Independent degree project

The Speaking Silence

A qualitative study of how Swedish teachers meet and handle the challenges of speaking anxiety among their students in English language education.

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Semester: Spring 2018
Subject: English
Level: Advanced
Course code: 4ENÄ2E
Abstract

Being able to communicate, interact and speak your mind in our time is considered one of the most essential proficiencies, especially in English which is accepted as a lingua franca. The most frequently used word in the Swedish course syllabuses for English is communication. Although there is an instant occurring communication in a classroom, some students stay silent since they fear to speak, they fear to fail and their way of preventing that from happening is to stay silent. In order to assess students language proficiencies, students must in some way demonstrate and show their knowledge to the teacher, a procedure that in some cases can be very demanding and difficult for students who suffer from speaking anxiety. The present study aimed to investigate how Swedish teachers meet and handle speaking anxiety among Swedish upper secondary students in English language education. The study was conducted through a qualitative method and semi structured interviews among four Swedish teachers. The gathered data was analyzed by thematic content analysis and resulted in three main categories, anxiety, the role of the teacher and teaching strategies. The study showed that the numbers of students suffering from speaking anxiety in Swedish upper secondary schools were in two out of four cases much higher than previous research. The study also showed that speaking anxiety has an impact on both students’ educational progress and in teaching aspects where teachers in some cases have to re-plan their planning and teaching material in order to help all students to reach the teaching goals.

Keywords
Speaking anxiety; Performance anxiety; English as a foreign language

Thanks
First and foremost the author would like to express sincere gratitude to the teachers who generously took their time to participate in the study despite heavy workload and shortage of time, as well as to my supervisor, Špela Mežek, for her great patience, her time and invaluable help and support along the way. The study would not be able to be carried out without them. Thank you.
# Content

1. **Introduction**  
   1.1 Research questions  

2. **Theoretical framework**  
   2.1 The Affective Filter Hypothesis and Anxiety  
   2.2 Speaking anxiety  
   2.3 Performance anxiety  
   2.4 Individual differences  
   2.5 The role of the teacher  
   2.6 Communicative language teaching  

3. **Method**  
   3.1 Participants  
   3.2 Instrument  
   3.2 Procedure  
   3.3 Analysis  
   3.4 Ethical considerations  
   3.5 Validity  
   3.6 Reliability  
   4.1 Anxiety  
   4.1.1 The teachers’ definition of anxiety  
   4.1.2 Speaking anxiety  
   4.1.3 Causal factors of speaking anxiety  
   4.2 The role of the teacher  
   4.3 Teaching strategies  

5. **Discussion**  
   5.1 Second language learning and anxiety  
   5.2 To handle and teach students suffering from speaking anxiety  

6. **Conclusion**  

References  

Appendix 1
1. Introduction

Language education has undergone a revolutionary development and transformation during the last century. From the grammar-translation method, which focuses on the structure of language, to today’s communicative approach which is first and foremost prioritizing the ability to communicate in different social contexts (Nagaraj, 1996). The English language is nowadays accepted of being a lingua franca (Jenkins, Baker & Dewey, 2017), and has never been as influential and easily accessible as today. Our everyday life is, in one way or another, connected to the English language in form of media and social contexts such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, all which continuously allow us to read and listen to spoken English. Moreover, online games have in a relatively short period of time become a cultural phenomenon which engages millions of members all over the world in different communities (Crawford, Gosling & Light, 2011). Although various kinds of virtual environments and social contexts online constitute an infinite possibility to develop language proficiency, the language classroom is the main environment where students acquire language with the input of a teacher. However, many students experience interaction in another language (L2) unpleasant, some even develop fear of speaking and speaking anxiety in public and in class. In order to be assessed within these areas, students have to acquire and develop language proficiency within production and interaction, and both are expected to be used in different situations and purposes such as commenting, arguing and reasoning (Skolverket, 2011).

Several aspects can be argued to contribute to struggles concerning language acquisition among language learners. One of Krashen’s (1982) most well-known theory concerning second language acquisition is the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which includes three different variables, motivation, self-consciousness and anxiety. Krashen (1982) argues that these three variables affect language learners in different ways. Learners who are motivated to learn a second language, tend to seek input which develops their current level of knowledge. Learners who have high level of self-consciousness also tend to learn a second language better. Lastly learners with low level of anxiety both in classroom situations and personally tend to be most
successful language learners (Krashen, 1982). Similarly to Krashen (1982), Horwits (1986) claims that foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) is connected to performance, and that some students believe that nothing should be said in a foreign language until it is uttered in perfection. Additionally Horwits (1986) claims that foreign language speaking anxiety can be experienced in such intense manner that students skip class in order to avoid it. Moreover, Horwitz (1986) put emphasis on communication apprehension and claims that people who experience speaking anxiety in a foreign language, do so partly due to the awareness that they most likely will have trouble understanding others in an interaction, and that they will have trouble making themselves understood. This knowledge can cause an otherwise talkative person to stay silent in a language learning situation (Horwits, 1986).

Previous studies have investigated speaking anxiety among second language learners within classrooms (Horwits, Horwits & Cope, 1986). Studies have also investigated in-depth analysis of different kinds of anxiety connected to oral production (Bergström, 2017), anxiety connected to other aspect such as gender and performance (Ekström, 2013) and studies considering language anxiety among students of different ages and nationalities have also been conducted (Landström, 2015; Landström, 2017). Although several studies have been conducted within the area of speaking anxiety and its impact on oral production, few have been focusing on teachers’ perspectives of the matter. Many teachers find it difficult to assess students’ oral proficiency since, as described above, many students suffer from anxiety when it comes to speaking in front of- or to others. It is therefore important to elucidate the complex situation where the expected demands within language proficiency, meet the reality among second language learners who suffer from speaking anxiety. This study will therefore contribute to the area of research, by illuminating the perspective of Swedish teachers who stand before the challenges of speaking anxiety among Swedish upper secondary students in English language education.

1.1 Research questions

The aim of this study is to investigate how Swedish teachers meet and handle the challenges of speaking anxiety among their students in English language education. This will be carried out by a qualitative research method based on interviews among
four Swedish upper secondary school teachers. Following research question will be answered:

1. What kind of anxiety do teachers experience among students in the English (L2) language classroom?
2. How do teachers handle speaking anxiety in English language education?
3. How do Swedish teachers experience their students to be affected by a communicative approach?
4. How does speaking anxiety affect the language teaching?

2. Theoretical framework

Previous research relevant to the study will hereafter be presented i.e. The Affective Filter Hypothesis, anxiety, Speaking anxiety, Performance anxiety, Individual differences, the Role of the teacher, Communicative language teaching, Second language teaching and Assessing oral proficiency.

2.1 The Affective Filter Hypothesis and Anxiety

The Affective Filter Hypothesis concerns the relationship between second language acquisition and different affective variables, which have an impact on second language acquisition due to the variables strength or level (Krashen, 1982). Krashen (1982) claims that there are three main categories of affective variables, motivation, self-consciousness and anxiety. Students with high motivation is claimed to acquire a second language better generally compared to students with low motivation. Students with low levels of anxiety also tend to acquire a second language better than students with high levels of anxiety (Krashen, 1982). Du (2009) explains Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis further and claims that students with god self-confidence dare to use a foreign language to a larger extent in communication, and therefore gain more than students with low self-consciousness. Students with low self-consciousness tend to be reluctant to use and communicate in a foreign language, and therefore loses opportunities to practice because they fear to fail and to make mistakes (Du, 2009). Du (2009) claims that performance and anxiety correlates and presents three types of anxiety in foreign language classrooms. Communication apprehension is described by
Du (2009) as follows, “individual level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (Du, 2009:163). Furthermore, Du (2009) argues that students might both have the ability and willingness to communicate but they simply feel too anxious to speak. Test anxiety concerns in short distress that have been experienced in connection to an assessment of some kind, to such extent that it has caused a student to perform poorly (Du, 2009). Students who have experienced this kind of distress might develop anticipatory anxiety. Other examples of factors contributing to test anxiety are fear of failure, perfectionism and lack of confidence (Du, 2009). At last, Du (2009) claims that fear of negative evaluation affects a learner when he or she experiences him/herself unable to make a proper socially impression. The fear of negative evaluation has also proven to act a causal effect in speaking anxiety (Du, 2009).

