on the quantitative findings but rather on the qualitative results. The qualitative method recognizes the possibility for the researcher to be subjective (Denscombe, 2007:367-368). The first stage of the interview procedure was to arrange an interview meeting. An interview guide consisting of twelve questions was constructed (see Appendix A). The teachers are from a secondary school in a small town in southern Sweden. The town has three secondary schools where one is an independent school, and this small town is not segregated but has received newly arrived children. The school itself is a small school with 220 pupils and is placed near the city centre, and this secondary school is normally considered as a school with a good reputation.

The interviews were performed in Swedish and were later translated into English. This method was used because the interviewer wanted the teachers to be as comfortable as possible, since most teachers in Sweden are native Swedish speakers. The teachers were interviewed in a small but quiet group activity room. Further, the interviews were recorded with an iPhone, so that it would be possible to listen to them repeatedly, providing the author with a permanent record. Moreover, the interviewer read the questions to participants before the interview but also during the interview. As mentioned previously, the interviewer asked follow-up questions if the participating teacher had an interesting reasoning. However, this means that each of the interviews is unique, as the interviewees’ answers were dissimilar and they were therefore asked different follow-up questions. After 6 weeks, the author of this essay realised that the data analysis required further researching into the pupils’ linguistic backgrounds. Regarding this, it was necessary to ask the teachers some additional questions (see Appendix B). To save time, the teachers were interviewed by telephone and the
interviews were documented by hand. According to Denscombe (2007:367), it is possible to adapt the interview questions during the study process and ask additional questions.

3.2 Material

The material that was used for this essay was three interviews with English teachers at a secondary school in southern Sweden. The table below presents information about the teachers and they will be called by pseudonyms instead of their real names.

Table 1. Informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lars</td>
<td>English/Swedish &amp; Science</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>30-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leila</td>
<td>English/Swedish</td>
<td>31 years</td>
<td>30-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>English/Swedish</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>30-60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Altogether the collected data from the interviews was 139 minutes long. The choice of interviewing regular English teachers and not English teachers who mainly educate newly arrived pupils was grounded in a decision that it would be interesting to investigate how English teachers cope with newly arrived immigrants in their ‘regular’ classes when they also have other pupils to consider in their teaching. The chosen school was mainly selected because of the author’s previous teaching experience in the school and it was also known that the school received newly arrived pupils. At the time of the investigation, three English teachers were actively teaching at the selected school, and all of them participated in the study. Focusing on the views held by teachers that are all employed at the same school provides an opportunity to highlight different perspectives on the same pressing pedagogical issues. The modest number of participants should not be regarded as a weakness, since the study gives a qualitative insight to one specific school’s situation. The teachers were contacted by email whereupon they received information about the aim of the essay, the interview procedure and the ethical concerns. These teachers had a wide range of different experience in teaching of newly arrived immigrant pupils.
3.3 Problems and limitations
This project will now be discussed in terms of its methodological problems and limitations. One specific problem has been the limited number of participants. The intention of this essay was to focus on one school at a secondary level in a particular municipality, but the chosen school is small with only three English teachers working at the time of the study. Nevertheless, it is notable to mention that if this study had had more time, it would have been desirable to interview more teachers at other similar schools and compare these interview results with each other. Another limitation that occurred while working with the result part of the essay was how results of the interviews should be presented in the essay. It is previously known that interviews can be very time consuming and it would have taken up to several days to transcribe the interviews. Because of this, a decision was made not to transcribe but instead summarise the interview answers.

The thematic analysis was based on the research questions and the themes in the analysis emerged from the data through knowledge from the theoretical framework. It took a lot of time to study the sections of the interviews where extra interesting material was found because it was necessary to listen several times.

