(In)visible assessment – why, what, when, how and by whom?

A qualitative case study of Swedish students’ and teachers’ awareness and experiences of formative assessment of English in upper secondary school

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ABSTRACT
This case study presents an overview of the student perspective on assessment, an area in which there is still little research. The aim of this qualitative study is to investigate the awareness, understanding and experience of assessment from a student perspective by addressing the following research questions: why, what, when, how and by whom are the students’ learning processes assessed? A secondary aim is to investigate if and how teachers work with formative assessment in order to discern possible similarities and differences concerning the perception of assessment between students and teachers of English in upper secondary school. The method employed is qualitative; structured interviews have been carried out with six students and three teachers in two upper secondary schools. The interviewees represent both theoretical and vocational programmes in years 1, 2 and 3. The results show that the students believe that their learning processes are assessed in order to enable their teachers to award the students with a grade, but also in order for the students to develop in their learning processes. The assessment is perceived as a natural feature of the education. However the assessment is not perceived as fully integrated in teaching and learning; teacher-initiated, test-like activities are thought to be of greater importance for the final assessment, according to the students. The teachers, on the other hand, assess all activities equally. Written and oral feedback on the students’ productions and performances is given in relation to assessment matrices; the students appreciate and prefer this type of feedback to a grade which is contrary to what the teachers believe. The assessment is ultimately made by the teachers; students’ self-assessment is a fairly regular feature, while peer-assessment is yet to be implemented in order for the assessment practice to be considered as entirely formative. Lack of time is an oft-repeated reason why the implementation of the different features of formative assessment is being made gradually. This case study contributes to the field of educational research in that it provides an overview of the student perspective on assessment, which needs to be further investigated.

KEYWORDS
Feedback, formative assessment, knowledge requirements, learning process, student perspective.
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1 Introduction

“Assessment is the bridge between teaching and learning” (Wiliam 2013:65).

Assessment is probably one of the most important and complex tasks a teacher has to undertake. Assessment ought to be visible and integrated in teaching and learning in order to be successful. Visibility in this case means that the goals of the education, such as syllabi and knowledge requirements¹, are discussed and understood. It also means that students are, or should be, aware of why, what, when and how their work is being assessed, as well as by whom. The final grade that a student receives at the end of a course could be seen as the ultimate result of assessment, traditionally called summative assessment. The grade reflects the learning product, i.e. the level of knowledge that the students have attained at the end of a course, and is determined in relation to the knowledge requirements. However, the assessment that is made throughout the course of a subject should essentially be a part of and support the learning process (Lundahl 2011:11ff, Lundahl 2009:389ff). This type of assessment has become very popular in the assessment debate over the years. Formative assessment², also known as assessment for learning, has been in great focus for the last decade, internationally as well as nationally. Lundahl (2011) explains what formative assessment traditionally means (in referring to Black & Wiliam 2001):

[the] term »assessment« refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes formative assessment when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet the needs (Black & Wiliam 2001:2, in Lundahl 2011:52).

Despite the absence of explicit instructions in the Swedish curricula to work with formative assessment (the term formative assessment is not mentioned in the curricula), there are still indications that teachers and students should do so. One indication is that the National Agency

¹ The grading criteria, i.e. in relation to which the grade is determined, are called knowledge requirements (Swedish: kunskapskrav).
² In Swedish the following terms are used frequently: formativ bedömning, bedömning för lärande, pedagogisk bedömning and lärande bedömning (Lundahl 2011).
for Education (henceforth Skolverket), on their official website\(^3\), has published a vast material of resources essentially endorsing formative assessment\(^4\). The question is no longer if formative assessment should be used, but rather how it is used.

While Hattie (2009), in his *A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*, discusses *Visible learning*, I would like to discuss visible assessment since formative assessment is used “explicitly to improve student learning (as opposed to simply measuring it) by actively involving students in the processes of collecting, interpreting, and responding to assessment information” (McInerney et al 2009:4).

Students’ awareness of assessment could also be discussed in relation to the concept of knowledge, which is regarded as a productive capacity rather than a reproductive one (Lundahl 2011:48f). According to the curriculum for upper secondary school (Lgy 11) “[T]he school’s task of imparting knowledge presupposes an active discussion about concepts of knowledge […] and also about how learning and the acquisition of knowledge take place” (Skolverket 2013a:6). In the same way that students develop knowledge within different school subjects, it seems relevant that they also develop knowledge of assessment, its features and practice in order for formative assessment to be visible and have a positive impact.

Evidently, students’ involvement in the assessment is necessary in order for assessment to be successful. Yet, research focusing on the student perspective is rather difficult to find. As McInerney et al put it: “Indeed, given the strong student-oriented focus of assessment for learning, it is remarkably strange that so little attention has been paid within the assessment for learning community to the perspectives of students” (2009:5). This kind of information is also something that Skolverket requests since “research on the student perspective on assessment hardly exists” (Skolverket a [www]). Vetenskapsrådet (2010) also points out that there is practically no research about assessment in Swedish upper secondary school and very few reports and articles from a student perspective.

It is interesting then to find that a large number (close to 200 search results in the university database, DiVA, alone) of Swedish university students in the teacher education

\(^{3}\) http://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/forskning/bedömning/undervisning

\(^{4}\) A free search on the official website of Skolverket containing the above mentioned Swedish terms for assessment gave the following results (number of publications): formativ bedömning: 57, bedömning för lärande: 43, pedagogisk bedömning: 12, and lärande bedömning: 50 (2014-09-09).
programme have chosen to focus, in their theses and degree projects, on formative assessment, from the perspectives of teachers as well as students. Future teachers seem to feel the need to know more about how to work with assessment, since this is not explicitly taught in the teacher education programme (Hult & Olofsson 2011:20f). According to Cizek (2009:9, in Lundahl 2011:70) “[i]t has been well documented that training in assessment is woefully lacking for teachers, principals, and nearly all educators who use assessment or rely on assessment information”. As a student I have previously investigated how teachers interpret and apply formative and summative assessment. I have also examined how teachers interpret and apply the notion of communicative competence as expressed in the syllabi for languages in upper secondary school. In my final effort of trying to understand the complexity of assessment, I have chosen to focus on the student perspective on assessment; one reason is that I feel as if I am missing that one last piece of the puzzle, and another reason is that I would like to further develop my competence within the area of assessment by building on my own previous studies.

For this study I have used a qualitative method, i.e. structured interviews, in order to investigate how students and teachers of English in upper secondary school understand, experience and work with assessment. This study examines students’ awareness of assessment based on the didactical questions why, what, when, how and by whom. The teacher interviews have been carried out with the intent to analyse similarities and differences in the perception of assessment between students and teachers.

1.1 Aim, research questions and scope
The aim of this study is to investigate students’ awareness, understanding and experience of assessment on the one hand; on the other hand this study investigates if and how teachers work with formative assessment. Since the study concerns both students and teachers, it also seeks to bring to the fore possible similarities and differences concerning the perception of assessment between students and teachers of English in upper secondary school. The following research questions are addressed:

1. Why are the students’ learning processes assessed?

2. What is being assessed in the students’ learning processes and when?

3. How are the students’ learning processes assessed?

4. By whom are the students’ learning processes assessed?
Since the aim is to investigate students’ and teachers’ experiences of assessment, the research questions are answered based on interviews with students and teachers of English in two upper secondary schools in the south of Sweden, i.e. the method used is qualitative. Therefore, the results cannot be extensively generalised. However, due to the fact that the respondents represent different schools and educational programmes, the similarities and differences concerning the perception of assessment between students and teachers ought to be measurable.

This study does not seek to evaluate or criticise neither the students’ knowledge concerning assessment, nor how the schools and their teachers work with the same. This study is rather to be seen from an educational point of view and as a point of departure for reflection for future teachers who seek to learn more about how to work with students and assessment.

1.1.1 Structure of study
This study has the following structure; Section 2 presents a theoretical background in which formative assessment and its key strategies, as expressed in research literature, are accounted for. Section 2 also presents previous studies within the field of formative assessment. In Section 3, the method and material used in this study are presented and explained. The results of this study are presented and analysed in relation to the theoretical background and previous studies in Section 4. The answers to the research questions are presented in Section 5, along with the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the results; Section 5 also presents suggestions for further studies within the field of assessment.

2 Theoretical background
The theoretical background for this study is the curriculum and the syllabi for English in upper secondary school, and research within the field of formative assessment. This section presents the necessary background information to enable the adequate understanding and interpretation of the results. The definition of formative assessment is presented, followed by the theoretical guidelines and the practical application of successful formative assessment. Assessment practice, as expressed by Skolverket in the policy documents, i.e. the curriculum for the Swedish upper secondary school is presented and problematized. Previous research on students’ perspectives on assessment, and the effects of formative assessment and its features, is presented at the end of this section. As mentioned in the introduction, there is hardly any
available research focusing on the student perspective on assessment, especially in upper secondary school. One could speculate that compulsory schooling, i.e. elementary school, is of greater interest for researchers. It could also be that formative assessment, which is still a fairly “new” practice in (Swedish) schools, is being implemented in the early ages of compulsory school and thus has provided an interesting research area. Lundahl (2011:13) also mentions that assessment research in Sweden could have been affected by the new curriculum, introduced in 2011, in that the effects of the new curriculum have not been measurable so far. Another possible explanation could be that assessment focus in research could have been surpassed by the frenzy over the dark PISA reports on Swedish school results in recent years (Lundahl 2011:13).

2.1 Formative assessment

Many are those who have attempted to give a definition of the concept of formative assessment and Wiliam (2013) accounts for some of the most acclaimed definitions (by Scriven, Sadler, Black & Wiliam, Hattie & Timperley, Broadfoot et. al., to mention a few). Wiliam (2013:58) explains that while some of the definitions of formative assessment imply that it should be used as a tool, it should rather be regarded as a process. This corresponds well with the intent that formative assessment should be a part of the learning process. Therefore, the definition used in this study (as presented in the introduction) can be considered as a summary of other definitions:

> [t]he term “assessment” refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes “formative assessment” when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet the needs (Black & Wiliam 2001:2, in Lundahl 2011:52).

The quote, in addition to serving as a definition, also explains the intent and function of formative assessment, namely to support and develop the teaching and the learning process by using evidence of students’ performance when planning the next step in the teaching (Lundahl 2011, Wiliam 2013, Skolverket 2011). Another way of explaining formative assessment is to contrast it to summative assessment; while formative assessment is part of the learning _

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5 In research formative assessment is sometimes distinguished from assessment for learning. Since this study focuses on awareness of formative assessment practice in general, no such distinction will be made.
process, summative assessment is an evaluation of the result of the learning, i.e. the learning product (Lundahl 2011:11).

The use of formative assessment takes its starting point in three questions that teachers and students need to ask, namely What is the goal of the subject?, What is the student’s current position? and How can the student move forward from here?. Thus, the assessment process starts with clarifying the learning objectives. Thereafter, the student’s current position in the learning process, in relation to the learning objectives, needs to be established. When the position is established, the student needs feedback that helps him/her to move forward and closer to the goal (Skolverket 2011:16ff).

There are five key strategies that have become a sort of working frame for formative assessment:

1. Clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success
2. Engineering effective classroom discussions, activities, and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning
3. Providing feedback that moves learning forward
4. Activating learners as instructional resources for one another
5. Activating learners as owners of their own learning

(Wiliam 2013:18, 61, Lundahl 2011:84ff, Skolverket 2011:15ff)

In the following subsections these five strategies are accounted for and exemplified.

2.1.1 What students are expected to learn – understanding the learning objectives

The curriculum for the upper secondary school (Lgy 11), developed by Skolverket, describes how the education should be designed, conducted and developed. Not only does the curriculum describe how schools and teachers should work, it also explains students’ responsibilities concerning their education:

Opportunities for students to exercise influence over their education and take responsibility for their studies requires that the school clarifies the goals of education, its contents and working forms, as well as the rights and obligations that students have (Skolverket, 2013a:5. My emphasis).

In order for students to know what is expected of them, the goals of their education and the grading criteria need to be clarified (Skolverket 2013a:13). According to the syllabi for English in upper secondary school (courses of English 5, 6 & 7) students should develop all-
round communicative skills through speaking, reading, writing and listening to English. Thus, students should be given the opportunities to develop the following abilities within the teaching and learning of English:

1) Understanding of spoken and written English, and also the ability to interpret content.
2) The ability to express oneself and communicate in English in speech and writing.
3) The ability to use different language strategies in different contexts.
4) The ability to adapt language to different purposes, recipients and situations.
5) The ability to discuss and reflect on living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used (Skolverket 2013b).