To experience anxiety is something that most human beings experience occasionally in life in one way or another. Holt et. al (2012) defines anxiety as being “a state of tension and apprehension that is a natural response to a threat” (2012:660). Holt et. al (2012) refers to four different components of response symptoms connected to an anxious state. Each symptom contains different characteristics. Emotional symptoms concern feelings of tension and apprehension. Cognitive symptoms concern apprehension and thoughts that are related to an inability to cope in a situation. Physiological symptoms concern increased heart rate, tension of muscles and other autonomic arousal symptoms such as nausea and dry mouth. Lastly, behavioral symptoms which affects a person through an avoidance of a feared situation, decreased task performance and an increased startle response (Holt et. al, 2012). Anxiety in this form- an occasional experience that decreases and disappears is innocuous, thus it might be unpleasant to experience.

2.2 Speaking anxiety
Speaking anxiety concerns fear connected to speaking in front of others in different contexts and situations (Sandin, 2017). According to Sandin (2017), the cause of speaking anxiety can be divided into two main categories. The social (environmental) aspect concerns influences affecting us in our surroundings and the biological aspect
concerns heritage. One aspect that affect us socially is the fact that human beings learn by and through others in social contexts, consciously or unconsciously (2017). If a student presents something in class and fails due to language or content within the task and gets laughed at by the others, that might affect that person in such way that he or she develops a fear of presenting something in front of a group of people again since he or she does not want to experience that situation once again. Sandin (2017) also claims that speaking anxiety can origin in a child’s early years due to parents’ behavior in terms of criticism of a child’s speech.

Biological aspects concern our heritage and Sandin (2017) argues that biochemical factors can contribute to a person’s propensity to develop anxiety. Sandin (2017) claims that serotonin is one biochemical substance in the brain which in low levels, can contribute to the development of anxiety. Another biological aspect mentioned and discussed by Sandin (2017) concerning speaking anxiety is personal traits in terms of introvert and extrovert. An introvert person is characterized as silent and lonely, and an extrovert person can be described as the opposite, socially competent and outgoing. An extrovert person likes to socialize with others, and an introvert person appreciates to be alone (Sandin, 2017).

Sandin (2017) divides the symptoms of speaking anxiety into three different categories, physiological, cognitive and emotional symptoms, which are all very similar to the four categories Holt et. al (2012) divided symptoms of anxiety into. Physiological symptoms concern breathing, pulse and sweating, cognitive aspects concern a person’s thoughts towards something and how we perceive ourselves. At last, emotional aspects concern how we feel about something and how a situation or someone makes us feel.

Speaking anxiety has been discussed and described by other researchers as well, and in addition to Sandin’s (2017) definition and description of speaking anxiety, Ayres and Hopf (1993) describe the feature in a similar way. Ayres and Hopf (1993) describe the term public speaking anxiety as a state implicating three sub-categories similarly to Holt et. al, (2012) cognitive, behavioral and affective. The cognitive aspect considers a person’s preconceived thoughts about a situation where a speech is expected to be delivered. In order to reduce speaking anxiety in these believes, thoughts about the speaking situation have to be changed to create a different mindset,
which in turn will reduce the emergence of the anxiety. A behavioral viewpoint of speaking anxiety would argue that the anxiety is founded and caused by a person’s deficient speaking skills. Accordingly, in order to decrease the level of anxiety, the person must upgrade his/her speaking skills to reduce the anxiety. Lastly, an affective theorist would claim that speaking anxiety derives from the apprehension that delivering a speech would include aversive consequences (Holt et. al, 2012). However, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) claim that language anxiety is the kind of anxiety most associated within performance in a second language, and can be defined with apprehension and tension associated with contexts concerning second language. Accordingly, Harmer (2007) claims that students are reluctant to speak in front of others because they worry that their speaking will not be good enough, which could implicate embarrassment and loss of face.

### 2.3 Performance anxiety

Performance anxiety is often connected to expectations and a person who is experiencing performance anxiety is often afraid that he or she will not be able to live up to others’, or his/her own expectations. There is moreover often a fear of failing a task or a presentation in school and lastly, there might be an intense fear of being put in a situation where one is to be judged, which could lead to a failure, that in turn could be seen as proof that one is not good enough (www[bup.se]). However, just because a person is experiencing or suffering from performance anxiety, it does not mean that, that he or she will not perform well. Performance anxiety is connected to a sense of feeling and the valuation of one’s own ability to perform. A person who suffers from this kind of anxiety often has high demands and expectations of him/herself and is prone to thresh negative aspects instead of positive (www[bup.se]). However, performance anxiety does not always or merely have negative implications. It can actually affect a person in a positive way too, since one tend to get even more focused and well-prepared if one is anxious that one will not succeed. Symptoms that characterizes performance anxiety can be divided into psychological and physiological symptoms. Physiological symptoms are similar to the ones experienced in an anxious state described by Holt et. al (2012) and in speaking anxiety by Sandin (2017) above, increased heart rate, sweating, shivering, nausea and short of breath. Psychological
symptoms- or characteristics of performance anxiety affects a person in various ways before, during- and after a performance. Exaggerated negative thoughts and the fear of failing tend to influence prior to a performance. High expectations tend to trigger the anxiety before and during a performance and this can lead to many fearful ideas of the outcome. A person suffering of performance anxiety, also tends to focus mainly and merely on negative aspects after the performance. Anxious thoughts of what others thought about one’s performance tend to affect the person a long time after the actual performance. The psychological effect can also have such strong impact on a person, so that he or she avoids demanding situations entirely, which in turn can constitute an even larger problem where he or she gets restrained in everyday life situations (www[bup.se]).

Speaking anxiety and performance anxiety are quite similar concerning symptoms and affection. However, current study showed that the two anxious states could be experienced and seen among students as entity or apart. Performance anxiety was experienced by students who necessarily did not suffer from speaking anxiety and vice versa.

2.4 Individual differences

Many studies have been conducted within the area of second language acquisition (SLA). One of the most investigated areas in SLA concerns individual differences (ID) among language learners. Individual differences can be described as specific attributes or variables that create an uniqueness in a person. Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) claim that motivation is considered being one (of several) main factor which have been proven to contribute to success in language learning. Moreover, Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) describes motivation as follows,

   [...] motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it. (2003:614)

Motivation is considered an affective characteristic that can influence an individual in a learning process in terms of attitude (Dörnyei, 2009). The outcome of a learning
process can in some cases be dependent on the learner’s attitude and behavior towards the task or content (2009). Other characteristics that affect language learners are self-esteem and self-confidence (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). Further research in the area of anxiety connected to language learning conducted by Simsek and Dörnyei (2017), shows that another characteristic (among several) that affects language learners is the individual’s self-image. Willingness to communicate (WTC) is closely connected to both motivation and self-image since the concept concerns an individual’s willingness to communicate in second language (Dörneyi & Skehan, 2003). In addition, MacIntyre (2007) defines and describe ‘willingness to communicate’, as whether an individual is mentally prepared and ready to communicate in a second language when an opportunity is given.