It is also relevant to criticise the case study approach and the qualitative method in this essay. A weakness in the qualitative method is the study’s generalizability, which is also connected to the case study approach. There are researchers that argue that a qualitative project cannot be generalized because it is generally a small scale study (Dörnyei, 2007:41). The same issue exists in the case study method because it is difficult to generalize results from a study that is based on a few individuals’ experiences (Dörnyei, 2007:153). This type of research also demands a discussion of validity and reliability. Dörnyei (2007:52) mentions research validity which can be broken down into the sub-components of internal validity and external validity. Internal validity means that the researcher has made a proper interpretation of the results, and it is crucial that the researcher presents all the variables that could possibly affect the study. External validity focuses mainly on the generalizability of the project’s findings and if the results would be the same in a different context (Dörnyei, 2007:52).
Reliability is connected to the concept of validity, and it concentrates on the procedural process of the gathering of the data. In this concept, it is important that the researcher is aware of the fact that the procedure is affected by external conditions that could influence the results (Dörnyei, 2007:50). It is possible that external circumstances have affected the procedure and therefore the reliability of this project. One example that could affect this essay’s reliability is the time aspect. The chosen school continues to receive newly arrived children, which means that the results could be different if someone asked the same interview questions in the future. It could also be critical to go back and ask new questions to the participants like the author of this essay has done. However, the time period between the two interviews is considerably short and it is reasonable to assume that not much has changed. If the school has received many new newly arrived children then the participants would not have received them yet because the children are always taught one year in the ‘international class’. The internal validity of this study is affected by the fact that it is risky to investigate the teachers’ opinions about this topic because their personal views are influenced by the social context. The external validity is related to the case study method and the qualitative method. As mentioned before, it is not possible to generalise this study because it is likely that the results could be different if the study was made in another secondary school. Nevertheless, this is an intrinsic case study that does not intend to generalise to a great extent. The focus is instead on this specific case.

3.4 Ethical considerations
According to Dörnyei (2007:64-65) a good researcher has to think of the people that are behind the result, which means that the researcher has to be aware of research ethics impacting on the project. Dörnyei (2007:64-65) states this in the following terms:

Social research—including research in education—concerns people's lives in the social world and therefore it inevitably involves ethical issues. As Punch (2005) points out, such issues are more acute in QUAL than in QUAN approaches because qualitative research often intrudes more into the human private sphere: it is inherently interested in people’s personal views and often targets sensitive or intimate-matters

(Dörnyei, 2007:64-65).
The topic of this essay could in many ways be considered a sensitive matter due to the highly politicized Swedish debate regarding immigration, integration, and the reception of refugees. In the current Swedish political climate, it can be problematic to express opinions and feelings towards questions and problems concerning the subject of immigration. Dörnyei (2007:65) argues that there are some ethical aspects that a researcher has to reflect on when he/she is gathering the data, for example, the amount of shared information. This aspect brings up the fact that the author of this research project has to decide how much of the essay that will be shared with the respondents. This is an important aspect because considerable information could ‘scare’ people off and much information could also make the interviews tendentious (Dörnyei, 2007:65). Nonetheless, it has been important for this essay to give clear information about the research project to the respondents, such as information about the topic and the ethical considerations.

The information aspect is also mentioned by the Swedish Research Council as one of the four main principles. The other three principles are consent, confidentiality and usage (The Swedish Research Council [www]). The consent aspect was fulfilled because all of the participants in the study were adults and were able to decide by themselves if they wanted to take part in this study. Confidentiality is about handling the data and anonymity (The Swedish research council [www.Vr.se]), which is also discussed by Dörnyei (2007:69). It has been crucial that the respondents are anonymous, and these teachers were given a promise that they would be treated anonymously if they participated in this project. The storage of the collected data refers to the fact that recorded data such as sound recordings and videos have been handled with respect so that the participants are not traceable with no open access to the stored digital information (Dörnyei, 2007:68). In the section about usage, the Swedish Research Council (The Swedish Research Council [www.vr.se]) argues that it is important that the results are not used in some other way than the purpose of the research. All these principles have been considered during this study.

4 Results

In this part of the essay, the results will be presented. The participants of the study will be mentioned by their pseudonyms because this makes it easier to follow their individual answers. All of the interview questions will be presented in this section, but
not in the order that they were asked. The structure of the results will be based on the research questions, and the results are divided into four headings that will discuss different themes. The first heading will focus on the interview questions that are related to the first research question. These interview questions will therefore discuss how teachers receive and provide an education for newly arrived pupils. The second heading is based on the second research question that wants to investigate how the teachers are affected by the pupils’ English proficiency and their linguistic backgrounds. The third heading in the results focuses on assessment, adaption and grading. This part of the results is related to both the first and the second research question because it investigates how the teachers are affected by their knowledge in this matter and if their teaching is affected by the pupils’ English proficiency. The final heading discusses the social aspect of learning a language. In this last section of the results, the teachers discuss the relation between the pupils’ English proficiency, prior knowledge in English and socialization. This last theme of the results is mainly based on the second research question. Some of the interview questions may seem like they are not directly linked to the research questions, but they give the reader valuable background information about the teachers’ opinions on teaching newly arrived pupils. Additionally, the answers from the teachers will be summarised, and some of the responses will be explained by a quote.