This is just the overall aim of English courses, but it still serves as an example of what students need to know, as a mere minimum, about the learning objectives of English studies. In addition to the contents of the syllabus, the students also need to be aware of the knowledge requirements since it is in relation to these that the students’ learning processes are assessed. The overall learning objectives need to be discussed and preferably exemplified in order for them to be useful to and understood by the students. When the teacher discusses the learning objectives with the students, the objectives (both the syllabus and the knowledge requirements) need to be concretized, exemplified and expressed in a language that the students can understand. The teacher could advantageously show the students different assignments with results corresponding to a certain quality in the knowledge requirements, or rather, let the students do the analysis and present what quality they believe the assignment corresponds to (Skolverket 2011:17f, Lundahl 2011:90ff). The National Tests are another useful resource in exemplifying the learning objectives; examples of old tests and their suggested solutions can be used to help students understand solutions of different qualities (Eklöf 2011:74f, in Hult & Olofsson 2011, Lundahl 2011). The learning objectives can be used for overall purposes, such as the course as a whole, but also for specific areas, such as a lesson, a test, an assignment, a presentation or homework. Essentially, the purpose, i.e. the

6 The knowledge requirements are not accounted for since they are different for the courses of English 5, 6 & 7 but can be found here: http://www.skolverket.se/laroplaner-amen-och-kurser/gymnasieutbildning/gymnasieskola/oversattningar
7 The National Tests are part of the Swedish assessment system and are obligatory in several subjects. The National Tests have both formative and summative functions and are supposed to help develop teaching and learning (Eklöf 2011, in Hult & Olofsson 2011).
learning objectives, always needs to be present and visible in order to motivate students’ learning (Lundahl 2011:84ff). One way of visualising the expected learning in a specific task is to construct and use assessment matrices related to the learning objectives. Matrices clarify what the students will be working with and in what way. A matrix hence contains the aim in focus of the assignment, concretised in relation to the syllabus, and the different quality levels, concretised in relation to the knowledge requirements (Lundahl 2011:93).

2.1.2 Students’ existing knowledge – eliciting evidence

In order for teachers to establish what the students know, the teachers need to “use all the information available about the student’s knowledge in relation to the national knowledge requirements for each course” and “on the basis of the national knowledge requirements for each course make an all-round [sic.] assessment of each student’s knowledge” (Skolverket 2013a:13). These instructions are aimed at the process of awarding students a grade. However, the same idea applies to the formative assessment; the difference lies in the type of feedback that the students get (feedback is explained in the next subsection). Since the summative assessment, i.e. the grade, is based on the student’s fulfilment of the knowledge requirements, it is important that the students are given multiple chances to prove and improve their performance. Assessment is not isolated to one test aiming at establishing one learning quality, but rather the contrary. This is why assessment should be made in different situations, come in varying shapes, and recur over time (Skolverket 2011:37).

Regardless of the type of assessment situation, the student’s performance on the assignment should be assessed in relation to the learning objectives. Thus, if the intention is to establish the student’s productive skills, e.g. his/her quality of spoken English, an oral presentation or a discussion are possible assessment situations. The assessment of the production could be made following a matrix\(^8\); this way the student, individually, with peers or with the teacher, can discuss the results. The student’s performance on the assignments has now been established. However, it is when the result of the assessment is used to develop the learning and teaching that the assessment becomes formative. To enable teachers and students (but also schools and guardians) to follow up the assessment it needs to be documented; the individual study plans for students are a regulated means of documentation. These development plans have formative functions in that they provide information about where the

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\(^8\) In language learning matrices are usually used for assessing oral or written productions.
student currently is in his/her learning process; strengths and weaknesses are established and feedback is given that helps the student develop further and reach the goals (Asp-Onsjö 2011:167ff, in Hult & Olofsson 2011).

Assessment in the classroom is not limited to the specific assignments, tasks and tests that the students do, but includes everything that happens during the lesson. Since formative assessment is a process that helps the teacher plan the next step in his/her teaching, the progress of the class as a whole needs to be considered. Instead of the teacher asking questions and letting the students who raise their hands (signalling that they know the answer) answer, the teacher can randomly select students to give an answer. Another method is to use ice block sticks with the students’ names on; the teacher can have a cup of sticks and randomly pull one and let the student whose name is on the stick answer (Wiliam 2013:97). There are a number of other methods which can be used to establish where students are in their learning processes. The traffic light method (Lundahl 2011:103ff, p. 126, Wiliam 2013:167ff, Skolverket 2011, Slemmen 2013) means that the students have three cups (a green, a yellow and a red cup) on their desks which signal to what extent they are following and understanding what goes on during class. Green means that the student understands, yellow signals insecurity and red means that the student no longer can keep up. Another method is the whiteboard method; each student writes his/her answer on a mini whiteboard to show what and how they have understood, when asked a question or at the end of the lesson (Lundahl 2011:113). Exit tickets at the end of a lesson, either orally or written on post-it notes, can help the teacher understand what the students have understood from the lesson. If it seems that most of the students have understood the main contents of the lesson, they can move on, if not, the teaching needs to be revised (Lundahl 2011:102). Common for all of the methods explained above is that they help the teacher see if and how well the students understand and learn during class.

2.1.3 How to move forward – providing feedback

The curriculum for upper secondary school (Skolverket 2013a) states that teachers should “together with the students plan and evaluate the education” (p. 11) and “regularly provide each student with information about their progress and the need for development in their studies” (p. 13). In order for feedback to be formative, the students have to be able to use it to progress in their learning process and improve their performance (Wiliam 2013:134ff). The feedback that students receive from the teacher can and does come in different shapes. However, in order for feedback to have formative functions, it has to meet certain criteria; the
feedback has to help the student understand what s/he has proved to handle well, and what qualities s/he still has to develop further. The feedback should not focus on the student’s ability, motivation or personality. The feedback also needs to be in the shape of explicit instructions explaining what the student must do to move forward, as well as how to do so. Again, the feedback needs to be given in relation to the learning objectives. Moreover, feedback cannot simply be given; it also needs to be considered, understood, discussed and evaluated. The assessment is a dialogue rather than a monologue. If the feedback is to be formative, it cannot be given in the shapes of points and grades; formative feedback means oral and written comments given regularly and consistently (Wiliam 2013:134ff, Lundahl 2011:127ff). Studies (see e.g. Butler, in 2.2) have revealed that grades and points as feedback do not help the learning process; this is contrary to what many teachers think helps the learning process. Students, as well as many parents, also seem to prefer points and grades (Lundahl 2011:121ff, Slemmen 2013:109ff). A possible explanation why grades would be preferred by teachers is that it is less time-consuming to write a grade or score instead of a comment; it could also be that teachers grade assignments out of habit. However, it seems that the process of determining what grade to give ought to imply some processing of information. Could the time spent thinking about what grade a performance would equal instead be used to actually write a comment? This process does, after all, mean establishing what the student has or has not shown in their performance, in terms of learning outcomes. As for the students, grades may be easier to understand since, throughout history, grades and points have been used extensively and exclusively in assessment (Slemmen 2013).

2.1.4 How students can support their own and each other’s learning processes

One of the goals of education is that “students individually can assess their study results and need for development in relation to the requirements of the education” (Skolverket 2013a:13). Students need to own and take responsibility for their learning. One way of doing this is through self-assessment, as expressed by Skolverket above. Lundahl (2011:146) suggests that teachers stop using grades and points when correcting students’ assignments, and start using the comment-only technique. This means that students, based on the teacher’s comments, find and correct their mistakes; the technique can be applied for individuals as well as groups. This way, an assignment that has already been completed once, can be used again and the students learn from their own and their peers’ mistakes; the students control their learning. Self-assessment is also an important feature when a student receives feedback from the teacher; either the student assesses him-/herself in relation to the feedback from the teacher, or in
advance before getting the teacher’s feedback. The feedback is ultimately used to develop strategies which help increase the learning process (Lundahl 2009:400).

There are several advantages with peer-assessment; students assessing each other’s work also help them assess their own work. By looking at different solutions to a problem or a question, students’ understanding of the learning objectives can improve. It also contributes to students understanding how varying solutions can be of different qualities. Students are often considered to be better resources to each other than the teacher, since students use a different type of language when talking to each other; this adds another dimension to the assessment. There is an advantage in activating students as “teachers”; students, instead of asking their teacher, should ask their peers first. As a consequence, peer-assessment contributes to the cognitive reinforcement of the students’ individual learning (Lundahl 2011:138ff, Skolverket 2011:22ff). Peer- and self-assessment, just as assessment in general, should be made in relation to some sort of template, such as a matrix or a checklist.

2.1.5 Obstacles in formative assessment
Despite research results (see 2.2) indicating the benefits of formative assessment, there are a number of possible obstacles in actually achieving these benefits, time being the main issue. It is time-consuming to plan, carry out and evaluate teaching and learning. Teachers already have a lot of administrative tasks, which may affect their motivation to use formative methods. Formative assessment is no “quick fix” concept that can be implemented in the blink of an eye. Gradual implementation of formative assessment starts with schools and teachers interpreting and concretising learning objectives and making sure students understand the reasons for assessment, as well as their involvement and responsibility in the process. Teachers also need thorough education about formative assessment and its working methods. Selecting and using one or a couple of the key strategies for formative assessment will not lead to improved results; the entire framework has to be used. Teachers and students have to try different methods to see what works for them, which could take years. Another time-consuming task is to construct matrices, especially if they are used for individual assignments; then the need for a large number of matrices can be impossible to handle, especially if the teacher is not cooperating with colleagues. It is also important that matrices and checklists do not limit students; students still need to be encouraged to think for themselves. Yet another possible obstacle is that weak students may find peer-assessment provocative and discouraging, while strong students may feel a lack of stimulation and challenges. Students may even be discouraged when they do not get grades and points, which is why it is
imperative that the feedback, i.e. the comments that are supposed to help students develop in their learning, focuses on solutions and not on problems. Neither should the comments concern students’ motivation, personality or ambition. In summary, it may take time for schools, teachers and students to learn how to use and appreciate the benefits of the features of formative assessment (Lundahl 2011, Wiliam 2013, Slemmen 2013).

2.2 Previous research
One of the most frequently cited studies on the effects of formative assessment is that of Black and Wiliam (1998). In collaboration with the Assessment Reform Group (ARG), Black and Wiliam conducted a survey which reviewed more than 160 journals over a period of nine years. They found 580 articles about assessment, of which they used 250 in their publication in the journal Assessment in Education. Black and Wiliam set out to answer three questions: Is there evidence that formative assessment raises standards?, Is there evidence that there is room for improvement? and Is there evidence about how to improve assessment?. The article review yielded a unanimous “yes” to all three questions. The conclusion that Black and Wiliam arrived at was that formative assessment and feedback in the classroom helped and increased learning, especially among the “weaker” students; formative assessment was found to double the learning pace. They also found that formative assessment increases students’ sense of involvement and motivation, their self-esteem and the quality of their performance, especially through self-assessment; the quality of both teaching and learning increases, but it takes time to implement and successfully work with formative assessment.

Another oft-cited study (even in research literature from 2013), is that of Butler (1988) who investigated the effects (effect size) of different types of feedback received by 132 students in four Israeli schools. The study is based on three groups of eleven-year-olds who were given three types of feedback on their tests in two rounds; the first group got a score, the second group got a score and an extensive comment, and the third group got an extensive comment only. The general result of the study showed that the students who got a comment improved the most, while those who got both types of feedback performed the weakest; the function of the comment was eliminated by the focus on the grade.

McInerney et. al. (2009) presents an anthology of studies by researchers (ranging from graduate students to professors) from several countries including New Zealand, Spain, Hong Kong, the U.S. and Brazil. The studies present students’ perspectives on assessment, ranging from elementary school to university. Survey questionnaires, interviews and focus group
activities are examples of quantitative and qualitative methods used in the different studies. The material in one study consists of one teacher and a group of students, whereas other studies make use of 700-800 students. Rather than going into the details of the studies in this volume, an oft-repeated conclusion in the majority of the studies is that students seem to relate assessment to formal, test-like, teacher-controlled activities, but not to self- or peer-assessment activities. The purpose of assessment is not always understood, nor perceived as integrated in teaching and learning.

3 Method and material
This section presents the method and material of this study. The choice and execution of the method, the selection of respondents and the ethical principles taken into consideration when carrying out the interviews are accounted for in the first subsections. Thereafter, the material, i.e. the interviewees are presented, followed by a detailed description of the interview process. Lastly, the problems and limitations of the method and material are accounted for.