2.5 The role of the teacher

A teacher’s role in the classroom is complex and versatile. The teacher is the one acting prompter when students get lost or loose fluency. The teacher can also be a participant, working together with the students in tasks or discussions. On the contrary from being one of the students, the teacher also acts a controller and a leader when he or she explains something or gives instructions prior to a task (Harmer, 2007). Aspelin (2010) claims that the teacher should first and foremost be seen as a tutor and fellow being who is responsible for students’ development. However, in order to be responsible for the students’ development, the teacher must be aware of the students’ different personal requirements.

In order to gather information from the students of how to best meet and handle the challenges of speaking anxiety, Sandin (2017) claims that the teacher can ask the students to write down what they consider fearful in terms of speaking. Sandin (2017) claims that students suffering from speaking anxiety have to practice speaking in order to handle and process their fear. Moreover, Sandin (2017) argues that there are plenty of possibilities for students to practice speaking and thereby handle and processing their fear of speaking in school. However, the students must first and foremost want to work with their fear in order to succeed. Sandin (2017) claims that teachers with nothing but good intentions handle speaking anxiety in a way that unfortunately have an opposite effect, by letting students who fear presentations in
front of class, present their work solely in front of the teacher instead of in front of class. This procedure is contradictory to what the student really needs which is to practice speaking in front of others. The indirect message that is sent by letting the student perform solely in front of the teacher verifies the students own perception about that he or she is unable or not proficient enough to perform in front of others. Sandin (2017) argues that a student suffering from speaking anxiety should be performing in front of a couple of friends rather than solely in front of the teacher. Performing in front of others, if so few, allows the student to practice which will enhance their speaking ability. Moreover, Sandin (2017) puts emphasis on the sense of safeness in a learning environment in order for the students to dare expose themselves to their fear. Furthermore, Sandin (2017) gives a concrete example of how a teacher can help students who suffer from speaking anxiety processing their fear. One way is to hand out tasks to students who suffer from speaking anxiety and step by step increase the level of difficulty with aim of slowly challenging the students so that they can succeed and advance. Finally, Sandin (2017) put emphasis on the importance of being sensitive as a teacher and adapt tasks and assignments appropriately in order to meet students’ personal requirements.

2.6 Communicative language teaching

The word *communication* is a repeatedly used concept in the Swedish syllabus for English (Skolverket, 2011). Accordingly, the Swedish syllabuses for English are vastly influenced by *communicative language teaching* (CLT). CLT focuses both on the structural form of a language, but foremost on the functional form of language in terms of communicative ability, which can be seen coequal to the concept of oral proficiency (Littlewood, 1981). Despite the fact that many students suffer from speaking anxiety, the European Commission survey “a European Survey on Language Competence (Europe Commission, 2012) test results show that Swedish students in general are very proficient in terms of oral proficiency.

Language education has undergone a tremendous technological development and transformation during the last three decades. Teaching methodologies and strategies have also evolved along with the technological development and emphasis has been put in different linguistic aspects. According to Swan (2016) language
teaching is too undergoing a paradigm shift in terms of practice where older methods such as traditional grammar-based instruction and pattern-drilling receives heavy criticism. The criticism claim the older methods of being outdated and ineffective (Swan, 2016).

Language teaching in Sweden is influenced by a communicative approach. Littlewood (1981) stresses the importance in communicative language teaching (CLT) to put emphasis on learner’s development of communicative proficiency. Moreover, Littlewood (1981) claims that it is important for language learners, not only to know the form of a language, but also the function of a language and how it can be used in different social purposes. In order to be able to assess oral proficiency according to the Swedish syllabus for English 5- grade E, students must achieve as follows;

In oral and written interaction in various, and more formal contexts, students can express themselves clearly and with some fluency and some adaptation to purpose, recipient and situation. In addition, students can choose and use essentially functional strategies which to some extent solve problems and improve their interaction. (Skolverket, 2011)

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is a well-established approach used in different course levels and ages (Skolverket, 2011). The Swedish National Agency for Education (Swe. Skolverket), too puts large emphasis on communication for different purposes such as arguing and commenting (Skolverket, 2011). The Swedish syllabus for English is in turn heavily influenced by The Common European Framework of Reference (the CEFR) which is pervaded by a communicative approach, where oral production and interaction constitute the leading factors. In summation, oral production and interaction can be claimed to be major aspects in English as a second language in Sweden.

3 Method
In this section the method and material of the present study will be presented in following order, participants, instrument, procedure, analysis, ethical considerations, validity and reliability.
3.1 Participants

Five teachers were asked to participate in the study and were all selected by predetermined criteria in terms of being authorized, educated active working upper secondary teachers in Sweden, teaching English as one of their subjects. All the teachers work in urban, large upper secondary schools. Three of the teachers work in schools in south Sweden and one in a city in the middle of Sweden. The study did not look for a special range of age among the participants, although it aimed of finding a variety in age if possible. The participating teachers were all familiar to the author of the study. This made the study possible to conduct since the study was planned in the time of year when teachers are under a heavy workload and a lot of pressure. Five teachers were contacted prior to the study. One was not able to participate, however the collected data from the other four participating teachers was considered enough in order to establish a reliable result. Nevertheless, having a couple of more participants could be advantageous considering the aim of creating an even more dynamic and multifaceted result as possible.

All participants were given the information that they would participate anonymously in the study and that they would get pseudonyms which would follow them from the interview and throughout the process of analysis and written material. The author decided to use teacher 1, 2, 3 and 4 simply to refer to their profession which was relevant to the study. Hereafter follows a short presentation of the participating teachers in their pseudonyms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Swedish and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>English and History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>Six months</td>
<td>Biology and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Swedish and English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Instrument

The present study was conducted through a qualitative method and interviews in order to put focus on the participating teachers’ experience and how they meet the challenges of students’ speaking anxiety in English education. Furthermore, in order to create an as versatile and dynamic depiction of the matter as possible, a semi structured interview was used, founded on an interviewguide with predetermined questions (see Appendix 1). A semi structured interview also allows the interviewer to create additional questions during the interview. This enables the interviewer to receive even more detailed and valuable information which in turn can be beneficial for the purpose of the study (Runswick-Cole, 2011). The interviewguide was tested in one pilot study by an external teacher, in order to find possible weaknesses among the predetermined questions and to see the guide’s ability to provide the study with relevant information. The pilot study did not result in any modification of questions, however a few questions were added in order to provide the study with even more valuable information. The interviewguide was written and used in Swedish but the used citations within the result section were carefully translated into English.

Several important aspects were considered carefully concerning how to carry out a good interview. Denscombe (2016) puts emphasis on different aspects such as, the representation of oneself as an interviewer and different interviewing skills. Denscombe (2016) claims that the interviewer’s representation of him/herself is important because of the impact that an interviewer automatically has since he/she leads the conversation.

A good interviewer is neutral both in terms of appearance considering clothing and in attitude and also in terms of the content of the interview. Furthermore skills of interviewing are just as important as how an interviewer approaches him/herself. A good interviewer ought to be perceptive and sensitive of the informant’s different emotional states during the interview (Denscombe, 2016). In order to bring out the best and most detailed information, it is important to empathize with the informant and ask the right questions at the right time. Another aspect or skill as Denscombe (2016) refers to is the importance to work with silence. Silence during an interview
can indicate that the informant needs time for reflection and should therefore not be forced to answer, since silence in this matter can compose a great resource to the material. Other important skills that Denscombe (2016) points out are control and the ability to follow-up relevant content.