4.1 The preconditions of receiving and providing an education for newly arrived pupils

1. What kind of resources do you and the school have to receive and teach pupils who are newly arrived in Sweden?

Lars mentioned that the teachers are not well prepared and that the condition for receiving young immigrant pupils is insufficient. Lars said that the teachers do their best and try to resolve all new tasks and problems that involve newly arrived immigrant pupils such as communication difficulties and evaluating their proficiency in English. This participant also answered that he believed that the complications and problems of receiving these pupils were caused by the fact that they generally speak another language and that they have a different cultural background. Lisa was the only respondent that mentioned anything about extra resources from the municipality and
this was only because the school had the responsibility for the International class (special class for newly arrived immigrants). The extra resources were funds that the school could spend on extra support equipment such as iPads. Normally, the pupils are given an iPad in the international class and they are allowed to bring it with them when they come to a ‘regular class’. This teacher said that they sometimes used the iPad to translate and communicate with the pupils. Nonetheless, Lisa also claimed that the school needs better resources:

I would say that the school would need much better pre-conditions and resources to provide the right education for these pupils. In the end, it is the financial factor that determines the resources in the classes, but it would be valuable if we could have one more person in the classroom when we are teaching these pupils. (...) [My translation]

Leila argued that the teachers are not able to do their best work and this was mainly because there are no clear guidelines for teaching newly arrived pupils in English, and this teacher said that she normally works with pupils who are at a secondary school or an upper secondary school level and not with pupils who are learning a completely new language. All of the teachers answered that they considered that the school and the teachers have an adverse situation when it comes to receiving and teaching these pupils. The teachers argue that they needed more resources such as more staff and more information about how they should handle these pupils.

2. Where does the directive come from when it comes to how you should handle these pupils? Is it from the municipality, The Swedish National Agency for Education or some other part?

It was obvious that the teachers were uncertain about where the directives come from. Lars was, for instance, unsure where the top directives came from and could not answer if it was the municipality or the Swedish National Agency for Education who gave the instructions. He said that most of the teachers at the school receive information from the International class, and this teacher said that it was unclear where the teachers should receive the directives from.

Leila mentioned that it was a combination of the school administration and the Agency that decides the directives of teaching newly arrived immigrant pupils. However, this
teacher claimed that the teachers do not receive enough instructions and information about teaching these children and that it seems as if neither of the Agency or the municipality was ready to receive many newly arrived pupils in the schools. Lisa added that it was the head teacher and the municipality who gave orders to the teachers. In addition, all of the teachers answered that the directive came from the international class where the pupils are first taught and the participants also agreed that there was a lack of directives and information.

3. *Do you consider that you receive enough knowledge and information on how you should receive and educate newly arrived pupils in English?*

All of the participants stated that they did not have good knowledge of how teachers should work with these pupils in the subject of English and that they did not receive enough information and training in how they should teach newly arrived immigrant pupils. Generally, the informants answered that every teacher stands alone and that the teachers themselves have to find teaching methods. Lars mentioned that teachers consistently question their working methods regarding these pupils. Moreover, all of the teachers desired a better training in how they should work with newly arrived pupils in their English class and Leila expressed it in this way:

> It would be great if we could be given some knowledge of how we should work with these pupils, such as work methods in different situations and maybe what kind of books that are usable. [My translation]

4. *How much do you know as a teacher about these pupils’ backgrounds?*

This includes aspects such as, why the immigrants came to Sweden, traumatic experiences, family, and socioeconomic background. In general, all of the respondents answered that there are some cases where the background information about a newly arrived pupil is insufficient. Moreover, Lars responded that the teachers do not receive much information about these pupils’ family background or socioeconomic status. If a teacher wants to find out personal facts about a newly arrived pupil, the teacher has to ask the pupils themselves. Leila considered that the teachers lack information about the pupils’ background. According to Leila there exists some form of monitoring of their backgrounds, which includes knowledge about why they have come to Sweden and
their family situation, but the amount of information about the pupils differs. It became clear during the interview with Leila that the teachers are uncertain what they are supposed to do if a pupil has any issues, for example, trauma experiences. Leila explained that the teachers have not received any information about teaching problems that concern newly arrived pupils. Furthermore, both Lisa and Leila mentioned that there exists a record that contains facts about the pupils’ former lives. Nonetheless, Lisa stood out because this respondent claimed that they received enough information about these pupils, which is not in agreement with what the other two teachers considered.

4.2 Newly arrived pupils’ English proficiency and linguistic backgrounds

5. What are the most common mother tongues among these pupils, and how do you work with these pupils based on their mother tongues?