3.1 Choice of method
According to Trost (2005:7) the method depends on the aim of the study, and the aim must be clearly specified before deciding on what method to use. Since the aim of this study is a) to investigate students’ awareness and knowledge of assessment, and b) to investigate how teachers work with assessment, the interview method is suitable. The choice of method is also motivated by the fact that qualitative interviews result in elaborate answers to questions concerning understanding and experience, and can therefore indicate people’s reality (Trost 2005:14f, p. 23). However, qualitative studies cannot be considered as representative in a statistical sense and therefore the results cannot be generalised (Trost 2005:16, Bryman 1997:47ff, p. 95f, p. 170f). The results can, however, indicate tendencies, such as differences and similarities. Having previously conducted studies using a qualitative method, i.e. interviews, the choice to do so again was also tactical; there is an advantage in having previous knowledge about how to construct interview questions, recording and transcribing as well as analysing interview responses.

3.1.1 Qualitative method – structured interviews
This study uses interview guides (see Appendices 3 & 4) where all respondents were asked the same questions which have been constructed with the aim and research questions of this
study in mind; this means that the interviews have a high level of structure. The questions, however, are not necessarily asked in the same order in all interviews and follow-up questions are asked if needed; this means that the interviews have a low level of standardisation (Trost 2005:19-21). According to Trost (2005:30ff) an interview is not a conversation; the interviewer is interested in the thoughts, experiences and opinions of the interviewee and therefore it is important not to influence the interviewee. The interviewer should show empathy with the interviewee but not sympathy, nor antipathy for that matter (Trost 2005:72ff).

In qualitative research, and especially qualitative interviews, it is somewhat inappropriate to apply the notions of reliability and validity, according to Trost (2005:111-115). When doing an interview, even a structured one, one can never expect to get the same answers from all respondents; there are no response alternatives and the results cannot be measured in terms of frequencies. In terms of validity, however, one could argue that this notion is indeed applicable since the questions asked during the interviews clearly aimed at revealing the interviewees’ awareness of assessment. Therefore, the answers can contribute to a comparison between individuals in regards to their perceptions and opinions.

3.1.2 Selection of respondents
When selecting respondents for qualitative interviews, it is common to aim for a wide spread. To begin with, there are a few variables to consider, such as gender, age and education (Trost 2005:117ff). The chosen variables are thus male and female students of ages 16-19 who study English 5, 6 or 7 in the Swedish upper secondary school. In terms of teachers there is only one variable, namely their teaching English in upper secondary school. Initially, the selection appears to be strategic. However, since participation is voluntary and I have asked other people to help me distribute my information, and by extension help me find interviewees, the selection is instead that of convenience sampling, i.e. you take what you get (Trost 2005:117ff).

In deciding what schools to contact to ask for permission to carry out this investigation, schools of which I had some previous knowledge and experience were considered. Therefore, the headmasters and teachers of English at the schools were contacted by phone. Thereafter, information about this study was sent to the people I had spoken to. The headmasters and teachers asked their colleagues if they were interested, and the teachers who were interested in turn asked their students for volunteers. Since the results of a qualitative study cannot be
generalised, it was even more important to get a sizable spread of interviewees in order to be able to do a comparison. The ambition was to find at least three teachers of English, preferably teaching in different schools or programmes, and two students, a boy and a girl, from each of the teachers’ classes, i.e. nine interviewees in total. However, the number of interviewees is not of utmost importance; the quality of the interviews is more important than the quantity. Trost (2005:122f) suggests that a reasonable number of interviews is somewhere between four and eight since too many interviews are difficult to handle. What is more, the aim of this study is not to investigate how widespread the awareness of formative assessment is in a classroom, at a school or in a city; what is interesting is how assessment is looked upon.

3.1.3 Ethical considerations

When doing interviews it is imperative to respect ethical principles (Trost 2005:40ff, 103ff). The interviewees were therefore given information about the study, its aim and educational purposes. The interviewees were also informed that their participation would be voluntary, i.e. they had to give their consent, and their anonymity was guaranteed. The data were also guaranteed not to be used for any other purpose than this study. The information about the ethical principles was explained in a letter (see Appendix 1) that was sent to the headmasters and teachers of English at the schools in question. The students received the same information (see Appendix 2) in themissive letter (Trost 2012:110ff) that was shown to them by their teacher before they decided if they were interested in participating, and explained again by me face to face prior to conducting the interviews. In addition to the ethical principles, it was also clarified that the results of this study were not meant to criticize or evaluate the school, nor the way the teachers and the students work with assessment. Contact information for myself and my supervisor was given in the information, should the respondents have any questions.

3.2 Material

This subsection presents the interviewees; the material hence consists of 6 student interviews and 3 teacher interviews. The students and teachers are presented and categorised based on which schools, programmes and classes they belong to. The schools and the respondents’ pseudonyms are marked in bold in order to make the presentation of the respondents reader-friendly. All names are fictive for the sake of the respondents’ anonymity.
3.2.1 Interviewees

Nine interviews have been conducted in two different schools; the interviewed students study English 5 and 6, and represent years 1, 2 and 3 of upper secondary school.

Three interviews, with one teacher and two students (the mother tongue of all three interviewees is Swedish), were conducted at an upper secondary school, School A, in a small town in the south of Sweden. The interviewed teacher, Annelie, is around 45 years old and has worked as an upper secondary teacher of English and Swedish at the same school for 13 years. Annelie is a lead teacher of English which means that she coaches and mentors other teachers and helps them develop their teaching to improve the students’ results. Annelie belongs to and teaches mainly at the Natural Science Programme in an upper secondary school which has both theoretical and vocational programmes. The interviewed students, Angelica and Alma, are in the same class, in year 2 on the Natural Science Programme, and Annelie is their teacher in English 6. Angelica and Alma had very good grades in the previous course of English, English 5 in year 1, but they did not have Annelie as their teacher.

Six interviews, with two teachers and four students (all of whose mother tongue is Swedish), were conducted at an upper secondary school, School B, in a large city in the south of Sweden. The interviewees in School B are referred to as Group 1 and Group 2. The teacher in Group 1, Bella, is around 40 years old, and has worked as a teacher for 8 years. Bella has worked in lower as well as in upper secondary school during these 8 years; last year, she went back to working in upper secondary school where she is currently teaching English and Swedish, mainly in the Restaurant Management and Food Programme. The students in Group 1, Bea and Benjamin, study English 5, for Bella, in year 1 on the Restaurant Management and Food Programme; both students had good grades in lower secondary school.

The teacher in Group 2, Carina, is a lead teacher of English who is around 50 years old and she has worked as a teacher of English and Swedish in upper secondary school for about 8 years. Carina is currently teaching on the Restaurant Management and Food Programme and the Hotel and Tourism Programme, but she has also taught on the Electricity and Energy Programme. Her students in English 6, Carl and Christer, are both 18 years old and study on the Restaurant Management and Food Programme in year 3 of upper secondary school; both students have very good grades from previous courses of English (C-A). All three interviewees in Group 2 are native speakers of Swedish.
3.3 Interview process

The dates and places for the interviews were decided upon via e-mail with the concerned interviewees. The interviews were conducted between October 9 and November 4 in private rooms at the two schools. In School A the interview locations were decided by the interviewed teacher and the students, and in School B I had booked small conference rooms in which the teachers and students were interviewed. All interviews were conducted in Swedish since this was the mother tongue of all interviewees; by conducting the interviews in Swedish, the risk of discomfort and misunderstandings was also minimised. All interviews were recorded, by consent, using a recording device on a laptop. In addition to recording the interviews, notes were taken. The recorded interviews were transcribed and partially translated to English in order to be able to use quotations in the results (Section 4).

3.3.1 Interviews with students

The interviews with the students lasted approximately 30 minutes; after being informed of the prerequisites for this study, and hence the interviews, the students were asked 20 questions in a set order. Common for all interviewed students was that they needed clarification as to what was intended with the questions concerning assessment. The students perceived assessment as being summative; thus an explanation of the difference between formative and summative assessment was necessary since this study primarily investigates formative assessment. During the interviews with the students, follow-up questions, such as “can you develop that thought a bit further” or “can you give an example”, were sometimes asked. Rephrasing of some of the questions was also necessary during most student interviews. All of the students seemed happy to participate in the interviews, probably since participation was voluntary, and showed little signs of being nervous or uncomfortable. The two students in School A volunteered to book the interview rooms and were interviewed in their spare time. They also expressed that they were happy to contribute to my study and that they found the topic interesting to discuss. The four students in School B had to leave their lessons to be interviewed. However, they did not use the interviews as an excuse to leave their lessons; the students expressed that they could participate since they had finished their assignments for their respective lessons (which their teachers also confirmed). After all questions had been asked, I stopped the recording device and asked the students how they experienced being interviewed and if they felt comfortable, which they did.

The students in School A, who are in year 2, were more talkative and opinionated in general; they also gave more examples and more elaborate answers, compared to the students
in School B, especially those students in Group 1. In School B, Group 1, the students gave answers that were less detailed; one reason for this could be that they are in year one (two months into the term) and they may have felt that they could not say as much about how they experience the assessment in upper secondary school so far. However, these students have some previous experience from lower secondary school in terms of formative assessment. The students in Group 2, School B, who are in year 3, had a lot to say about assessment; partly because they are in year 3, but also because they have had the same teacher in English 5 and English 6.

3.3.2 Interviews with teachers
The teacher interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. In contrast to the student interviews, where the questions were asked in a set order, the teachers were more talkative; therefore, the teachers sometimes gave answers to more than one question at a time. The fact that the teachers accounted for more than what the specific question required made note taking somewhat difficult, but the recordings of the interviews enabled pairing the answers to the questions later in the process. After the interviews were conducted and the recording device had been turned off, the teachers and I discussed teaching in general and I had the opportunity to learn more about how they experienced their teacher role. Thus, the conclusion is that the teachers seemed to feel comfortable in participating in the interviews as well as sharing their experiences.

3.4 Problems and delimitations
The process of finding interviewees has been time-consuming and problematic; between mid-September and end-October, a total of 30 teachers have declined their participation, mainly due to lack of time. Some of these teachers also mentioned that their students probably would not have much to say about assessment that early in the term (September, October). Teachers who have declined their participation have also expressed that they feel insecure in talking about assessment, possibly because of the pressure they feel when it comes to working with formative assessment, which not all teachers fully do. The insecurity in participating in an interview could possibly also be my fault as I chose not to give the teachers any details about the contents of the interviews since I did not want them to prepare their answers. Despite my efforts of explaining that the questions concern assessment in general and how the teachers use it, and that this study by no means has the intention of evaluating or criticising how the teachers work, I could not get them to participate; after all, participation is voluntary. The fact that teachers declined to participate also affected the number of students in this study; in order
to be able to compare students’ and teachers’ experiences and perceptions of assessment and hence draw conclusions based on the interviews, it was necessary to interview teachers and their students. What is more, due to the teachers not wanting to participate, asking their students to do so seemed inappropriate. The correspondence with the teachers who eventually agreed to participate went on for several weeks before the interviews were booked.

The fact that only three teachers and six students have been interviewed delimits the extent of this study. However, the interviewees do represent two different regions (the schools are situated some 150 kilometres apart); one school is situated in a big city and the other in a small town; one school offers vocational programmes only, while the other school offers both; the interviewed students represent year 1, 2 and 3, and together with the interviewed teachers (two of which are lead teachers of English) they represent theoretical as well as vocational programmes.

It is possible that it would have been more convenient to interview students in the spring or early summer when they have more experience of the assessment made throughout the school year. However, since the National Tests take place in the spring, it would probably be even more difficult to get teachers and students to participate, due to lack of time.

4 Results and analysis
This section presents the results of the study, i.e. the results of the interviews are presented and analysed in relation to the theoretical background and the previous studies presented in Section 2. In each of the following subsections, which are structured in accordance with the research questions, the results from the two schools, School A and School B (Group 1 and Group 2), are presented separately, and then analysed and discussed in relation to the theoretical background in a fourth subsection.

4.1 Why are the students’ learning processes assessed?
This subsection deals with the following areas: the purpose of the assessment, the visibility and understanding of the learning objectives, and the advantages and disadvantages of the assessment, according to the interviewed students and teachers. Questions regarding how teachers and students work with matrices and assessment examples are also addressed.
4.1.1 School A

Annelie, the teacher, explains that students, especially in year 1, want to know exactly what they need to do for the different grades, and that initially students usually perceive assessment as summative: “the students want to know how many words they need to learn to get an A, so we have to explain then that it’s not about the number of words they learn but how they can use them”. According to Annelie, it is usually the ambitious students who ask these types of questions, and they are used to assessment having summative purposes in lower secondary school: “The students have a really hard time understanding and accepting this so it takes a while before they learn to think differently” says Annelie. In order to help students understand the purpose of the assessment, Annelie and her colleagues interpret, concretise and rewrite the learning objectives in intelligible words since they consider the syllabus and knowledge requirements to be “full of fancy and unintelligible words for the students and for us too”. Annelie gives her students a copy of the concretised learning objectives at the beginning of the course of English; the overall learning objectives, specified in a matrix, concern the course as a whole, but are modified in relation to the various individual assignments and tests throughout the course.