One of the largest advantages of interviewing is that the interviewer is constantly able to ensure him/herself that he or she has understood the informant correctly, by asking or summarizing what the informant has said, the interviewer is in control. The interviewer can bring forth important information by “follow-ups”. This simply means that the interviewer pays attention to details and notices possible inconsistencies in an utterance, which can be explained or further investigated when noticed. At last, an aspect that was carefully considered was to make sure that the informant was able to add any optional information to the study according to their own will, one of the last questions was therefore formulated in a way that encouraged the informant to describe if there was anything he/she felt had been missed out or if he/she had something else important to add to an already discussed question. This resulted in many interesting experiences and important aspects considering how to meet and handle the challenges of speaking anxiety.

### 3.2 Procedure

The study aimed to investigate how Swedish teachers experience and meet the challenges of speaking anxiety among Swedish upper secondary students in English language education. The teachers were contacted via email shortly after establishing aim and purpose of the study. In order to be as flexible as possible and to meet the fact that all teachers are under a lot of pressure and heavy workload during this time of year (spring), the teachers were given the opportunity to participate in an interview either online via Skype, or somewhere else “in real life” suitable for them. Date and time was also set after their will. Two interviews were conducted online via Skype and two in “real life”. All four interviews were recorded by a Smartphone after allowance from the teachers (hereafter called informants). The recordings made it possible to focus completely and entirely on the informant and his/her given information, since writing during listening was thought by the author to be distracting for both
participants. To record the informants during the interview was also seen as a way to minimize the risk of losing important information during the interview.

3.3 Analysis

All four interviews were all transcribed in their entirety. Transcription of data is time consuming, nevertheless, the effort it takes allows the author to revive and relive the interview once again which in turn creates an opportunity to yet again familiarize with the content (Denscombe, 2016). Denscombe (2016) claims further that it is possible to carefully choose certain extracts in an interview to transcribe instead of put emphasis on transcribing a whole interview. However, all four interviews were carefully transcribed in order to be analyzed through thematic content analysis which creates an opportunity to identify, organise and describe themes which are found in collected data (Braun & Clark, 2006).

The author followed Burnard’s (1991) stages of analysis which is a method that includes fourteen different stages. All stages contains different ways of processing the collected data with aim of producing a detailed and systematic overview. All stages were followed with exception of stage six, where Burnard (1991) puts emphasis on inviting colleagues who are asked to individually compile their own category systems based on the collected data. The colleagues’ and the author’s systems are then supposed to be discussed and adjustments in the author’s work can be done if necessary. Burnard (1991) claims that this procedure is important in order to enhance the validity of the categorizing method. This stage was not considered possible due to lack of time and colleagues but otherwise, the different stages of analysis were used as a template while analyzing the data for descriptive themes and reoccurring categories.

The analysis resulted in three main categories, anxiety, the role of the teacher and teacher strategies.

3.4 Ethical considerations

There are several aspects in a qualitative study, based on personal information through interviews that reinforces the importance of ethical considerations. Content and subjects within the interview can be considered delicate in terms of emotional experiences. There is also an individual behind the telling who is not to be revealed.
All participants were before the interviews given information about the principles of research ethics. The principles concerns four areas of demands which are connected to information consent, confidentiality and usage of content (Vetenskapsrådet, 2008).

The demand concerning information points out the importance of giving the informant relevant information about the study, the aim of his/her participation and that it is completely optional to attend and that he/she can intermit at any time and an intermitting, would never lead to any kind of negative consequences. The demand of consent considers first and foremost consent of participation from the informants and that the informant own the right to decide whether he/she wants to attend or how that is to be done. The demand of confidentiality considers the anonymity of informants. All personal information should be documented in such way that it is impossible for anyone else than the author to find, nothing can be traced back to the informant. This was carefully regarded throughout the process of the study.

The participant’s real names were never documented in the study, nor in notes or memos in order to ensure the secrecy of the informants. The last principle concerns the demand of usage. This demand regards the fact that information collected from and about informants will solely be used in purpose of science. All four principles were summarized in a fluid text which was read out to the informants before the interview. This section, the fluid text concerning the ethical principles, was based on material from a previous study conducted by the author and a co-author (Alijagic & Nessler, 2015). The procedure ended with the question if all was understood and if the informant felt at ease in participating after receiving the information of how the study would use the content of the interview, all informants consented.

3.5 Validity
Validity within a study can be defined as to the extent a researcher has succeeded to measure what he or she intended to measure (Persson, 1958). Validity can also be called ‘trustworthiness’ since that is basically what a researcher aims at by conducting a research (Denscombe, 2016). Current study put much emphasis in formulating relevant and useable questions for the interview-guide, with aim of providing the research with credible and valuable data. All participating teachers were as mentioned in the “participants section (3.1) ”, authorized, educated active working teachers in
upper secondary schools in Sweden, teaching English as one of their subjects, which was the predetermined criteria in order to provide the study with relevant information. The teachers were also participating in their own free will, which increases the possibility for the study to receive trustworthy information. All informants were also able to avoid any questions they perceived peculiar for any reason, or to quit their attendance at any time, aspects that can be argued to increase the validity of the study as well. Yet another aspect considered in the study with aim of attaining high validity, was the recording which allowed the author to be active and entirely committed to the content during the interviews, instead of busy writing notes and citations. Recordings also made it possible to capture an identical depict of the interview in script, which in turn enabled the author to analyze the data by thematic content analysis. Lastly, the recordings and transcriptions ensured the study that no valuable data were lost or forgotten.

The interviewguide was written in Swedish and the interviews were carried out in Swedish. The interviews were transcribed in their entirety, in detail and all quotes used in the essay were carefully translated as identical to the origin as possible in order to sustain the validity of the study.

3.6 Reliability
Reliability concerns to what extent a study is consistent in terms of measurement. Persson (1958) explains further that the reliability is considered strong when a potential replications’ outcome is alike to the original study. One aspect differed in the procedure due to flexibility since two of the interviews were conducted online via Skype (videocall) and two were conducted face-to-face. As mentioned above all four interviews were recorded by a Smartphone and there was no difference in the recordings in terms of quality of the sound. Patel (2011) claims that recording an interview is one way to maintain reliability, since it enables the author to go back and listen as many times as he/she needs in order to make sure that he/she has understood the content correctly. Denscombe (2016) claims that it can be problematic to replicate a study based on qualitative interviews since the interviewer often constitutes a great deal of the study. In order to create as good conditions as possible to replicate a study in terms of reliability, Denscombe (2016) claims that the author can keep a log, where
all important information about the procedure and decisions made throughout the study is kept in order for a possible author of a possible replication to read and adopt. Notes and memos were documented and kept separately from the transcriptions in order to keep the transcriptions ‘clean’, which allows the author to read the transcriptions repeatedly without being influenced of previous findings and codings.

4. Results

The study aimed to investigate how Swedish teachers meet the challenges of speaking anxiety among Swedish upper secondary students in English language education. Several research questions were formulated in order to operate driving force within the study. The thematic content analysis resulted in three main categories, anxiety, the role of the teacher and teacher strategies.

4.1 Anxiety

The study’s most essential subjects and area was anxiety. One of the study’s research questions considered what kind of anxiety teachers experienced among their students. The aim was to investigate first and foremost speaking anxiety, although, another form of anxiety- performance anxiety was mentioned by all teachers and interpreted as a rather usual existent state among many students. Teachers also put emphasis on anxiety concerning grades, which were commonly caused by high demands and the apprehension of not being good enough.