Leila answered that their mother tongues vary. This person said that the school receives pupils that have mother tongues like Romani, Arabic, Dari, and Thai. Lisa and Lars said the same languages as Leila but they also mentioned languages like Bosnian and Serbian. All three of the participants commented that they though that Arabic, Romani and Dari were the most common languages and especially Arabic. The informants explained that the pupils’ L1 did not influence how they work with them in English. All of the teachers said that they do not have enough knowledge on how they should work with these issues. They answered that they basically use the same teaching methods regardless of the newly arrived pupils’ mother tongues.

6. What is your view on newly arrived immigrant pupils’ prior knowledge in English? Are they good, poor or do they vary? And how do you assess these pupils’ English proficiency when they are coming to their new class?

Lars said that their prior knowledge in English often varies, but in some cases, the pupils have a very low level of knowledge. The teacher gives a description of the fact that many of the newly arrived pupils are illiterate. Even if their English proficiency varies, their English knowledge tends to be poor or non-existent. Leila provides a similar answer that these pupils do not generally have a good prior knowledge in English, but that occasional pupils are very good in English. Further, these claims are
also shared with Lisa that also states that their English proficiency depends on where they come from. This teacher mentioned that newly arrived immigrant pupils normally are better at speaking than in the other language skills, which are reading, writing and listening. In addition to Lisa, Lars claimed that their speaking skills are better than the other language skills even if they also have some problems with their oral proficiency in English. Furthermore, Lars said that they lack the ability to read English and that their proficiency is often below average. All of the respondents answered that they use their own method to measure the pupils’ English proficiency and there were no specific tests or similar tools to find out the pupils’ language knowledge. Leila argued that it was really hard to assess these pupils’ English knowledge due to the fact that some are below average. Furthermore, this teacher said that:

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\text{It works fine if a pupil who should be in the ninth grade is in the seventh grade because then the pupil is at least at a secondary level, but the problem is that many of them are at a much lower level and have to work with English material from the fourth grade. [My translation]}
\]

Lars used British Council material and computer applications like Softogram to determine newly arrived pupils’ levels when they came to the regular class. However, these tests did not test their talking and instead the teacher judges the pupils’ speaking skills by trusting in his/her own ability. Moreover, this teacher expressed the view that many of the pupils are eager to learn English more than to learn Swedish. This is because they are not sure if they will stay in Sweden, which makes English more valuable. All three teachers responded that they often receive information about the pupils’ English proficiency from the International class where the pupils start their learning. They also said that they did not have any specifically-written material to use in their assessment of newly arrived pupils’ English knowledge. Lisa thought that this could be the result of not having enough resources for this type of teaching.

4.3 Assessment, adaption and grading

7. How do you assess a pupil’s proficiency in the four language skills? The receptive skills: reading and listening and the productive skills: talking and writing. Do you follow any type of template, for example, CEFR?
Lars and Leila were not particularly familiar with The Common European Framework of Reference (the CEFR) even if they claimed that they had heard of it. Lisa was one of the teachers that had the most experience of the CEFR because this teacher had taken a course where they had discussed the CEFR. However, none of the teachers used the levels of the CEFR or any other template to assess the four language skills. Lars answered similarly to what this person said in question six that there are no common guidelines on how teachers should assess these pupils. All of the teachers responded that they used their own English material to judge the pupils’ language proficiency and that they do not have any definite material that they use on every pupil.

8. In what way do you adapt your English teaching based on the pupil’s test result and language proficiency?

Lars answered that teachers try to do their best to adapt their teaching and the material once they have determined the pupils’ level of English. Leila’s opinion was that it is often good to give clear instructions to these pupils and also to use support equipment such as iPads. The iPad can be useful when the teacher and the pupil have communication problems and can help with the translation. This teacher said that it is preferable not to mention everything that is wrong with their language at once, but instead focus on one prominent error that is in that particular situation. As an example, the teacher said she does not highlight every mistake in a writing task, but instead focuses on a specific language error. The teacher thought this was crucial because an essay that is full of ‘red’ marks could be seen as a failure from a pupil’s perspective. The last interviewed teacher, who was Lisa, said that these pupils are given an easier form of material than the material the rest of the class is working with or material from a lower grade.

9. Do you use any specific supporting material to help the teaching of these pupils?

If so, what type of supporting material?

Many of the teachers said that they normally use iPads and material that are adapted to the person’s English proficiency. Lars mentioned once more the usage of Softogram and the British Council as working material. Both Leila and Lisa said they used material that was at a lower level than secondary school level to teach these pupils. The last two
mentioned teachers also stated that iPads are really good supporting tools to help the teaching of newly arrived pupils because they can be used as a communication resource, for example, apps like SayHi. The iPads were also useful when the pupils needed to write and read, for example, the iPads helped the pupils to translate words and texts from their L1 to English or the other way around.