In addition to exemplifying, concretising and discussing the learning objectives, Annelie usually lets her students construct tests in relation to the learning objectives. The tests have to relate to the contents of the syllabus and include a question corresponding to each of the levels in the knowledge requirements (E, C and A); the students also have to write answers that correspond to the levels of the questions. “When the students have done this assignment and we have discussed and compared it with each other, they have a totally different understanding of what is expected of them in order to achieve the different qualities of the learning objectives” Annelie explains. Even though all students are not equally successful in constructing the tests, they still have a better understanding of what is required of them in terms of different qualities. There are no right or wrong answers; rather there are different ways for students to show what and how they have understood a question. Another common way of exemplifying different quality levels is using old students’ productions; this is usually well received. However, “too many examples and instructions can limit the students in their creativity and free thinking, especially when the students are supposed to analyse something; we can’t have examples of everything”, Annelie adds. When Annelie was asked about the advantages and disadvantages of assessment, she explained that the students need assessment in order to develop. The way in which Annelie works with assessment is time-consuming,
which Annelie sees as a disadvantage, and therefore she has fewer and larger assignments that she assesses compared to previously, but she believes that her students learn more and better.

When the students Angelica and Alma were asked how they understand the purpose of the assessment they both answered that the assessment helps the teacher decide what grade the students should get. Angelica dwells on the question:

ehh well I don’t know, really… I mean, of course assessment has a purpose, and the teachers tell us that everything we do counts, but I think assessment is mostly a base for the teachers when they give us a grade at the end of the course. Assessment is made for others…ehh if I want to get in to schools or apply for a job…ehh but also for me to know what I’m supposed to develop and what I should focus on.

Alma has the same thoughts: “well, I think assessment is made for teachers to know what grade to give. Sure, it could also be that it is made so that we know what to develop, but I think it’s mostly because of the grades”. Based on these answers, it seems that Angelica and Alma primarily relate assessment to grading, as opposed to understanding the intent of the assessment as helping them develop in their learning processes. However, when Angelica and Alma were asked about the advantages and disadvantages of assessment both students agree that “without assessment we cannot develop” and “assessment is a natural part of learning”. Alma explains that she needs assessment to motivate her to improve her learning, provided that the comments are clear and concrete in terms of what she needs to do in order to develop further. The disadvantage of assessment, according to Alma, is that the students are not always aware of their work being assessed and this sometimes causes confusion. Angelica mentions the importance of the National Tests as a disadvantage, “I think they are more important than everything else in the end. I mean I hope everything I do during class matters but I’m not sure”. Thus, the purpose of the assessment seems to become clearer to the students when they consider the advantages and disadvantages of assessment. However, in understanding the purpose of the assessment, the students also become more aware of its significance.

Angelica and Alma understand that they are expected to further develop the quality of their language competence in terms of speaking, writing, listening and reading in relation to what they learned in English 5. Angelica explains that she does not know exactly what or how to develop as of yet, but she knows that “there has to be a progression from last year”. Despite the female students being unable to account for the learning objectives in detail, they fully
understand what the different areas and assignments aim at developing and how these are assessed. Both Alma and Angelica explain that the teacher gives clear instructions, using matrices explaining the learning objectives for an area of teaching or an assignment, before they start working with something new. Thus, the expected learning outcome in relation to specific assignments or areas seems easier to understand than the overall aim of English as a subject. Alma says that she does not know what to do to get an A in English but in relation to the instructions and matrices for separate assignments she does know how to perform on an A-level.

Since Alma and Angelica had another teacher in English 5, they have not yet had the opportunity to do the exercises of constructing their own tests or worked with assessment examples of old students’ productions as explained by Annelie above; it was still early in the term when the female students were interviewed. However, the students worked with assessment examples in preparing for the National Tests for English 5 and considered these to be helpful in understanding qualities on different levels.

4.1.2 School B, Group 1
Bella, the teacher, believes that her students understand assessment as an evaluation of what they have learned and that the purpose of the assessment made throughout the course of English is to establish what the students have or have not learned at the end of the course. Bella explains that students are used to their work being assessed and graded, and therefore the students may not dwell on the purpose of the assessment; they simply accept it. However, Bella believes that her students understand the contents of the course, i.e. what they are expected to learn and how their performance is assessed. The learning objectives, i.e. the syllabus and the knowledge requirements for English, are always presented to Bella’s students at the beginning of the term; the teacher and the students discuss the contents and how they will be working with it, but also how the teacher is going to assess the students’ oral and written productions, as well as their speaking and listening comprehension.

Bella explains that she is still in the process of constructing her own assessment examples; since she went back to teaching in upper secondary school a year ago, she has not been able to do as much as she would have liked to. Bella further explains that she and her colleagues are currently working on finding and constructing assessment examples. Matrices, on the other hand, are always used when Bella assesses her students’ work; the matrices are
distributed and discussed in relation to the instructions of an assignment to help the students to better understand what they are expected to show in their performances.

Bella, who has gone back and forth between lower and upper secondary school in the 8 years that she has been a teacher, has had to adjust to the new curricula for both school forms⁹, which she explains has been rather difficult. The advantage of the assessment, according to Bella, is that the students have a better understanding of what they are expected to learn; it is clear what the students need to do in order to reach their goals, due to the instructions, matrices and knowledge requirements, but above all due to the feedback that the students get.

The students, Benjamin and Bea, were asked how they understand the purpose of the assessment, to which Benjamin answered: “when something I do is assessed I know how I’ve performed, and based on the assessment I know if I need to work harder or if I’m already working hard enough. I think it’s helpful”. Bea understands the purpose of the assessment as assisting the teacher in grading students at the end of the course. Bea explains what she believes the learning of English is about:

We are supposed to develop, I mean, be able to talk to people, e.g. have a conversation with an Australian, so we need to learn how to do this in school… ehh we are also supposed to learn how to write, and learn words and spelling and grammar. We are also supposed to develop our listening comprehension, and be able to rephrase what we hear in our own words.

Benjamin gives a similar answer in that he believes that he is supposed to develop his speaking, writing and listening comprehension. Both Bea and Benjamin explain that they get clear instructions to all assignments, with the aim of the assignments specified. Bella, the teacher, constructs matrices for writing, speaking, listening and reading activities in general, and for specific assignments in particular. Bella’s students vouch that the assessment is made in relation to the matrices and that the students understand what has been in focus of the assessment as well as how their performance has been assessed.

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⁹ Lgr11 (Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the recreation centre) and Gy11 (the curriculum for upper secondary school)
So far in year 1 of upper secondary school neither Bea nor Benjamin have worked with assessment examples, such as those of old students. However, they both have experiences from using assessment examples in lower secondary school. Benjamin recalls: “we spent several lessons looking at examples of written productions when we prepared for the National Tests. It was a bit boring but definitely worth the time”.

The advantage of the assessment, according to Bea, is that she knows how she can improve her English and she knows what she needs to develop for the high grades. The disadvantage of the assessment, however, is the constant feeling of her work being assessed, which is a bit stressful. Benjamin gives a similar answer: “the fact that we’re constantly being assessed could be stressful to think about, but I actually don’t think about it”. The advantage of the assessment, according to Benjamin, is that everything is taken into consideration throughout the course and “nothing is really final until we get a grade at the end of the course”.

4.1.3 School B, Group 2
Carina, the teacher, explains to her students the course contents and its working areas early in the course of English: “I explain to them what we will be doing, why we will do it and what the intended final product could look like”. Carina also has a copy of the concretised learning objectives on the wall in her classroom; the general working areas and how these are connected to the central contents of the syllabus as well as to the knowledge requirements are presented. Carina distinguishes between preparatory exercises, which are not assessed, and assignments which are assessed; she does this in order to establish what the students already know about e.g. writing a report, and based on the students’ existing or lacking knowledge, Carina plans the layout for her lessons. According to Carina, the objectives of the learning are difficult to visualise in theoretical subjects such as English: “it’s easier to show them what a cake should look like; it’s more concrete”. However, Carina explains that her students, by looking at three different examples of a text summary, can determine whether the examples would get a pass or not, and approximately to what levels the productions correspond. Thus, the students have a rather good understanding of the expected learning outcome when they look at the examples, but the difficulty for the students is to understand how to get to the final product, i.e. the process is too abstract. It takes time to implement a new way of teaching and assessing students, but also for students to become used to and understand how teachers work. Carina believes that her students understand the assessment as assisting the teacher in the grading process. However, she uses assessment both to visualise what the students know and
what they do not know. Therefore, it is important that all teachers work together and in the same way; within schools as well as between lower and upper secondary school, Carina emphasises.

Carina would like to use assessment examples more than she does; currently, she uses the example material that is intended to prepare the students for the National Tests for English. On the other hand, Carina always uses matrices, which function as a sort of checklist for the students. Carina works continuously on finding good examples of different types of oral and written productions, as well as revising matrices to help all students understand the learning objectives. Unfortunately, one of the disadvantages of working with formative assessment is that it is very time-consuming. But not only is the lesson planning, the assessment work and the verbally given feedback to the individual students time-consuming for the teacher, the implementation of these features of formative assessment take many years, according to Carina. In addition to being time-consuming for the teacher, the assessment also takes some getting used to for the students, especially when it comes to dealing with written comments instead of grades, which the students are used to. The advantage of the assessment is that the students get several opportunities to show their performances on various types of tests and assignments, in different situations and repeatedly over time: “the assessment becomes a part of the learning process” Carina explains. Having worked as a teacher for 8 years, Carina notices a difference in the students’ results in the last few years, compared to when she started teaching. She believes that more students reach the goals of the education and that more students reach the higher grades; the students seem to benefit especially from the written comments and the fact that they are more aware of what they are intended to learn as well as how their performances will be assessed.

Christer, one of Carina’s students of English 6, explains that the teacher hands out a copy of the course contents for English at the beginning of term; the course contents are concretised in working areas with learning objectives, and supplemented with a matrix expressing the overall knowledge requirements for the course. Although Christer cannot explain exactly what the learning objectives for the course are, he knows that he is expected to learn how to communicate in English, as well as understand spoken and written English: “I’m the kind of person who does what the teacher tells me to do”. Carl, another student of Carina’s, says that he has been informed of the contents of the syllabus and the knowledge requirements at the beginning of term, but he cannot account for what he is expected to learn in the course of English 6. “It is difficult for me to remember written instructions; I need to
have the information repeated verbally and often”, Carl explains, and further: “grammar, writing, tense, that I know, and you have to be able to speak”. However, when Carl explains what they do in class, such as speak, write and listen, it is clear to him that these skills are what language teaching aims at developing. The fact that Carl does not have a clear picture of the course contents is not a problem: “Carina is very helpful and explains so that everyone understands”. In terms of separate assignments, as opposed to the course contents as a whole, Carl finds it easier to understand what he is expected to learn, due to the clear instructions from the teacher.

The students get a matrix of the concretised knowledge requirements for the course of English at the beginning of term. The matrix is sometimes used as a checklist for the students when they work with an assignment, but the most common use for a matrix is when an assignment is assessed by the teacher, Christer and Carl explain. According to Christer, the teacher has shown some examples of good texts, but this is something he remembers vaguely; the use of matrices and checklists is more common. Carl recalls having analysed text examples in English 5, but apart from this they mainly work with the text examples which are preparatory for the National Tests for English. Looking at examples of texts that correspond to the different levels of the knowledge requirements (grades) is, according to Carl, helpful in that these examples show that the quality of a text is more important than the quantity, i.e. the number of words or the length of the text.