The gathered data provided the study with much information about the impact of speaking anxiety among students, both in an educational aspect but also what it implicates for teaching. In this section, the different categories and subcategories collected in the thematic content analysis, will be presented and discussed in terms of previous studies and research within the area of speaking anxiety. The themes collected from the analysis were divided into three main categories which will be described and discussed apart.
4.1.1 The teachers’ definition of anxiety

All teachers were, in the beginning of the interview asked to define the word anxiety. The aim of this question was to see how the teachers would describe the significance of the word and how they related to anxiety personally. All teachers defined and described the term anxiety in a similar way and pointed out both physiological and psychological symptoms such as pressure to the chest, lump in the stomach and apprehension which is hard to understand or remove. Teacher 2 and teacher 1 referred both to physiological and psychological symptoms such as pressure to the chest and a lump in the stomach (which can be interpreted as stomachache). They also mentioned apprehension and the feeling that one is not able to solve the situation, nor stop thinking about it. Teacher 1 described anxiety as follows,

1. I’m thinking about that big lump in the stomach that makes you feel bad, the feeling that keeps you from eating, sleeping, you just can’t stop thinking about that one thing that makes you feel bad. (Teacher 1)

Teacher 3 also mentioned pressure to the chest that in turn manifests in expectations which triggers the mind. Teacher 4 described the matter in a more serious manner by mentioning palpitation, hyperventilation and sweating, all in all, a psychological state that turns into a physiological state. Teacher 4’s definition of anxiety was described from another perspective,

2. It gets very obvious for some people since they not only worry, but it turns into a physiological state with palpitation, sweating and they get short of breath and some hyperventilates […] (Teacher 4)

Even though the teachers’ definitions of the term anxiety differed slightly, there were common denominators concerning physiological and psychological symptoms such as stomach ache, pressure to chest and apprehension.

4.1.2 Speaking anxiety

The result of the study showed that speaking anxiety is affecting many students. Two of four teachers presented a percentage of students suffering from speaking anxiety that was much higher than previous research. All teachers were able to describe and give examples of behavioral, cognitive and affective aspects and reactions affecting
students in different ways. A behavioral reaction in terms of what strategies students use in various situation could be described as follows,

3. In some situations, one can see that they almost crouch and try to make themselves invisible. They pull back and find strategies because they know that the teacher most certainly wants them to present the task orally when they’ve finished, “and then she’ll probably want us to say something in class”, they might sneak off to the toilet, they disappears for a while. (Teacher 1)

The behavioral aspect can also be connected to the different physiological and psychological reactions experienced among students when they are faced with a challenge within the classroom.

4. Behaviorally, they turn in upon themselves and refuse to… some starts crying and some get… they can almost get difficult to breath if they’re that scared, it is unusual but first and foremost tears, the can end up with tears in their eyes or start crying intensively. (Teacher 2)

The cognitive aspect can be connected to the students’ perception of their own ability to speak in front of others, how they value their own proficiency in English, also what they consider defines a ‘good and proficient speaker’, since their perception of what constitutes a ‘good and proficient speaker’ affects their own demands on themselves since they (often) want to perform well.

5. It has to sound in a certain way and if I’m not able to make it sound in a specific way then I won’t say nothing at all. (Teacher 1 describes how students think of how things are supposed to be said when speaking English in class.)

The affective aspect can be linked to the different emotional experiences students have had when it comes to speaking in front of others in their past. If a student has been laughed at by others while speaking or presenting something in class, there is a possibility and risk that the students will be reluctant to perform in front of class once again.

6. That there’s been someone in their class who has laughed at them when they’ve attempted to speak during class in upper school, so they carry that with them. Experiences from upper school have affected them so much that they don’t want to speak at all and they feel worthless. (Teacher 2)

The collected data provided the study with information about the teachers’ estimation of quantity of students suffering from speaking anxiety. Teacher 1 estimated the percentage of anxious students to approximately ten percent in each class. Teacher 4’s
estimation was one, to two students per class. Teacher 3 and teacher 2 presented higher percentages. Teacher 3 estimated the numbers of students to four to five out of thirty in a class and teacher 2 experienced the highest numbers of students suffering from speaking anxiety by as much as eight students in one class of 23 students. Both teacher 3’s and teacher 2’s percentage were much higher than the one presented in previous research. Teacher 2 described a situation in one class as follows,

7. [...] it is about eight students who suffer from speaking anxiety which is almost 30% of the class [...] this is a class where I never would be able to work with presentations in front of class... [...] some of my classes haven’t during the whole year which soon is to be finished, presented anything in front of class at all [...] because they simply refuse to, which is very related to speaking anxiety, that’s the main reason, they don’t want to, they refuse because they think it is horrifying.” (Teacher 2)

4.1.3 Causal factors of speaking anxiety

The teachers presented different factors which they considered to be contributing to, and causing speaking anxiety among students, *earlier experiences, group dynamics, sense of safeness, performance anxiety, students’ own demands and expectations on themselves.*

Two of the teachers described and discussed *earlier experiences* among the students as a causal factor to their speaking anxiety. As mentioned above, the affective aspect in speaking anxiety was in this study connected to what students might have experienced in upper school that simply affected them in such manner that they develop a reluctance to speak. Not only might they have been laughed at, teacher 2 described other reasons to a reluctance of speaking English,

8. Some students refuse to answer in English, they want to answer, but not in English. [...] they think that they have had poor English language education during upper school. That they haven’t got the chance to speak, or being active in the English language on lessons during almost the entire upper school period. Alternatively that they have had many different teachers so that there has never been a sense of safeness within the classroom. (Teacher 2)

Teacher 1 described students’ earlier experiences who suffer from speaking anxiety in a similar way,

9. Most of the times when I talk to the students they say that they have been laughed at, at some point or that they feel stupid and feel ridiculed by someone. They might also compare themselves to someone who’s had the best result which make them fee bad and that they will never be able to reach that level. (Teacher 1)
Group dynamics was also considered to be a very important and even to a certain extent, a decisive aspect concerning the teaching and learning process. Both teacher 2 and teacher 4 put much emphasis on the relational aspect among students. Teacher 2 stated that especially one of his/her group of students were very dependent on the relational aspect which according to him/her, could determine the students’ willingness to speak in front of each other. Teacher 2 connected the relational aspect to a sense of safeness among the students since teacher 2 experienced that the most intense fear of speaking, decreased slightly after a while when the students had gotten to know each other a bit better, which in turn affected the dynamics within the classroom.

10. They had gotten quite safe with me at least at that point, and each other, because they were strangers to each other in the beginning and I think that was the problem, talking in front of people you don’t know. They are- as I said’ very dependent to the relational aspect. (Teacher 2)

All four teachers pointed out dynamics and ‘good relations’ as main contributing factors to a successful learning environment. Teacher 4 described the dynamics of one group of students compared to another,

11. I have a very homogenous group where everything goes smoothly. They are all good friends even though they’re not associating with each other outside of school as friends, there’s an open and allowing climate within the classroom in that group. I also have two other groups of students which are the opposite of the first group. They’re kind of “guarding” each other and they’re a bit… it’s a totally different dynamic in that group and a totally different tension in the classroom that matters […] (Teacher 4)

Teacher 4 mentioned the well-functioning group of students once again when answering the question of what he/she believed constituted a successful class, and he/she was convinced that students who suffer from speaking anxiety benefits from that kind of climate,

12. You’re allowed to make mistakes, they’re helping each other, there are students in that class who suffers from speaking anxiety in a very serious way, who really fears… but, they’re allowed to be like that and they help and support each other, they’re not petulant or penurious. It’s a very generous climate in the classroom.