10. What does the procedure of assessment and grading look like when it comes to these pupils? And if there are any difficulties, which are they?

It seems like most of the respondents did not find it hard to grade these pupils because many of the newly arrived immigrant pupils did not obtain an E as a grade and the teachers have to follow the same grading system as they normally do. Nonetheless, the teachers found it difficult to help the pupils reach an E and the teachers were worried that the pupils’ English grade would affect their ability to gain admission to an upper secondary school. Leila added that the newly arrived pupils generally do not pass their English before leaving for upper secondary school and that the teacher instead gives a written assessment of their English proficiency. Most of the respondents said that they understood that these pupils have to be assessed and graded just like a ‘regular’ pupil. However, Lisa mentioned that it is not entirely fair that a newly arrived pupil should be graded like a ‘normal’ pupil because some of them have not had any opportunities to learn English before coming to Sweden.

4.4 The social aspect of learning a language

11. Does the pupil follow the rest of the class’s English education or do you place the pupil in a small group based on his/her English proficiency? Explain the pros and the cons of the alternatives.

Generally, all of the informants responded that they use a combination of both. Lars answered that the pupil is often given their own studying material, but that he/she occasionally is with the class, for instance if the class is practising speech or watching a movie. Furthermore, this teacher mentioned that the benefit of letting the pupil occasionally work with the rest of the class is that the person has the opportunity to be more integrated in the class. The importance of integrating these pupils in the class was
In what way are the pupils’ English learning experiences affected by their integration. Can you see this when you have followed a pupil during a time?

Generally, the informants responded that they thought that the pupils’ English language learning is influenced by their ongoing integration process. Lars believed that this was the case and that pupils become better in school if they have socialised with Swedish pupils and are integrated into Swedish society outside the school. The teacher thought that a good way to help the pupils to be a part of the class was to put names on seats, so that they do not only sit with other newly arrived immigrant pupils. Additionally, this view on integrating the pupils in the class was shared with Leila and Lisa. Lisa added that it is crucial that the pupils also have the chance to socialise with Swedish teenagers when they are not in the school. Lisa said that:

When they come to the International class, many of them speak a wide range of different languages which makes English as the most usable communication language because many of them have more knowledge in English than in Swedish and because of this, they are more willing to learn English. The pupils know that the English language will help them to make friends. […] I can in some cases be ambivalent because I want them to learn Swedish, but at the same time, as an English teacher I am happy if they speak English in situations other than in the English classroom. [My translation]
This is another aspect of how integration affects newly arrived immigrants’ English learning. The teacher meant that even if they lack oral and written proficiency in English, they are still better in English than in Swedish and because of that the pupils are ‘forced’ to communicate in English, resulting in their English becoming slowly better.

5 Discussion

In this section of the essay, there will be a discussion where the result will be analysed and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework. The structure of the discussion is based on the findings in the results and this section will follow the themes from the results section. It has been difficult to find previous research on teachers’ experiences of receiving and teaching newly arrived children. This makes this study even more important because it aims to highlight aspects of teaching newly arrived pupils.

Nonetheless, the results obtained from the study showed that the respondents considered that the teachers at their school were not fully prepared for this task. Two of three informants said that there was an absence of information on how the school and the school staff should cope with the integration of these pupils into their regular teaching routines. It became clear during the interviews that the participants were unsure where the directives came from because all of them responded differently, and one of the teachers said openly that he/she did not know if the orders came from the municipality or the Agency. It seemed as if the respondents could answer where the individual information came from, but not where the top directives came from.