As a response to the question concerning the purpose of the assessment, Christer explains that he needs the assessment as proof of what he has learned, but also to understand what he has yet to learn. “The assessment is made so that I can learn stuff; without the assessment I don’t know what I’ve done right or wrong”, Christer says. Carl gives a similar answer: “the assessment makes me aware of what and how I can improve; without the assessment I wouldn’t see any point in doing anything”. Neither Christer, nor Carl, see any disadvantages of the assessment: “I don’t know if there are any disadvantages of the assessment, but the advantages are that I know what I’ve done well and what I need to improve”, Christer explains, and Carl agrees. However, Carl believes that the assessment causes a lot of stress for many other students. Personally, Carl is motivated by the assessment, and sees the assessment as an advantage.
4.1.4 Analysis
Common for the three interviewed teachers is that they all believe that their students understand the assessment as summative, i.e. that the assessment is made in order for teachers to give their students a grade. The teachers’ presumptions are confirmed in that the female students in School A, Alma and Angelica, as well as Bea in School B, Group 1, believe that the primary purpose of the assessment is to assist the teacher in the grading process at the end of the course; the female students half-heartedly express that the assessment possibly could have the purpose of helping them in their learning processes. However, the male students (Benjamin in School B, Group 1, and Carl and Christer in School B, Group 2) understand the assessment as a way of visualising what they have and have not learned. The male students also express that they become more aware of the quality of their performances due to the assessment. As explained by Black & Wiliam (2001:2, in Lundahl 2011:52) the formative assessment is part of the learning process and “refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers, and […] students, […] which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning […]”. Thus, the purpose of the assessment is to support and develop the students’ learning processes by giving them feedback, which the teachers, as well as the male students, are aware of. One could assume that the male students, who are in year 1 and 3, and who have previous experience from their teachers working with formative assessment, have developed a better understanding for the purpose of the assessment. In contrast, the female students, who are in year 1 and 2, have less previous experience and have had different teachers of English over the years of their education; it could be that these students are still in the process of getting acquainted with their teachers’ working methods.

In order for teachers and students to work with formative assessment, the goal of the subject needs to be clarified (Skolverket 2011:16ff). Therefore, the teachers and students need to discuss the learning objectives. In addition to discussing the learning objectives in a language that the students understand, the teachers also need to provide example material to visualise what productions of different quality levels could look like, or better yet, let the students analyse the qualities of different productions (Lundahl 2011:90ff). The interviewed teachers all inform their students of the learning objectives in a similar way; the teachers interpret, concretise and rewrite the syllabi and construct matrices for the courses of English. The teachers also use assessment examples (mainly the examples of written productions which are preparatory for the National Tests for English) as suggested by Eklöf (2011:74f, in Hult & Olofsson 2011) to a certain extent. Neither the students in School A, nor in School B,
Group 1, have worked with assessment examples so far this term, but have some previous experience. Carl and Christer in School B, Group 2, have worked with assessment examples more than the other interviewed students, and Carl explains that by looking at examples he understands the difference between quantity and quality in written productions. The interviewed teachers all express that they have the ambition to use more assessment examples, but that the process of constructing or searching for these examples is time-consuming.

The teachers discuss the course contents, working methods and assessment procedures with their students; nevertheless, the students do not seem to fully understand the overall purpose of the courses of English. However, despite the students being unable to account for the course contents and its purpose in detail, they still understand that they are supposed to further develop their speaking, writing, reading and listening comprehension. The students also understand what the different working areas and separate assignments aim at developing and how their performances are assessed, due to the clear instructions and the matrices provided by their teachers. The use of matrices seems to be well implemented in the two schools; the teachers and students are used to working with matrices and it seems that all students understand how to use them. The use of a matrix is twofold; it contains the concretised and intended learning objectives and knowledge requirements for the assignment in focus, and functions as an instruction and a checklist for the students while working with the assignment (Lundahl 2011:84ff). In addition to functioning as a checklist, the matrix is also the basis for the assessment; when handed back to the students, the teacher has given feedback in relation to the matrix.

The teachers believe that their students understand the course contents, which the students do not seem to do; yet again, the teachers and the students have different perceptions. It may be that this is not a problem, as long as the students understand the separate working areas. However, in order to be motivated and understand that language learning is an ongoing process, the students also need to take responsibility for their learning. The students’ learning processes could be limited if they do not understand language learning as an ongoing process, as opposed to being limited to specific learning products of varying qualities. As stated in the curriculum for the upper secondary school, the students have both rights and obligations concerning the influence over and responsibility for their studies, provided that the school clarifies the goals of the education (Skolverket 2013a:5). The male students in School B, Group 2, express that they rely on their teacher to make sure that the teaching corresponds to the intended learning of English 6.
The students, despite not fully understanding the purpose of the assessment, do not express any doubt in terms of understanding the assessment as such; as long as the feedback is constructive and made in relation to the matrices, the students find the assessment meaningful and helpful. According to all six interviewed students, the advantage of the assessment is that it works motivationally and helps them develop in their learning processes. The teachers believe that students in general are aware of how and what they are learning, as well as how they can develop and learn more. Carina, the teacher in School B, Group 2, believes that there has been a positive development in the assessment practice in the 8 years that she has worked as a teacher. Carina’s students reach the goals to a greater extent today, compared to when she started teaching; the written feedback seems especially valuable to the students. It is perhaps somewhat bold to draw a parallel between Carina’s positive experience of formative assessment and the results of the study by Black & Wiliam (1998. See 2.2). Yet, the fact that formative assessment has increased the results of Carina’s students over time is still a step in the right direction and should be seen as a positive development.

According to the female students in School A and School B, Group 1, the disadvantage of the assessment is that it sometimes causes stress and that the results of the National Tests are believed to get too much attention; the male students do not think that there are any disadvantages of the assessment. The interviewed teachers all mention that the assessment is time-consuming, which is a disadvantage. The time-consuming nature of formative assessment is also the primary obstacle mentioned in research literature; Wiliam (2013) among others explains that formative assessment is not an easily implemented quick-fix concept, but rather something that may take years to organise, and it starts with schools, teachers and students working together and towards the same goal.

4.2 What is being assessed in the students’ learning processes and when?
This subsection presents the different situations in which students are assessed, as well as how assessment is followed up. This subsection also deals with questions relating to the students’ and the teachers’ experiences concerning the different types of activities, assignments and processes that are assessed, and how the assessment relates to the learning objectives. The question whether or not assessment is integrated in teaching and learning is also addressed.

4.2.1 School A
It is somewhat difficult to answer the question concerning when the students’ work and performance is assessed; on the one hand, everything that the students do throughout the course is assessed in a way, according to Annelie; thus, for the teacher, the assessment is an
ongoing process. On the other hand, feedback is usually given in written form on assignments that are handed in to the teacher. As presented in 4.1.1, Annelie gives clear instructions to the areas and assignments that her students will work with; the instructions correspond to and explain a certain area of the syllabus for English and are supplemented with a matrix expressing the knowledge requirements for the assignment in question. The assessment of the students’ performances is thus made in relation to the learning objectives. When asked about how the assessment is followed up, Annelie explains that she keeps a record of the students’ results in order to see how they progress and develop over time; the students’ learning processes are also evaluated at least once every term and more often if necessary or requested by the students.

Alma and Angelica have different perceptions as of when their performance is assessed; Angelica believes that the National Tests in the spring are of greater importance for the final grade, and she does not fully see how the work she does throughout the year counts in comparison to the final grade. Alma on the other hand believes that “everything is assessed, all the time; from classroom activity and smaller assignments to big tests. I don’t think one bad test result will affect the final grade”. According to Alma and Angelica, the instructions and matrices are helpful in visualising the intended and expected learning. Annelie explains that the learning process, as well as the learning product, is assessed, and according to Angelica, the teacher is very clear about this. Yet, Alma still believes the product to be of greater importance than the process, although she hopes that the teacher makes an all-round assessment of everything she does in class. Angelica is also a bit sceptical of the learning process being equally important as the learning outcome on a test: “I think that big tests and the National Tests are more important than what the teachers tell us”. Thus, the students believe that the results on their tests matter more than their classroom activities in the assessment during the course as well as in the final grading. According to Angelica, her performance is mainly assessed on assignments, tests and presentations, but also in group discussions or group work, initiated by the teacher; exactly what the assessment is based on is clear in relation to the individual assignments, but not in relation to the course of English as a whole. However, Angelica is certain that this will become clearer as the course progresses. Alma is of the same opinion; she knows exactly what is expected of her when it comes to completing an assignment successfully, but she cannot say what she needs to do in order to get an A on the course. Neither Alma nor Angelica could account for how assessment is followed up since it is still early in the term.
4.2.2 School B, Group 1
As mentioned in 4.1.2, Bella gives instructions to all areas and assignments that the students work with; the instructions are also a way of concretising the learning objectives, i.e. the aim of the assignment is explained, as well as how it will be assessed in relation to the knowledge requirements. Thus, the assessment is always made in relation to the syllabus and the knowledge requirements, i.e. a matrix. In addition to assessing assignments that are handed in, Bella makes an all-round assessment of her students’ performances on the course of English as a whole, but this may not always be clear to the students, she adds.

Bea’s experience is that the learning process as well as the learning product are assessed. Benjamin agrees and explains that “when we have an assignment and hand it in to the teacher, we get it back along with feedback and we have to correct and improve it and hand it in again”. Classroom activities, such as answering questions from the teacher, or discussing an issue with peers, are assessed, as well as tests, presentations, and individual written assignments, according to Bea; Bella, the teacher, accounts for the same assessment situations. Yet, Bea feels a little extra pressured in situations where her performance is assessed; thus she does not feel as if the assessment is fully integrated in teaching. The assessment is made in specific situations where “you can tell that the teacher is observing you, there is a certain atmosphere”, as well as on separate assignments. Benjamin agrees that he is more aware of the fact that his result on a test is assessed, which adds extra pressure. However, he is convinced that his performance and activity during class and on all other assignments and exercises count as much as his test results: “if I have a bad day and I don’t do well on a test I can still do well in class, and that’s comforting”.

According to Bea “everything we do is connected to the learning objectives in some way, the aim is always explained” and Benjamin agrees: “the instructions to the assignments are always clear, and we also see in the matrices what has been assessed”. As to how the assessment is followed up, Bea and Benjamin expect the assessment to be followed up in the teacher-student-parent conferences, which Bella, the teacher, confirms.

4.2.3 School B, Group 2
Carina explains that it may not always be clear to the students what she intends to test and assess; it takes time, practice and repetition in order for the students to understand how the teacher works and what her intentions are. However, Carina always constructs all types of assignments to correspond to the learning objectives. Most assignments are recurring exercises which allow both the teacher and the students to follow-up how the students develop
and improve over time. Carina often discusses with her students how they have progressed and developed in comparing the latest results with those from earlier in the term.

According to Carina, there is a difference between a grammar test and a written production in terms of how these activities are assessed; a grammar test is an exercise and a check-up to determine what the students have learnt and shown to handle well from the lessons, but more importantly, is visualises where there is a need for more work. A written production, on the other hand, visualises how the students understand and practically apply the grammatical rules, which is what Carina assesses. Thus, Carina assesses her students’ language skills in terms of how they use the language more than their abilities to account for facts and rules behind the language. “They have to have the opportunity to start from zero and move forward from there; students never have the same prerequisites and therefore I can’t assess exercises that aim at visualising weaknesses” Carina clarifies. Moreover, Carina emphasises that it is not realistic to rely on the assessment of an assignment that is done once (such as one oral presentation during an entire course) since it is natural for students to have a bad day or to do less well due to tension and nerves. As a result, everything is taken in account in the final grading process, i.e. the process and the results are equally important, according to Carina. However, it is, above all, the positive progress that the students make that matters more than the negative in the assessment.

Christer’s experience is that Carina assesses the learning process as well as the learning product, and that the learning process is followed up regularly: “she often talks about how I’ve developed and improved over time”. Carl thinks that Carina is good at following up and keeping track of her students’ performances: “she can ask if I had a bad day or if I thought the test was difficult, and then say that on this type of test last year I did better”. When asked whether or not the assessment is a natural part of the learning process, Christer answers that it is: “without the assessment I wouldn’t know how I’m doing, and that’s important to me”. Carl answered similarly, i.e. that the assessment, for the most part, is a natural part of learning. However, Carl believes that the National Tests for other subjects (but not for English) sometimes are of greater importance than the assessment made throughout the year.

The teacher always explains, either verbally or in written instructions, what skills or areas the different assignments and tests of English aim at developing and testing, according to Christer. Thus, Christer believes that all types of tests and assignments are in accordance with the syllabus for English, even though he does not always think about it. When the class
works with a certain area of the central contents of the syllabus over a longer period of time, the instructions are always written; the contents as well as the expected learning outcomes (in relation to the knowledge requirements) are always explained. “Carina is great at making sure we understand what the purpose of the assignments is; her instructions are very clear” Carl explains.