Performance anxiety
One of the questions in the interview guide was what kind of anxiety(ies) the teachers considered to be the most common occurring concerning English language education, Teacher 1 answered,
13. It is usually performance anxiety of some sort. One is either... one is afraid to utter anything, one understands everything, one knows everything but is afraid to open the mouth. Some students don’t dare talking to the neighbor, nor in front of class. That is the most common form of anxiety, performance anxiety, speaking anxiety. (Teacher 1)

14. All of a sudden it gets so obvious that a teacher is to look and listen and assess how well I speak, it’s the thing that something said is not erasable. If you write something in English on paper and you write it in a wrong way, you’re able to erase and rewrite another word, but what is said is definite, so I believe that’s performance anxiety... it’s troublesome. (Teacher 4)

Teacher 3 connected performance anxiety more specifically to students’ concerns of achieved grades after finishing tasks or presentations.

15. We also have an anxiety that can be claimed to be manifested in performance anxiety, the students might not experience anxiety when it comes to presenting, but they focus on the grades “what grade will I get on this assignment?” and “what could I have done differently?” They are very focused on the aspect considering assessment instead. (Teacher 3)

Teacher 3 described the focus students put on grades several times during the interview. Teacher 3 described that the performance anxiety was often connected to grades and the apprehension among students concerning accomplishing goals or not, which also can be connected to students’ own demands and expectations.

16. When I have given them feedback “this was good and you can consider this next time”, I experience that some students, not all, but a few, especially the ones who focus extra on grades instead of focusing on the received feedback, they are so aware of knowing when they will get the chance to perform once again. So instead of listening to the feedback to get an insight of what they can get better at, they only want to forget that it went badly according to their own expectations and find out when the next time for performing will be. (Teacher 3)

As mentioned above, performance anxiety was one of the themes most frequently used by all teachers in the study. Furthermore, another theme that occurred often and also was mentioned by all teachers was the students’ own demands and expectations put on themselves considering their education and what they expected of themselves. All teachers experienced students to have either high, or very high demands and expectations on themselves.

17. What they believe and experience is that they have to get as close to an ‘native speaker’ as possible, that they’re not allowed to have any kind of mispronunciations and that they’re never allowed to say the wrong thing and if they do, they’ll sound stupid, weird and unskilled. (Teacher 1)
4.2 The role of the teacher

The category ‘the role of the teacher’ considered what the teachers thought and believed constituted a ‘good teacher’ in terms of qualities and how students’ speaking anxiety should be met and handled appropriately.

The teachers mentioned several important qualities that they considered a necessity in meeting the challenges of speaking anxiety among students. First and foremost, all teachers mentioned the word distinctiveness, both in terms of educational material used in the classroom and in terms of being distinct considering how to behave and treat each other in a classroom. Finally, being distinct and clear was often closely connected to the sense of safeness among students which was considered a crucial factor in order to develop oral proficiency.

18. I think it’s important to set goals which all students feel are manageable, at least the lowest set goals. The tasks and assignments should be described in a distinct and concrete manner that all students understands and can relate to and then you challenge the ones who want to reach even higher grades. (Teacher 1)

19. I think that one have to be very distinct and clear in general. It is complicated for the students with the different grades in different courses and such an amount of different demands of knowledge in each course. One have to have a very clear and distinct plan along with a very clear structure. (Teacher 4)

Other qualities mentioned by the teachers were perceptiveness and kindheartedness,

20. A good teacher has to be distinct and perceptive but first and foremost open to several different solutions to problems that might occur. (Teacher 3)

21. [...] I believe you have to have a kind heart. You meet so many students who are different and who have different kinds of worries [...] many students feel bad, not all but some and three years of studies, especially in the theoretical programs if they suffer very much from performance anxiety [...] there will be hard times so you have to have a kind heart and clear goals. (Teacher 4)

The last subcategory concerned how to meet and handle students’ speaking anxiety. In order to meet and handle the matter, the teacher must first be aware of the anxiety. The teachers were asked whether they considered students to be open and honest about their speaking anxiety or how they get aware of students’ anxiety. Teacher 2 explained that in most cases he/she discovers speaking anxiety among students at first when they are assigned tasks which includes oral presentations. Teacher 4 said that some students approach him/her and tell him/her about their speaking anxiety, but that he/she usually asks students to write something about themselves in the beginning of the term in
order to get an insight in possible anxieties, since students are not always open and honest about their anxiety. However, when asked how the teachers handled students’ speaking anxiety, teacher 2 described how he/she partly adapted teaching material after the students’ need but also tried to challenge the students carefully, since he/she believed that although the students find speaking fearful, it does not mean that they should not be challenged if so very carefully and after their ability.

22. First of all, I try not to play up or exaggerate the situation, it could be the case that it concerns a role that the student has put on during elementary school, ‘I was the one who didn’t dare to speak’, and if that’s the case, you can be given the opportunity in a new classroom not to attain that role again. (Teacher 1)

Both Teacher 1 and teacher 4 described that when they experienced a student’s speaking anxiety to be problematic in terms of learning development, they handled the first step in a discovered speaking anxiety similarly by asking the student what he or she considered helpful in his or her situation. Teacher 1 described further that an adaptation in a situation where a student suffers from speaking anxiety, could consist of anything from, him or her being allowed to bring a friend up in front of class while performing, to letting the student perform in front of a small group of students.

Teacher 3 described that he/she handled such situations by asking simple questions to the student concerning what he or she works on at that moment, in order to de-dramatize the speaking aspect. Moreover, teacher 3 also described that if he/she suspects that a student might suffer from speaking anxiety, he/she approaches the student in person and carefully asks the student if his interpretation that the student might feel a reluctance to speak in front of others is correct. Teacher 3 pointed out that he/she believes that it is important that the student feel respected and noticed.

4.3 Teaching strategies

All teachers gave concrete examples of strategies and tasks they used in order to adapt their teaching material after various needs and demands among the students. Teacher 2 described that, in one of his/her classes where the percentage of students suffering from speaking anxiety, almost reaches up to 30 percent, he/she creates tasks where students work in small groups, from the beginning two, three students a’ group.
He/she gradually increases the sizes of the groups in aim of letting the students practice speaking in front- and to more and more students.

Teacher 3 gave an example of a task he/she designed in order to create as good conditions as possible for all students to show their oral proficiency in a podcast recorded as a team. Furthermore, teacher 3 described how he/she used group work in different levels, where the students at first work with a task in one group setting, which after a while is split into new groups. Teacher 3 described that the aim of this kind of task is for the students to talk to classmates they might not talk to very often, since they preferably sit together with friends and do not ‘move around’ much in the classroom.

23. We all have different language proficiencies, and different vocabularies and if we blend the groups of students when they work, we’re giving them the possibility to listen to each other and receive input from other classmates. (Teacher 3)

Teacher 4 emphasised speaking practice concerning the need for students to listen to their own voices in English. He/she described the matter as follows,

24. [...] you have to dare to listen to your own voice in English [...] if you think it’s difficult, you have to practice by foolish exercises in pronunciation to really consolidate it [...] (Teacher 4)

Teacher 4 also described how he/she sometimes let the students suffering from speaking anxiety to practice speaking in front him/her step by step in preparation for a presentation in front of class.

Teacher 1 described that he/she uses strategies in the classroom in form of games (the teacher had designed different kind of games since classes are different). The games can be compared to competitions involving all students in attempt to ensure that the only spoken language in the classroom is English, since, as the teacher argued, that is the main goal and aim of the English language education. The teacher considered the games to work and fulfil the purpose for the students to solely speak English in the classroom, very well.
5. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate how Swedish teachers meet and handle the challenges of speaking anxiety among Swedish upper secondary students in second language education.