None of the teachers in the results mentioned anything about any information or guidelines from the Agency. Additionally, it is uncertain if the Agency’s guidelines would help the informants in their teaching because their guidelines are more open and general regarding this subject, and the teacher and the school have to interpret the material by themselves. The Agency (Skolverket 2016:18) also claimed that it is crucial that the teachers have an adequate expertise in receiving newly arrived pupils. This is interesting because most of the interviewed teachers said that they did not receive enough information. This also means that it exists a discrepancy between the Agency guidelines and how the teachers carry out their teaching. Rong and Preissle (2009:121) stated that teachers need training in how to teach these children. If the teachers are well-educated in this matter, they can help immigrant children to succeed in school. Chong
Chong (2005:26-29) argues that the teachers in Hong Kong were not prepared in teaching newly arrived children, and the same conclusion appears to be valid in this case study. Chong (2005:26-29) declares that teachers are educated in teaching a homogeneous group and not pupils with a cultural diversity. In this study, one participant said that he/she considered that the problems of teaching and receiving these pupils were caused by the fact that they normally speak another language and that they have a different cultural background. Learning a language is also associated with a cultural aspect. Lundahl (2012:93) and Rong and Preissle (2009:69-71) state that newly arrived pupils have to not only learn through another second language, but also through a new culture. This means that social problems and other aspects that are related to integration and cultural diversity may affect pupils’ language learning, for example, immigrant pupils who are not integrated in the community find it more problematic to achieve the educational goals. As stated in the previous research (EF [www]), some of these pupils come from a cultural background where they are reluctant to learn English and be a part of western culture, which may affect the pupils’ understanding of English.

The results included a question about what the teachers knew about these pupils’ backgrounds. It was difficult for the teachers to answer this because they considered that they do not receive enough information about their newly arrived pupils. The answers from this question show once more that the teachers had poor preconditions for receiving and teaching these children.

The teachers were asked about their view on the pupils’ prior English knowledge and how they evaluate the pupils’ English proficiency. Furthermore, the Agency (Skolverket 2016:20-21) argues that the pupils’ first period in the school is crucial and that it is important that the school and the teachers evaluate their prior knowledge in the subjects so that they are given the right education. According to these teachers, they did not have any specific guidelines to evaluate the pupils’ prior knowledge in English. Many of the participants in this study answered that they have to trust their own ability when it comes to judging the pupils’ prior English proficiency. It is therefore arguable that the pupils’ English proficiency is not investigated in depth, which affects the newly arrived pupils’ English acquisition. Even if it is part of the teachers’ work, their assessment guidelines are developed for ‘regular’ pupils. It became clear from the teachers that it is
difficult to evaluate newly arrived pupils’ knowledge of English because these children are generally at a lower level than their classmates.

Many of the teachers discussed that most of the newly arrived pupils considered that English was an important language to learn. This could be related to the language’s status as a lingua franca (Mackenzie 2013:2-4). As previously stated, English is highly recognised as a crucial passport when it comes to acceptance in different social situations (Mackenzie 2013:2-4). One of the informants said that some of the newly arrived pupils are reluctant to be taught Swedish and instead prefer English because they have more use of English if they are not allowed to stay in Sweden.

The interviews revealed that the newly arrived pupils mainly used English as the communication language, which could prevent them from having a good level of Swedish proficiency. The Agency states that it is crucial that newly arrived pupils learn Swedish and the focus should therefore be on learning this language (Skolverket [www]). Lisa was ambivalent towards this fact because this teacher argued that it was understandable that the focus was on the pupils’ Swedish acquisition, but at the same time, this teacher responded that it was good from an English teacher’s perspective that these pupils focus on their English acquisition. Some of the respondents answered that a great number of the newly arrived pupils have some prior knowledge in English regardless of what proficiency they have, which is not comparable to Swedish, a language which most of the newly arrived pupils have no previous knowledge of.

In this study, the teachers were asked about the newly arrived pupils’ mother tongues. The interviewees stated that many pupils come from countries where languages, such as Arabic, Dari, Romani and Thai are spoken. The teachers said that Arabic was the most common spoken language by the newly arrived pupils. The results are not surprising, because according to the Swedish Migration Board 2015, people largely came from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Arabic is the official language in Iraq and in Syria. These countries belong to the Middle East and North Africa region where the report from EF (EF[www]) showed that this region has a very low level of English knowledge. The report mentioned that this could be an effect of that many children learn English later in life and that their English language teaching may not be the most optimal. Jessner (2006:2-4) mentions that countries and regions have different relations to the English language. Countries in northern Europe, for example Sweden, use English
frequently and it is almost learned as a second language. It is showed in the EF’s
statistics (EF [www]) that Sweden has a very high English proficiency. Many countries
in the Middle East and North Africa have a very low English proficiency. Even if
languages such as Dari and Arabic were the most common spoken languages by the
children, the teachers answered that the languages vary. The results showed that the
teachers used a more general language learning methods.

The teachers also mentioned that they did not adapt their teaching based on the pupils’
mother tongue, because they have no knowledge in how they should do this adaption.
Previous research (Lindblad and Lindblad, 1981:42-43) on this topic also suggested that
teachers found it difficult to teach pupils with another mother tongue because the
teachers considered that they have no knowledge in the learning transition between the
pupils’ mother tongue and the English language. Lundahl (2012:91-93) states that
newly arrived pupils’ difficulties to succeed in English are affected by the fact that the
teachers are mainly taught to recognize Swedish learners’ errors and pronunciation
problems, and not errors made by pupils from other countries.