“My work is always assessed! At least I hope it is” Christer answers, when asked about in what situations his work is assessed. However, after thinking for a few seconds, Christer explains that the assessment of oral presentations is probably a bit more prominent, at least that is what he best remembers. After an oral presentation, the teacher gives verbal feedback and discusses with the student how s/he has performed. Carl: “whenever I’ve finished an assignment, the teacher assesses it; whether I’ve had a presentation or handed in a written paper, I get feedback”. Carl emphasises that in the subject of English the process as well as the result are equally important. In other subjects, however, he thinks that the teachers often value test results more than e.g. classroom activity and basic assignments. “When I have English I feel as if it doesn’t matter if I start out on zero; I can still reach the higher grades”. Carl also appreciates that he is given several opportunities to show his performance and how he improves, in contrast to his performance only being assessed once.

4.2.4 Analysis
The students do not seem to be entirely sure if they consider assessment to be integrated in teaching; they believe that their overall performance, regardless of the situation or the activity, is assessed, but some students believe concrete test-like activities, as well as the National Tests for English, to be of greater importance (e.g. Angelica in School A). McInerney et. al. (2009. See 2.2) present a similar result in that students do not necessarily experience the assessment as incorporated in teaching and learning. Despite the students’ uncertainty concerning the integration of the assessment, they still experience the assessment as a natural part of teaching and learning. The students explain that their learning processes as well as their learning products (such as test results) are assessed. However, the students do not necessarily think that the learning process and the learning product are equally important; three students (Alma and Angelica in School A, and Bea in School B, Group 1) out of six still believe test results to be of greater importance than classroom activities and other assignments. It could be that the students do not perceive the everyday classroom activities as being assessed, since there are no criteria or matrices in relation to which their performance could be measured and since the teachers do not use any of the methods accounted for in
2.1.2. (the methods accounted for are used, in general, to establish how well the class as a whole have understood the teaching). What is more, the teachers correct and assess their students’ productions after or in-between lessons; thus, the majority of the assessment takes place outside the classroom, which could possibly explain why students do not perceive the assessment as fully integrated in teaching and classroom activities. As to what is being assessed, and when, the results from this section point in the same direction as the results from the studies in McInerney et. al. (2009); students often relate assessment to test-like activities that are initiated and controlled by the teacher.

In terms of what is being assessed, and when, Carina differs from the other two teachers in her assessment philosophy; Carina distinguishes between an exercise to elicit evidence of the students’ knowledge (or lack thereof) and an assignment in which the students’ performances are actually assessed. Annelie and Bella do not mention making the same distinction, even if it is possible that they do. Thus, one could speculate that Carina has interpreted the method of eliciting evidence of the students’ learning (e.g. Wiliam 2013:18. See 2.1) somewhat differently compared to Annelie and Bella. However, all three teachers use the assessment of their students’ performances as a basis when planning the next step in the teaching, in order to make sure that the students are developing in their language learning.

When the students work with a specific assignment which is to be handed in to the teacher and to which there are instructions and a matrix, it is clear to the students that the teacher will assess that production. The interviewed teachers are somewhat vague in their answers concerning the integration of the assessment; it could be that the teachers consider it to be obvious that everything is assessed and taken into consideration in the final grading. It is part of the teacher profession to “use all the information available about the student’s knowledge in relation to the national knowledge requirements for each course”, as stated in the curriculum for the upper secondary school (Skolverket 2013a:13), and “on the basis of the national knowledge requirements for each course make an all-round [sic.] assessment of each student’s knowledge” (Skolverket 2013a:13). As explained by Lundahl (2011:84ff) the purpose of any assignment in the teaching of a subject always needs to be visible in order to motivate students learning. The teachers, in using matrices for the assessment of all types of assignments, presentations and tests, and in following up their students’ performances and development over time, do make sure that an all-round assessment is made in relation to the learning objectives, regardless of how and where the students’ knowledge has been acquired.
Despite the teachers’ assessment work not always being visible to the students, it is still, according to the teachers, a natural part of their everyday profession.

4.3 How are the students’ learning processes assessed?
This subsection deals with different types of feedback, written and oral, used for assessment in terms of how the feedback is given, perceived and used. The use of assessment matrices, which was touched upon in 4.1, is discussed further in this subsection. The issue of formative versus summative assessment, i.e. if and how points, scores and grades are used as feedback, is also addressed.

4.3.1 School A
Annelie gives her students written instructions, relating to the learning objectives, in connection to all assignments on which the students’ performances are assessed. She always uses a matrix when assessing her students in which she underlines to what extent a student has performed within a certain area; this means that the knowledge requirements for the levels E, C and A are represented in columns and it is in these columns that Annelie underlines the students’ quality levels. In addition to underlining in the matrix, Annelie writes an extensive comment where she explains her underlining and where she gives concrete advice regarding what the students need to focus on developing. Verbal feedback directed at one student at a time is rarely given since Annelie has such large classes (usually over 30 students). If a student needs clarification to the written comments in the matrices they ask Annelie. When the students have group exercises or presentations, however, Annelie always gives comments in general terms. Individual verbal feedback is given if students request it, but otherwise during the teacher-student-parent conferences which are held once every term. Thus, the assessment is always made in relation to the learning objectives and the knowledge requirements and the feedback is given in written form most of the time.

Annelie never uses grades, points or scores of any sort when assessing and giving feedback to her students. This is appreciated by most students, but sometimes her students ask her to “translate” the comments into a preliminary grade: “they want me to tell them how their performance would have measured if this had been the National Test”, Annelie explains. Thus, Annelie’s answer to the question regarding what type of feedback she thinks her students prefer is that they want comments explaining the quality of their performance and how they can improve, but every now and then they request a grade as well.
Angelica and Alma were asked the same question, i.e. what type of feedback they prefer and why, and they both said that they prefer written comments that help them understand what they have done well, and less well, and especially what they should think about in the future. Angelica thinks that “it would be nice to get a grade, even though I know we won’t, along with the comments saying how it should be, to feel more secure in where I am and where I’m going… I’d prefer a bit of both”. Annelie’s solution to the double feedback preference expressed by the students is to underline the qualities in the matrices and write an extensive comment; Alma explains that “it’s quite obvious what grade you get when you see what has been underlined”. In other words, the students actually get a bit of both.

Alma does not necessarily think that the feedback, i.e. the comments, is useful but for the specific assignment; the comments so far have focused on how the specific assignment, e.g. an article, can be improved. Again, Alma has had Annelie as her teacher for approximately two months and thus there may not have been enough opportunities so far for Alma to make use of the feedback in a concrete situation or for a specific purpose. The fact that the feedback is so strongly connected to the assignment in question could be seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage; it depends on what the assessment situation aims at visualising and evaluating. The students refer to one specific assignment, a written production (an article), on which they have received feedback so far. One could speculate that the feedback, which, according to the students, mainly concerned spelling, grammar, and vocabulary, was not perceived as useful since the students did not believe that they would write an article again. Thus, the feedback was understood as more of an evaluation of the students’ performance in writing the article rather than their writing in general.

4.3.2 School B, Group 1
Bella corrects and assesses her students’ work in relation to a matrix, where the level of the students’ performances is circled; thus, the assessment is made in relation to the knowledge requirements. She also writes a comment focusing on three things: what was good, what needs to be developed and how the students can do in order to develop. Bella was asked about what type of feedback she thinks students would prefer: “a grade is what they want. It’s what they are used to.” Bella explains that a grade can only be given at the end of the course of English and that “there are different types of texts to be written throughout the course of English, therefore I cannot grade one text; it’s the writing competence as a whole that is graded in the end, in relation to the knowledge requirements”. The teacher, in thinking that students prefer grades, could be referring to what she believes students in general prefer in
terms of feedback, however, Bea and Benjamin both said that they prefer comments (see below). The matrix, where the level of the students’ performances is circled, could be the answer; the students actually get a sort of grade in interpreting the matrix, but it is the comment that helps them move forward in their learning processes.

Due to the feedback, i.e. the matrices and the comments, Bea and Benjamin know where they are in their learning processes; it is clear to them what they have showed in their performances so far and what they need to do to improve and develop further. According to Bea, the feedback is mostly given in written form. Benjamin also estimates that the feedback is given in written form more often than verbally, but is not afraid to ask, should he feel the need for clarification. The type of feedback that Bea prefers is also what she gets in the matrices and the comments: “it’s easier to understand why my performance is on a certain level and not higher or lower when I read the comments, and if I don’t understand I can always ask my teacher”. Benjamin prefers comments “because it becomes clear what I can develop; of course I’d like to see the grade as well, but I’d chose comments over grades because they are clearer”.

4.3.3 School B, Group 2
Carina uses matrices when assessing the productions of her students, i.e. the assessment is made in relation to the learning objectives, but she always writes an extensive and explanatory comment as well. Despite the matrices and the comments being very clear and specific according to Carina, she still makes sure to discuss, explain and motivate the assessment to her students and thus make sure that they fully understand it. Carina’s feedback to the students is always specific and focuses on what the students should think about in their future work.

On a few occasions, Carina has recorded the students when they have had oral presentations. Since Carina assesses many different features of an oral presentation she finds it convenient to analyse it several times to make sure that she makes an all-round assessment of the students’ performances. In the film sequences, Carina adds written comments when and where feedback is required; this way the students can see exactly what Carina has commented on. Carina believes the most common way of giving written comments, i.e. on a piece of paper in relation to an assessment template for oral presentations, to be a bit useless since these comments are more general than specific. What is more, students are often nervous when giving speeches in front of the class and when they have finished they do not remember
exactly what they said and how they said it, thus they cannot properly embrace the feedback if it is not concrete and connected to the specific occurrences. Despite some students being sceptical of their presentations being recorded, they are positive afterwards when they watch the recording because they understand the feedback better when they watch themselves, according to Carina.

When asked what feedback she thinks her students prefer, Carina answers that most students probably want a grade on their productions. “A grade is easy to understand. If I write a comment only, the students ask me for a grade as well. Of course, a minority is happy with the comments, but most students want grades”, Carina explains. Thus, the written feedback on written productions needs to be very specific if the students are to fully understand and embrace it. Therefore, the students have to have the opportunity to work with and improve their written assignments, based on the feedback, Carina explains.

According to the students, Christer and Carl, their performances, especially on oral and written presentations, are always assessed in relation to a matrix. The level of the students’ performances are marked in the matrix and explained and motivated in a comment from the teacher. Christer explains that the comments always visualise what he has done well, but also what he needs to think about in the future. Furthermore, the comments are always a clarification to the matrix, i.e. the underlined quality level of the matrix is further developed and explained by the teacher. Carl gives the same answer as Christer in that the feedback always focuses on what he has done well, but also on what he needs to improve. Christer explains that verbal feedback is usually given when the students have an oral presentation of some sort, and written feedback is usually given on written assignments and tests. Carl elaborates on the question: “we get both oral and written feedback, individually and sometimes in full class when we have oral presentations. If we’ve had a written assignment, we often get written feedback, but we can ask her for oral feedback as well, which I really like”. Carl further explains that sometimes Carina sits down with the students individually and discusses the results, but she also explains and motivates the assessment, which Carl is grateful for since he prefers oral feedback.

Christer prefers oral feedback, but written comments come in second place: “the comments are easier than the matrix to understand. I don’t always go through the matrix because it’s tiring to read; I’d rather she wrote the grade… like a summary of the matrix”. Christer focuses more on the comments than on the matrix; “when I read the comment I better
understand how I’ve performed”. Carl also focuses more on the comments; he especially appreciates that his teacher takes the time to sit down with him and discuss and motivate the feedback. Carl again: “I always want a motivation to the feedback, whether I’m happy with my performance or not. If I’m aiming for an A and I don’t get it on that assignment, I need a motivation why I didn’t get an A so I can think about that next time”.

4.3.4 Analysis

Lundahl (2011:146) suggests that teachers stop using points, scores and grades in the assessment of their students’ work, and research shows that grades do not lead to improved learning (see Butler’s study, 1988, in 2.2). None of the interviewed teachers use grades, points or scores in the assessment of their students’ performances, which the six students also confirm. Another common feature in the teachers’ assessment work is that they underline or circle the level of the students’ performances in a matrix; the students appreciate this, but sometimes they request a preliminary grade as well. None of the teachers really give preliminary grades, except in the teacher-student-parent conferences once every term, as suggested by Asp-Onsjö (2011:167ff, in Hult & Olofsson 2011). However, Alma (School A) explains that it is rather obvious what grade her performance corresponds to since this is easily interpreted in the matrix. In addition to the matrix, all teachers write an extensive comment focusing on three things; the students’ strengths, weaknesses and how the students can improve. All students prefer these comments, written and oral, even if they (Angelica, Benjamin and Christer) sometimes would like a grade as well. However, the students would not choose a grade over a matrix, and especially not over the comments; this is contrary to what the teachers believe their students to prefer, i.e. grades (see e.g. Slemmen 2013:109ff).