The study also aimed to answer several research questions which were formulated and used in attempt to provide the study with relevant and interesting information connected to the content. All research questions will be presented and answered in this section. The research questions of the study are:

1. What kind of anxiety do teachers experience among students in the English (L2) language classroom?
2. How do teachers handle speaking anxiety in English language education?
3. How do Swedish teachers experience their students to be affected by a communicative approach?
4. How does speaking anxiety affect the language teaching?

Relevant quotes will be written out in the text with aim of connecting the result to the discussion.

The study was divided into two main parts. The first part concerned different anxieties connected to second language education. The second part concerned and focused on the teachers perspective of speaking anxiety in terms of different strategies used in order to meet and handle speaking anxiety in classrooms. The latter part also emphasised whether the teachers experienced speaking anxiety to affect their teaching in terms of educational approach and material.

5.1 Second language learning and anxiety

The first research question in the study focused especially on anxiety and was formulated “what kind of anxiety do teachers experience among students in second language education (English)?” Previous research in the field of second language education show that anxiety correlates with performance (performance anxiety) (Du, 2009). Performance anxiety was mentioned and discussed by all four teachers and they all illuminated demands and expectations connected to performance anxiety.
Moreover, all four teachers also gave examples of how the anxieties (speaking anxiety and performance anxiety) were experienced among students in terms of physiological symptoms and how the anxieties affected the students in terms of behaviour (quote 2, 3 and 4). The physiological symptoms and behavioral symptoms were all in line with previous research (Holt et al., 2012; Ayres & Hopf, 1993; Sandin, 2017).

However, previous research shows that speaking anxiety is a common occurring anxiety among students in schools. Utbildningsradion (2012) claims that the percentage of students suffering from speaking anxiety in upper school and upper secondary school is estimated to almost twenty percent. Speaking anxiety is, accordingly to the teachers a commonly occurring form of anxiety in schools. However, the study showed a result that differed notably from previous research concerning the amount of students suffering from speaking anxiety according to Utbildningsradion (2012) (quote 7). The survey carried out by Utbildningsradion (2012) showed as mentioned above, a percentage of students suffering from speaking anxiety to approximately twenty percent. Suppose that a larger upper secondary school holds approximately 800 students. The number of students suffering from speaking anxiety among 800, ought to be approximately forty students a school. The present study showed that the teachers estimated the number of students suffering from speaking anxiety from least one or two per class, to eight students in one class at the most. However, the time aspect should be considered since previous research was conducted six years ago. Nevertheless, such increased numbers should be taken seriously.

Previous research within the area of second language education claims that there are different factors and variables affecting language learners such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety (Krashen, 1982; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). Moreover, previous studies also give examples of three different types of anxiety, communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Du, 2009). Self-confidence was often connected to performance anxiety as to willingness to communicate (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003) in the present study. The teachers experience that students who lack of self-confidence are in general more reluctant to speak than students with good self-confidence, which is in line with Krashen’s (1982) Affective Filter
Hypothesis. However, the result of the present study especially illuminated anxiety concerning students’ own demands and expectations, grades, and the sense of feeling among students in terms of not being ‘good enough’. The latter is especially in line with Harmer (2007) who claims that students are reluctant to speak in front of others because they worry that their speaking will not be good enough. It would be interesting to extend current study into a mixed method study where students’ experiences of anxiety are investigated and included in order to see whether the students’ experience of language anxieties is comparable with teachers’ experiences of the matter.

However, Sandin (2017) emphasizes the importance for students to feel safe in the learning environment in order to dare exposing themselves to their fear. All teachers discussed and emphasized sense of safeness and group dynamics as important aspects for learning progress (quote 10, 11 and 12). The teachers also mentioned causal factors to students’ speaking anxiety as being connected to situations and experiences where the students had been laughed at by other students, which affected them in such manner that they had developed a fear of speaking, which also can be related to sense of safeness and group dynamics (quote 6, 8 and 9). The sense of safeness could also be connected to Ayres and Hopf’s (1993) cognitive aspect of the term ‘public speaking anxiety’ which considers an individual’s preconceived thoughts about a situation where a speech is to be delivered. Ayres and Hopf (1993) claim that in order to reduce speaking anxiety, the individual’s thoughts about the situation must change into another mindset. It would be interesting to involve psychological aspects in future research, where students suffering from speaking anxiety were to work with cognitive development in form of exercises with aim of changing the mindset, and then evaluate whether such exercises could be beneficial for students suffering from speaking anxiety.

Krashen (1982) claims that motivation is one variable that has an impact on language acquisition similarly to self-confidence. Furthermore, Dörnyei (2009) claims that motivation can influence an individual in a learning process in terms of attitude. Motivation was, surprisingly not mentioned much by the teachers. One of the teachers mentioned motivation in connection to how he/she was able to motivate the students by his/her own interest in the subject. The same teacher further mentioned motivation
in connection to students who were tired of studying and therefore lacked motivation which can be related to Dörnyei (2009). It is possible that the interview guide lacked questions concerning motivation, and therefore did not provide the study with much information, it can also be interpreted that teachers focus more on other aspects and strategies in general. Another possible way to receive more relevant information about motivation and the importance of motivation in second language education, would be to focus on students’ experience and thoughts of how the level of motivation affects them in their learning process by surveys or interviews.

5.2 To handle and teach students suffering from speaking anxiety

The second research question in the study concerned how the teachers handle speaking anxiety in second language education. All teachers mentioned the importance of being sensitive and empathic since not all students are very open and talkative about their condition (quote 21). One teacher emphasized the importance not to exaggerate something that might be connected to a past role for a student. The teacher explained further that if a student had taken on a role as ‘the silent one’ in upper school but did not feel that the role was representative for him/her any longer, the student must be able to start over in upper secondary school (quote 22).

The teachers explained how they handled speaking anxiety among students in terms of adjusting teaching material and use small groups of students in different tasks in order to de-dramatize the tension that might occur when students are expected to talk to many other students. Another way to handle speaking anxiety was to give the students tasks that increased gradually in terms of difficulty level. This approach was in line with Sandin (2017) who put emphasis on working with tasks where the difficulty levels increase step-by-step in order to allow the students to succeed and advance slowly.

Moreover, Sandin (2017) claims that students who suffer from speaking anxiety must practice in order to handle and process their fear. All teachers discussed the matter of how to handle students’ fear of presenting something in front of others and they admitted that they occasionally allowed students to present their work solely in front of them, but claimed that it happened very seldom and only in extreme cases.
where the student refused to present in front of others due to intense fear of speaking anxiety. Otherwise, all teachers emphasized the importance of speaking practise and described that they let the students who suffer from speaking anxiety choose a couple of friends and present in front of them instead of in front of the entire class. This can be related to Sandin (2017) who claims that letting students presenting their work solely in front of the teacher is contradictory to what the students really need, since the act verifies the students’ own perception that he/she is not proficient enough to present their work in front of others. Sandin (2017) claims that the students should instead be able to present their work in front of a couple of friends in order to practise speaking.

Furthermore, the teachers in the study put much emphasis and effort in attempt to sustain the English language in the classrooms. One of the teachers claimed that she experienced students suffering from speaking anxiety to benefit in particular when surrounded by English due to the fact that even the most proficient speakers have to use strategies in their communication when they lose words. This signals to others that even the most proficient speakers are unsure of how to express themselves time to time and this was considered to lower the students expectations and also to create an allowing environment. In summary, according to the gathered data, speaking anxiety can affect language teaching in terms of when teachers have to replan a course event or assignments.