Nevertheless, some researchers suggest that it is easier to learn a third language if the
language resembles the learner’s other languages (De Angelis 2007:23). Swedish and
English are both Germanic languages and they have some similarities like word order
(Falk and Bardel, 2010: 188). This shows that it could be valuable for the newly arrived
pupils’ English proficiency to have a high proficiency in Swedish. Another beneficial
aspect of learning Swedish as a second language and English as a third language is that
learners who have already been taught a second language in a formal setting can be
familiar with the process of learning a language (Falk and Bardel, 2010:192). Lindblad
and Lindblad (1981:42-43) stated that their study concluded that immigrant pupils who
had a high proficiency in Swedish also had a success in their English acquisition. Based
on this study, it seems that the pupils’ second and third language learning are related to
each other. As mentioned by Lisa, the teachers should focus on the pupils’ Swedish
proficiency, but the teachers answered that learning English has a beneficial influence
on these pupils’ integration and therefore also their Swedish acquisition.

A significant part of the essay’s purpose was to investigate how the teachers adapted
their teaching depending on the child’s English level but also what kinds of supporting
materials that they used. Generally, the results informed that most of the teachers considered that it was difficult to find appropriate teaching material and adapt their teaching to newly arrived pupils. This was an effect of the fact that many newly arrived pupils had a low English proficiency, which made it difficult to adapt the teaching. Moreover, Lundahl (2012:93) and Lindblad and Lindblad (1981:43) argue that a critical problem is that the teaching material is not constructed for newly arrived pupils. The conditions resemble those in Lundahl’s study on how Greenlandic children were taught in English through the medium of Danish, which was not their native language. He claims that the English teaching material focuses on teaching Swedish children and this focus makes it difficult for newly arrived pupils who have in some cases lower proficiency in Swedish than in English (Lundahl, 2012:91). This is related to the aspect of learning a third language and CLI. De Angelis (2007:25) and Jessner (2006:14) argue that learners’ ability to learn a third language is affected by their prior knowledge in the language learning process. It is plausible that the pupils’ different mother tongues and their Swedish proficiency affect their acquisition in the third language. Jessner (2006:24) mentions that learners that have a lower proficiency in their L2 transfer more linguistic aspects from their L1 to their L3. The newly arrived pupils have in some cases not reached a high level in their Swedish acquisition, which means that it could mean that they transfer more from their L1. The results showed that the consequences of not having suitable teaching material are that the teachers have to use more general teaching methods and materials.

The teachers were also asked about assessment and grading. The teachers answered that many of these children do not obtain an E in English (minimal pass in English). Lundahl (2012:91) states that it is common that newly arrived pupils will not receive a grade in English before they leave for upper secondary school. Furthermore, Lundahl (2012:91-91) claims that not all of these pupils in Sweden are weak or fail to achieve an E, which was also acknowledged by the teachers who expressed that some of the children are good at English, but that it depends on where the pupils come from.

The teachers were asked in what way the newly arrived pupils’ English acquisition was connected to their socialization and if the pupils follow the rest of the class. Leila responded that the newly arrived children work with their own material but that they occasionally follow the rest of the class. All of the teachers said that they considered
that it was important that the pupils were integrated with rest of the class. The teachers answered that they had made observations that implied that integration affected these pupils' language learning. The participants in the result said that social contacts with other pupils made these pupils more talkative and they used more English during the lessons. This aspect is discussed by the Agency. The Agency argues (Skolverket [www]) that integration and socialization are crucial for the newly arrived pupils’ educational achievements.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this case study was to investigate how English teachers at a chosen secondary school in southern Sweden deal with the growing number of newly arrived immigrant pupils in their school. One main point of the aim was to study how the teachers cope with the pedagogical and language challenges of teaching newly arrived immigrants: for instance, if there occurred any teaching or learning difficulties. The results of this project showed that there existed both teaching and learning situations that were complicated when it came to receiving and teaching newly arrived pupils. An overall picture was that the teachers did not obtain enough information on how they should receive and teach these pupils, which affected the pedagogical and the language challenges of educating newly arrived pupils. Most of the teachers were not aware of the guidelines from the Swedish National Agency for Education, and the lack of directives influenced the teaching of these pupils because the teachers were not fully confident in what methods that they should use. The results showed that the pupils’ mother tongues did not affect the teachers’ English teaching, because they had no training in this. The informants considered that it was difficult to adapt their teaching to pupils that lack proficiency in both Swedish and in English. Previous research has mentioned that learning a third language can be positive affected by learning a second language. This means that immigrant pupils who learn Swedish may have a bigger chance to succeed in their English acquisition.