Bella firmly believes that students prefer grades. While Carina estimates that a majority of her students prefer grades, Annelie’s experience is that her students would like a combination of comments and grades. The students would like to get more oral feedback but the teachers do not have enough time to give oral feedback or discuss the results with their students regularly. Nevertheless, one could argue that the feedback from the teachers is indeed formative since the feedback (especially in the shape of written comments) helps the students understand how they can improve and move forward in their learning processes (Lundahl 2011:127ff, Wiliam 2013:134ff). However, the frequency and regularity of oral feedback need to increase based on the answers (requests) from the student interviews. The curriculum for the upper secondary school also states that teachers should regularly provide each student with information about
their progress and their need for development (Skolverket 2013a:11); whether or not this information should be given orally or in written form is not explained.

4.4 By whom are the students’ learning processes assessed?
This subsection deals with questions concerning students’ self- and peer-assessment in particular, i.e. if and how students and teachers work with these features of formative assessment and how the students perceive this. This subsection also deals with questions concerning the assessment process in general, and by whom it is executed.

4.4.1 School A
Annelie, the teacher, was asked about her students’ working with self- and peer-assessment, and she explains that she gradually lets her students assess each other’s work. Annelie accounts for a peer-assessment activity in which the students, using an assessment template, give each other feedback on oral presentations. First, the students practice their speeches, and when they feel comfortable enough, they record themselves. Thereafter, the recorded speeches are played in front of the class and the students assess each other’s performances in relation to the assessment template. The students are also supposed to write a comment to each other where they focus on what was good and what could be improved, as well as how this could be improved. However, Annelie explains that while it is an exercise in year 1 (English 5), it becomes a more frequent activity in years 2 and 3 (English 6 and 7). The reason why this becomes more regular later rather than sooner is that the students have to mature, develop their independence and become more used to the assessment process in general, according to Annelie. She also refers to the fact that the syllabi for English 6 and 7 state that students should be able to process the language and the structure of their own and others’ oral and written productions. In addition to functioning as a means for peer-assessment, the speeches and oral presentations that the students prepare are also assessed by the students themselves. The students record themselves when practicing for their presentations and use their checklists to help them improve their performances for the coming presentation in front of the class and the teacher.

Another way in which the students work with a type of self-assessment is when they use checklists or matrices for most of the assignments that are handed in for teacher assessment. The students have to make sure they have included all of the required components before handing in the assignment. The students also have to correct their own productions when handed back with comments from the teacher, especially when writing e.g. research reports, which is a process that goes on over a period of time.
The students, Alma and Angelica, account for the same type of self-assessment as Annelie above in relation to improving their own productions; Alma explains that she takes upon herself the responsibility to make sure she understands the strengths and weaknesses of her production as well as how to improve. Angelica and Alma cannot recall having worked with self- or peer-assessment in the course of English 6 so far this term, probably because it is still early in the course, according to Alma. However, Alma recalls having a peer-assessment exercise in English 5 where the students recorded a speech and played it to their peers in class (as explained by Annelie above). Alma appreciated the peer-assessment exercise in that she got valuable feedback from her peers which helped her when it was time for the real speech, which was assessed by the teacher using the same type of checklist. The exercise of assessing her peers’ speeches helped Alma to better understand how assessment works; she became more aware of how her own performance measured in comparison to her peers, as well as how it could be improved.

4.4.2 School B, Group 1
Bella was asked if her students work with self- and peer-assessment, but since the students are in year one (two months into the term) Bella has not introduced her students to these practices yet. Bella has previous experience in working with peer-assessment and she believes that students in general find it difficult to assess each other’s work since “they don’t want to be mean to each other. They don’t seem to take peer-assessment seriously; even though I was clear about how they should assess each other’s work and explained to them how they should do it by looking at the matrix, they couldn’t do it”. In terms of students’ self-assessment, however, Bella believes that “students are quite good at evaluating their performances in general” when she talks to them about where they currently are in their learning processes: “they can be very insightful, they’re not like “what?” when you tell them on what level they are. They are good at estimating their own levels”. When the students work with correcting and improving their different productions they need to read and understand the feedback from the teacher before they can use it; this could be considered as a type of self-assessment.

Bea cannot recall ever having worked with self- or peer-assessment, but she can see how it could help her to better understand the different levels of the knowledge requirements and how to attain them. In terms of peer-assessment, Bea does not feel entirely comfortable about doing this since this could affect personal relationships with her peers in a negative way. However, she does see how peer-assessment could help her own understanding of how a performance can vary in quality. In relation to another question during the interview, Bea
actually mentioned that they did a sort of self-assessment in lower secondary school; the class compared their written productions to old pupils’ productions and were supposed to decide and motivate how their performance measured in comparison. Benjamin has no experience of self- or peer-assessment in English 5 so far, but “in 9th grade we did a lot of self-assessment in all subjects, but so far this term we haven’t done any. In English in 9th grade we assessed our own texts by using a matrix. We also had to give ourselves a grade”. Benjamin found it difficult to be objective in assessing his own text and he also became very critical of his performance; despite this, he could see the benefits of self-assessment in that he understood the assessment process better. Peer-assessment, however, is not something Benjamin would appreciate: “uuuh, no I really don’t want to do that, it’s too awkward to have someone in the class read what you’ve written”.

4.4.3 School B, Group 2
The students are supposed to use the matrices as checklist before they hand in their work as a sort of self-assessment, but the students also assess and evaluate their performances and productions after Carina has corrected and assessed their work. Carina often discusses the results with the students and motivates her assessment, but if the students have a different opinion they have to motivate it. However, it is difficult, according to Carina, to make peer-assessment work successfully. “The students want me to assess their work; they are not interested in assessing each other’s work. They don’t have the right tools either; they are lacking in assessment vocabulary and therefore, they are very general in their comments. They should use the matrices and checklist but it still doesn’t work as I’d like it to. It’s all about working with it over a longer period of time, but the time isn’t really there…” Carina concludes. Carina believes that assessment, especially within the theoretical subjects, is too abstract for the students. She further explains that her colleagues, who teach e.g. florists, find it easier to let their students assess each other’s flower bouquets.

Christer, one of the students, remembers having assessed his own performance on a written assignment: “we got a matrix and were supposed to estimate how well we had done before the teacher assessed it”. Christer does not necessarily take self-assessment too seriously: “I usually do well so I don’t look at all the criteria for the different levels of the knowledge requirements; I make a more general assessment”. According to Christer, self-assessment is not a frequent activity, but since he is content with the assessment that his teacher makes, this does not bother him. Carl remembers having assessed his own work, but whether it was in English 5 or 6 he cannot remember. However, Carl realises that the teacher,
who often discusses and motivates her assessment also asks the students to evaluate their performances and motivate what they think their performances correspond to, should the teacher and the students disagree. Oral presentations in front of the class are sometimes assessed by the students as well as by the teacher, but according to Christer, the students do not always take it seriously. He explains that many students give the same type of feedback, focusing on the same features of the presentation: “loud and clear, that’s the comment many of us give”. When Christer is asked if he finds self- and peer-assessment useful, he answers that it could well be, if it was taken seriously. Carl agrees that oral presentations sometimes are peer-assessed, but he does not think that all students take peer-assessment seriously. Carl mentions that peer-assessment of written texts works slightly better than giving oral feedback on presentations in front of the class.

Carl and Christer explain that the written tests and assignments are handed back with comments from the teacher. The teacher has also underlined and pointed out language mistakes, such as grammar and spelling, but also errors concerning facts and contents in the written production, which the students are expected to correct and sometimes hand in for a second assessment. In order for the students to be able to make any improvements of their productions, they need to embrace and understand the feedback. Furthermore, to make sure they have indeed improved their productions, they need to carefully go through the feedback again before they hand in the assignment a second time. This way, the students assess their performances in relation to the feedback and the suggested improvements, which could be seen as a way of self-assessment.

4.4.4 Analysis
Students’ self- and peer-assessment are two important key strategies for formative assessment, and according to the curriculum for the upper secondary school (Skolverket 2013a:13) one of the goals of the education is that “students individually can assess their study results and need for development”. Peer-assessment is not a regular activity in the interviewed teachers’ classrooms, according to the students; peer-assessment exercises have occurred, but are no regular features. The teachers have varying previous experiences from having their students work with peer-assessment, but an oft-repeated answer is that the students do not take it seriously, possibly due to inexperience and the fact that students are used to their work being assessed by their teachers rather than their peers. The students, in turn, express their discomfort about assessing each other’s work, which could be the reason why they do not take it seriously. Nevertheless, the teachers still seem to have the ambition to
introduce and gradually implement students’ peer-assessment. According to Annelie in School A, peer-assessment is necessary in order to meet the requirements of the syllabi for English 6 and 7 (i.e. in year 2 and 3). Thus far, the interviewed students only relate peer-assessment to giving each other feedback on oral presentations. Alma, Bea, Christer and Carl believe that they could benefit from peer-assessment, provided that it is taken seriously by all students; the students could possibly develop a better understanding of how their own performances measure in comparison, but also how they can improve.

In terms of self-assessment, the teachers expect their students to use the matrices as checklists before handing in their assignments or giving presentations. In addition to this type of self-assessment, the students refer to the process of correcting and improving their productions based on the teachers’ feedback, which is also a method suggested by Lundahl (2011:146). Bella believes that her students are rather insightful when it comes to evaluating their work and that they are good at estimating the levels of their performances; the received assessment thus seems expected by the students, according to Bella. Carina makes sure to discuss with her students how they have performed as well as how they are progressing and developing; she also expects the students to motivate their self-assessment, should they disagree with Carina’s assessment. Lundahl (2009:400) explains that an important feature of students’ self-assessment is to let the students assess their performances in relation to the learning objectives, either before getting feedback from the teacher, or based on the given feedback; this is something that Carina makes sure to do regularly.

5 Discussion and conclusion
In this section the aim of this study is revisited and the results are discussed. The research questions are answered, and based on these answers conclusions are drawn. The strengths and weaknesses of the study are discussed, and suggestions for further research are given.

5.1 Visible assessment
This study has focused on the visibility of the assessment from a student perspective. The aim of this study was to investigate students’ awareness, understanding and experience of assessment, as well as how teachers work with formative assessment. This study has also sought to bring to the fore possible similarities and differences concerning the perception of assessment between students and teachers of English in upper secondary school. The material
consists of qualitative interviews with three female teachers and six students (three male and three female students) of English in two upper secondary schools in the south of Sweden. The interviews were conducted with consideration to the following research questions: Why are the students’ learning processes assessed?, What is being assessed in the students’ learning processes and when?, How are the students’ learning processes assessed? and finally, By whom are the students’ learning processes assessed?

As clarified in the theoretical background of this study (Section 2.1), formative assessment starts by teachers and students asking the following three questions: What is the goal of the subject?, What is the student’s current position? and How can the student move forward from here?. Based on the results of this study, it seems that these three questions have been present in the teachers’ lesson planning. However, and despite the teachers’ good intentions, the students do not fully understand the goal of the subject. Students’ current positions as well as how they can move forward in their learning processes, is however clear to the students and the teachers. In order to visualise to what extent formative assessment is implemented in teaching and learning of the interviewed teachers and students, the five key strategies for formative assessment are revisited:

1 Clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success
2 Engineering effective classroom discussions, activities, and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning
3 Providing feedback that moves learning forward
4 Activating learners as instructional resources for one another
5 Activating learners as owners of their own learning
(Wiliam 2013:18, 61, Lundahl 2011:84ff, Skolverket 2011:15ff)

In terms of “clarifying and sharing learning intentions” (strategy number 1 above), the teachers seem to have a strategy; however, in terms of their students understanding the “learning intentions” there is less success. The students have no difficulties understanding the purpose of separate assignments, such as larger working areas within the subject, writing summaries of articles, giving oral presentations and taking written tests. The reason why these activities do not seem to cause any difficulties for the students is that the teachers always give clear instructions and inform the students of how their performances will be assessed, i.e. in relation to a matrix containing the knowledge requirements in focus for the task. Nevertheless, the overall “intended learning”, in other words the contents of the syllabus for English, is not fully understood. One could speculate that the students are yet to take responsibility for their
studies and involve themselves in their education more than they currently are. In order for students to take responsibility for their studies, the goals of the education need to be clarified by the schools and the teachers; the results of this study indicate a need for better methods and strategies when teachers inform students of the goals of the education. One way of increasing the students’ understanding of the learning objectives is to use assessment examples to a greater extent; the interviewed teachers express their ambition and willingness to do so, but as of yet, time, or lack thereof, is a limiting factor. In terms of “engineering effective classroom discussions, activities and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning” (key strategy number 2 above), the three teachers work in similar ways. All assignments are assessed in relation to the learning objectives, according to the teachers and the students, and based on the assessment, which visualises the students’ strengths and weaknesses, the teachers plan the next step in their teaching. The results of this study show that the teachers in general focus more on the students’ individual learning processes, as opposed to the progress of the class as a whole. When the evidence of the students’ learning has been elicited, the teachers need to “provide feedback that moves students’ learning forward” (key strategy number 3). The results of this study show that teachers are successful in providing feedback, as expressed by the students during the interviews; the students receive extensive written comments, and to a lesser extent oral comments, in relation to a matrix where the knowledge requirements and the learning objectives are specified. The feedback explains to the students what they have proved to handle well, as well as what and how they need to improve; grades, points or scores are not used as feedback from the teachers, according to the students. As to key strategies 4, “activating learners as instructional resources for one another”, and 5, “activating learners as owners of their own learning”, these are yet to be fully achieved by the interviewed students and their teachers. Students’ self-assessment is seemingly well implemented, but could be done in a more conscious way, while peer-assessment as a regular feature is woefully lacking, as indicated by the results of this study.