The third research question in the study considered the communicative approach which is generally accepted in terms of aims and goal according to the Swedish course syllabuses for English (Skolverket, 2011). “How do Swedish teachers experience their students to be affected by a communicative approach?” The interviews provided the study with poor information concerning this question. Two out of four teachers did not have specific answers. One teacher argued a communicative approach to be very good and beneficial for all student due to the importance of being able to use a language in our days. On the contrary, another teacher discussed how the focus on communication in language education, might be the reason why some students never turn up in classes due to fear of communicating with others, especially in another language. It would have been interesting to investigate how students experience the focus on communication, therefore it might have been better to investigate this area
from the perspective of the students instead of the teachers’ perspective. However, to investigate whether a communicative approach is affecting students, could be an aspect and area included in a mixed method study as mentioned earlier, in order to create an even wider and deeper insight of possible affecting factors in second language education.

The fourth research question of the study was, “how does speaking anxiety affect the language teaching?” It could be claimed that speaking anxiety among students in second language education does affect the language teaching to some extent in terms of plannings and re-planning of course material and tasks. The teachers described that they in some cases had to re-plan tasks and material due to the student’s reluctance of speaking in front of others. The teachers also discussed the affect of speaking anxiety in a time perspective, where ‘special occasions’ where students were allowed to present their work in smaller groups, or in front of a couple of chosen friends instead of in front of class could be time consuming, which in some cases could be more or less challenging. However, none of the teachers spoke about speaking anxiety, or the affects speaking anxiety might have on teaching in a negative manner. It could be interpreted from the teachers that re-plannings in tasks and course content are a part of a teacher’s work regardless teaching students suffering from different forms of anxieties, or not.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated how Swedish teachers experience and meet the challenges of speaking anxiety among Swedish upper secondary students in English education. The study was conducted through a qualitative method and the data was gathered by semi-structured interviews. The collected data showed that the numbers of students suffering from speaking anxiety in Swedish upper secondary schools were in two out of four cases much higher than previous research. The study also showed that speaking anxiety has an impact on both students’ educational progress and in teaching aspects where teachers in some cases have to re-plan their planning and teaching material in order to help all students to reach the teaching goals. The result of the
study showed and proved that teachers need to be aware of the impact that speaking anxiety has on students and how speaking anxiety affect students in different ways. Current study can therefore be used in order to motivate the need of increased knowledge of speaking anxiety, its impact on second language education and how teachers can meet and handle speaking anxiety among students. Moreover, the result of current study, especially the teachers’ strategies to meet and handle speaking anxiety among students, can be used in order to develop other working teachers’ ability and knowledge within the area of speaking anxiety. However, it would be interesting to interview even more teachers of different ages and from different cities and schools in Sweden, in order to get an ever deeper insight of how teachers meet the challenges of speaking anxiety among both upper school and upper secondary school. It would also be interesting to interview teachers from other countries to see whether they experience and work differently within the area.

The study could also be extended in terms of mixed method and use surveys given to students to see if their experiences are comparable to the teachers’ experience. Lastly, it would also be interesting to implement practices or methods with aim of enhancing the conditions for communication in a classroom and see whether active practice would be useful and how the students would experience such event.
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Vetenskapsrådet (2002)
Appendix 1

**Intervjuguide**

Studien syftar att intervjuar informanten om hur hen som gymnasielärare upplever talrädsla hos elever inom sitt yrke. Det material (inspelat och skrivet) som intervjun erhåller studien med kommer att transkriberas och sammanställas i syfte om att relatera innehållet till tidigare forskning. Informanten har fullständig rätt att bestämma över sin egen medverkan då medverkan är frivilligt och informanten kan när som helst avbryta intervjun och sitt deltagande om hen önskar vilket i så fall inte kommer leda till några som helst konsekvenser. Informanten kan alltid avstå från delar av intervjun eller hoppa över frågor (informationskravet och samtyckeskravet). Materialet kommer endast att användas och bearbetas av författaren och kommer endast nyttjas i forskningsändamål (nyttjandekravet). Informanten aidentifieras och tilldelas ett pseudonym som kommer ersätta egentlig identitet och detta pseudonym följer deltagaren genom intervju, transkribering och citering. Detta för att skydda informanterna då inget i innehållet av empirisk data kommer att kunna härledas tillbaka till informanten (konfidentialitetskravet) (HSFR).

1. Hur länge har du arbetat som lärare?
2. Vad har du för ämnen?
3. Hur många gånger i veckan träffar du dina olika klasser?
4. Hur många elever är det per klass ca?
6. Hur tycker du att en bra lärare ska vara?
7. Vad karakteriserar en lyckad lektion?
8. Vad karakteriserar en framgångsrik klass?
9. Vad behövs för att skapa en framgångsrik klass?
10. Hur skapar man en dynamiskt väl fungerande klass?

**Ångest**

- Vad är ångest för dig?
- Hur kommer det sig att du definierar ångest på det sättet?
- Vad för slags ångest upplever du hos elever i ämnet engelska?

(Vad upplever du att ångesten handlar om?)

- Vad upplever du att ångesten skapas av?
- Hur upplever du att ångesten påverkar eleven/eleverna i klassrummet?
- Kan du ge exempel på hur ångest yttrar sig hos en elev i klassrummet?
- Upplever du att talrädsla enligt definition finns i dina klasser i engelska och om ja, hur många elever ca lider av talrädsla?

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1 (Alijagic & Nessler, 2015)
● Upplever du att talrådsla påverkar elever mer än andra ämnen, om ja, varför tror du att det är så?
● Vad upplever du kännetecknar talrådsla hos elever i en klass?
● Vad upplever du sker beteendemässigt hos en elev som har talrådsla?
● Vad upplever du sker fysiologiskt hos en elev som har talrådsla?
● Under din tid som lärare, upplever du att talrådsla har ökat i ”engelska klassrummet”?
● Vad tror du detta beror på?
● Hur bemöter du elevers talrådsla?
● Upplever du att elever med liknande upplevelse av talrådsla behöver olika slags hjälp av dig som lärare, om ja, på vilket sätt?
● Hur hanterar du elevers talrådsla?
● Anpassar du arbetsuppgifter efter elevers eventuella talrådsla?
● Hur tror du att man som lärare bäst kan hantera elever med talrådsla?
● Tror du att du som lärare kan ha en avgörande roll i hur elevers ångest påverkar deras prestation i klassrummet, ifall ja, hur och varför?
● Upplever du att elever är öppna om sin talrådsla och vågar prata om den med dig som lärare?
● Upplever du att elever vågar berätta för sina klasskamrater om sin talrådsla?
● Upplever du att talrådsla är förknippad med en viss personlighetstyp som gör att det finns en oro att tala engelska?
● Upplever du att en kommunikativ approach som råder (enligt styrdokument) i L2 klassrummen påverka elever på något sätt, om ja, hur?
● Upplever du att det är svårt att betygsätta elever med talrådsla i engelska, om ja, hur hanterar du då en betygsättning? (Hur säkerställer du att det finns underlag för betygsättning)?
● Kan den fysiska miljön i klassrummet påverka elever med talrådsla? Om ja, hur?

Avrundande frågor

● Finns det något som du tycker viktigt att tillägga gällande elevers talrådsla i det engelska klassrummet, enligt ditt perspektiv?
● Om du skulle ge mig som blivande lärare tips om hur man som lärare kan och bör bemöta elever med talrådsla, vad skulle det då vara?
● Har du några frågor till mig gällande innehållet i intervjun eller i uppsatsen?
● Får jag återkomma till dig ifall jag skulle behöva komplettera något gällande intervjun?