Furthermore, the results suggested that it was common that these pupils did not receive a grade in English, as a result of their lower levels of English proficiency. This could be explained by previous research that argued that the teaching material and methods are not adapted for newly arrived pupils. The respondents in the study also claimed that they thought that social contact and interaction with Swedish adolescents could affect
their integration, which could also positively benefit their English acquisition. The investigation of the aim of the essay has essentially been completed, as the study revealed the existence of didactic challenges for the teachers at the secondary school when it came to teaching newly arrived pupils. The essay has aimed to only focus on one specific school and qualitative findings. Considering this, the conclusion of this essay cannot be generalised because this is as mentioned a case study and a small-scale project. The study highlights the challenges faced by these specific teachers. However, in regard to previous research, it does not appear overly presumptuous to assume that the circumstances are not wholly unique to this specific context. In future research it would be interesting to study more teachers at other secondary schools, and compare the teachers’ answers. Alternatively, a study could be carried out that investigates the perspective of the newly arrived pupils, and what experiences, emotions and thoughts that they have about learning English as a second language in Sweden.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guide

1. Vilka förutsättningar har du och skolan för att kunna ta emot och undervisa elever som är relativt nyanlända i Sverige?

2. Var ifrån kommer direktiven om hur ni ska hantera dessa elever, är det skolledningen, skolverket eller någon annan part?

3. Hur mycket får du som lärare veta om elevernas bakgrund så som trauman, varför de har kommit till Sverige, familj och socioekonomisk bakgrund osv?

4. Anser du att du får tillräckligt mycket kunskap och information om hur ni ska ta emot och undervisa nyanlända elever i Engelska?

5. Vad är din uppfattning kring nyanlända elevers förkunskaper i Engelska? Är de goda, dåliga eller varier de?

6. Hur bedömer ni elevernas Engelska kunskap när de anländer till sin nya klass?

7. Hur bedömer ni en elevs kunskaper så som de fyra språkfärdigheterna, skriva, prata, läsa och lyssna? Har ni någon form av mall som ni följer till exempel, CEFR?

8. På vilket sätt anpassar du Engelska undervisningen efter resultatet och elevens förutsättningar?


10. Hur ser bedömningen och betygsättningen ut när det kommer till dessa elever? och om det finns svårigheter kring detta hur uttrycker sig det?
11. Använder du något speciellt typ av hjälpmedel för att lättare kunna undervisa dessa elever, i sådana fall vilket typ av hjälpmedel?

12. Hur påverkas elevernas Engelska av deras pågående integration är detta något som du kan se när du har följt en elev under en tid?
Appendix B: Additional questions

1. Vilka modersmål är de mest vanligaste hos dina nylanlända elever?

2. På vilket sätt anpassar du din engelska undervisning till deras modersmål?
Appendix C: Interview guide in English

1. What kind of resources do you and the school have to receive and teach pupils who are newly arrived in Sweden?

2. Where does the directive come from when it comes to how you should handle these pupils? Is it from the municipality, The Swedish National Agency for Education or some other part?

3. How much do you know as a teacher about these pupils’ backgrounds?

4. Do you consider that you receive enough knowledge and information on how you should receive and educate newly arrived pupils in English?

5. What is your view on newly arrived immigrant pupils’ prior knowledge in English? Are they good, poor or do they vary?

6. How do you assess these pupils’ English proficiency when they are coming to their new class?

7. How do you assess a pupil’s proficiency in the four language skills? The receptive skills: reading and listening and the productive skills: talking and writing. Do you follow any type of template, for example, CEFR?

8. In what way do you adapt your English teaching based on the pupil’s test result and language proficiency?

9. Does the pupil follow the rest of the class’s English education or do you place the pupil in a small group based on his/her English proficiency? Explain the pros and the cons of the alternatives.

10. What does the procedure of assessment and grading look like when it comes to these pupils? And if there are any difficulties, which are they?

11. Do you use any specific supporting material to help the teaching of these pupils? If so, what type of supporting material?

12. In what way are the pupils’ English learning experiences affected by their integration. Can you see this when you have followed a pupil during a time?

Additional questions

13. What are the most common mother tongues among these pupils?

14. How do you work with these pupils based on their mother tongues?