5.2 Conclusion
After having discussed and summarised the results in relation to the key strategies for formative assessment, the answers to the research questions why, what, when, how and by whom the students’ learning processes are assessed can be given. According to the students, one reason why their learning processes are assessed is in order for the teachers to be able to grade the students at the end of the course of the subject; this is also how the teachers believe that the students understand the purpose of the assessment. It is not necessarily wrong to think
that the assessment has summative purposes since the assessment ultimately results in a grade, but it is imperative that students also understand the formative purposes of the assessment in order to experience the assessment as meaningful. The other reason why the assessment is made is in order for the students to understand what and how they can develop and improve their learning throughout the course of the subject, in relation to the feedback they receive; this perception is expressed by the students as well as the teachers. In order for students to fully understand the purpose of the assessment, they must also understand the goal of their education. Thus, the teachers need to develop their methods of visualising the learning objectives and ascertain that the students understand them; one solution is to use more example material and to work more with the matrices for the course of English as a whole, which is also what the teachers intend to do. Nevertheless, the students understand the purpose of the feedback as helping them develop in their learning processes, which is why one must draw the conclusion that the students ultimately understand the assessment as being made for the students’ sake, rather than for the teachers’ sake.

In terms of the questions as to what is being assessed in the students’ learning processes and when, the answers from the students differ. On the one hand everything that the students do during the course of English is believed to be assessed. However, teacher-initiated test-like activities are thought to be of greater importance for the final assessment, i.e. the grading process, according to the students. In contrast, and despite what the students believe, the teachers make no such distinction; the teachers make an all-round assessment of the students’ acquired knowledge, in relation to the learning objectives and the knowledge requirements for English, at the end of the course. The fact that the students perceive test-like activities to be of greater importance for the assessment could possibly be explained by the teachers’ assessment methods. The fact that the assessment, for the most part, seems to take place outside the classroom probably influences the students’ perceptions as of what and when their performances are being assessed. What is more, written feedback is given on written productions, while oral feedback is given in connection to oral presentations. The assessment needs to be made more visible inside the classroom to be perceived as integrated in teaching and learning; if the teachers were to give the students oral feedback more regularly, this could possibly change the students’ perceptions. The teachers could also advantageously discuss in class the written feedback, i.e. the most common issues that surface in most students’ productions; this way the written feedback would also serve as oral feedback and the assessment would be more integrated in the teaching.
The answer to the question regarding how the students’ performances are assessed is rather uncomplicated; the teachers use matrices which define and explain the learning objectives when giving feedback to their students. In addition to the matrices, extensive written comments explaining what the students did well, what they need to improve and how to do so are always given; oral comments are given less frequently. However, in terms of what type of feedback the students prefer, and what their teachers think they prefer, there is an interesting difference; while the teachers believe that students in general prefer grades, the students of this case study ultimately prefer extensive comments. One could speculate that the students, when asked to consider and motivate what type of feedback they prefer, realise that the written comments are more instructional and helpful compared to a grade. Despite the material being too small for any general conclusions to be drawn, the fact that the students prefer comments over grades is still an optimistic, yet timid, result.

As to the question by whom the students’ performances are assessed the answer is that the assessment is made by the teachers. Students’ self-assessment is developed to a certain point in that students sometimes are expected to evaluate and assess their own performances, usually during the teacher-student-parent conferences, but sometimes also in connection to receiving feedback from the teachers. Furthermore, the students are expected to learn from their own mistakes and improve their productions, based on the feedback that they receive from the teachers. The ambition to implement students’ peer-assessment has been expressed by the interviewed teachers, but since the interviewed students have little experience of this feature, one cannot say that peer-assessment is implemented as of yet. One could speculate whether or not the students are ready for peer-assessment, based on the hesitation expressed during both student and teacher interviews. What is certain is that students’ self-assessment could be made in a more planned way and that the methods for peer-assessment need to be developed in order for formative assessment to be fully implemented.

Ultimately, the results of this study have shed light on the fact that students understand the assessment as helping them develop in their learning of English as well as assisting their teachers in the grading of the students’ learning outcomes. The students experience that the assessment concerns both their learning processes and, probably more so, their learning products; the assessment includes classroom activities and, probably more so, their results on various teacher-initiated assignments that are handed in for assessment. The teachers assess their students’ performances and give constructive feedback in relation to the learning objectives; thus, the assessment is, above all, made by the teachers. As to the question...
whether the assessment is visible or not to the students, one must conclude that the assessment is indeed visible. What has also emerged from this study is that the teachers are fully aware of the features and strategies for formative assessment, but lack of time is limiting the teachers to a gradual and slow implementation of this assessment practice.

5.3 Strengths and weaknesses
In addition to the delimitations accounted for in 3.4, the method and material of this study has both strengths and weaknesses. Qualitative interviews are a way of learning about peoples’ experiences, but by using this method, which is limited to a small number of respondents, one can neither generalise the results nor draw any general conclusions; I was fully aware of this when I chose this method to suit the aim of this study. A possible weakness of the material is that the respondents only represent two upper secondary schools; a third school would have been preferable. In contrast, the demographics of the respondents should be seen as a strength; three female and three male students, representing both vocational and theoretical programmes in year 1, 2 and 3 of upper secondary school, have been interviewed. Furthermore, the teachers, despite all being female, have worked as teachers between 8 and 13 years, and two of them are lead teachers of English. During the student interviews, the students obviously had to reflect upon the functions of the assessment and the purpose of their education more than they had done previously; when asked about this, the students revealed that the interviews had given them food for thought, which can only be interpreted as positive cognitive reinforcement.

5.3.1 Suggestions for further research
This study has contributed to the field of educational research in that it has provided an overview of the student perspective on assessment which is woefully lacking in previous research. This study has given an indication of students’ awareness and understanding of the assessment and its functions and could be developed further. A possible area for investigation could be to study the methods used by teachers when informing students of the learning objectives since this has proved to be a bit problematic, at least on the receiving end. It would be interesting to know why students do not fully understand the learning objectives and how to overcome this obstacle. Another possible research angle is the tentativeness among students and teachers towards peer-assessment; it would be interesting to know why students’ self-assessment can work but not peer-assessment, since both strategies essentially build on the same principles.
As a supplement to this qualitative study, one could advantageously do a quantitative study to investigate whether or not the results of this study are representative, if one wishes to carry out a study on a larger scale, that is. One could also do a thorough analysis of teachers’ written feedback and its effect on students’ learning. Classroom observations would of course also be an appropriate supplementary method to discern possible reasons behind students’ and teachers’ different experiences of the integration of the assessment.
References


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För att kunna genomföra mitt arbete skulle jag vilja be om tillåtelse att genomföra intervjuer med engelsklärare, gärna lärare som undervisar på olika program. Jag skulle även vilja genomföra intervjuer med elever (en pojke och en flicka) från dessa lärare klasser. Elevintervjuerna beräknas ta ca 20-30 minuter, lärarintervjuerna beräknas eventuellt ta något längre tid. Skolan och samtliga respondenter kommer naturligtvis att vara anonyma i examensarbetet, kön och ålder för eleverna, samt antal verksamma år och utbildning för lärarna är det enda som presenteras och detta av hänsyn till att jag ska kunna analysera ”yttre förhållanden”. Intervjuerna kommer att behöva spelas in, om detta godkänns, eftersom jag ska jobba med materialet under hela terminen.

Jag vill tydliggöra att dessa intervjuer, och i förlängningen mitt examensarbete, inte har för avsikt att utvärdera eller på något sätt kritisera skolan eller lärarnas och elevernas arbete. Avsikten och förhoppningen är att jag ska få en uppfattning om hur det formativa arbetet i skolan uppfattas ur ett elevperspektiv, samt hur lärare arbetar med bedömning, vilket jag tror att jag kommer ha stor nytta av när jag kommer ut i arbetslivet.

Jag vore väldigt tacksam om Ni ville låta mig komma till Er skola och på så sätt bidra till mitt examensarbete och i förlängningen hjälpa mig att bli en bättre förberedd framtida lärare!

Mina kontaktuppgifter är e-post: cj222bt@student.lnu.se och mobil 0706622762. Min handläggare och kontaktperson för examensarbetet är Ibolya Maricic, docent i engelsk
lingvistik vid Linnéuniversitetet: ibolya.maricic@lnu.se

Med vänlig hälsning Charlotte
Hej,


Genom att Du som student/lärare medverkar i denna intervju bidrar Du med värdefull information till mitt examensarbete. Din medverkan är frivillig och Dina svar är helt anonyma och kommer inte att användas i något annat syfte än för just detta arbete. Stort tack för Din medverkan!
Appendix 3

Interview guide for students of English concerning assessment

Kön:
Ålder:
Program/klass:
Senaste betyg i engelska:

1. Känner du till undervisningsmålen, dvs kursplanen och kunskapskraven? Kan du redogöra?
2. Vet du vad du förväntas lära dig och vilka kunskaper du förväntas utveckla under kursen? Kan du förklara?
3. Upplever du att de prövningar ni har är i enlighet med kursplanen och kunskapskraven? Kan du ge exempel?
4. Framgår det i samband med uppgifterna vad det är som prövas? På vilket sätt?
5. I vilka situationer upplever du att du blir bedömd? Prov, läxförhör, inlämningar, muntliga presentationer, redovisningar, grupparbeten etc.
6. Hur uppfattar du syftet med bedömningen?
7. Jobbar ni med bedömningsexempel? Kan du ge exempel?
8. Jobbar ni med matriser eller liknande checklistor? Kan du ge exempel?
9. Upplever du att det är ditt resultat och/eller din process som bedöms?
10. Hur bedöms ditt arbete? Betyg, kommentarer, poäng etc.
12. Om du får återkoppling i form av kommentarer, är dessa kopplade till målet med uppgiften?
14. Vilken typ av feedback (poäng, betyg, kommentarer) föredrar du och varför?
15. Arbetar ni med någon form av självbedömning? Hur går det till och hur upplever du detta?
16. Arbetar ni med kamratbedömning? Hur går det till och hur upplever du detta?
17. Hur följs bedömningen upp?
18. Arbetar ni elever med attförbättra era produktioner, utifrån den återkoppling ni får? Kan du utveckla?
19. Upplever du att bedömningen ingår som en naturlig del i undervisningen eller är bedömningstillfällena separata från resten av undervisningen?
20. Vilka för- och nackdelar upplever du i samband med bedömningsarbetet? Tex. bedömning av förmåga/motivation kontra måluppfyllelse/kunskapsutveckling?
Appendix 4

Interview guide for teachers of English concerning assessment

Kön:
Ålder:
Vilket/vilka program/klasser undervisar du?
Hur länge har du arbetat som lärare?
Vilken utbildning har du?
Vilka andra ämnen undervisar du i?

1. Hur informerar du dina elever om undervisningsmålen, dvs kursplanen och
kunskapskraven?
2. Upplever du att dina elever vet vad de förväntas lära sig och vilka kunskaper de förväntas
utveckla under kursen? Om inte, varför?
3. Hur utformar du prövningar? Gör du det i enlighet med kursplanen och kunskapskraven?
4. Framgår det i samband med uppgifterna vad det är som prövas, dvs i relation till
lärandemålen?
5. I vilka typer av situationer bedömer du elevernas prestationer? Prov, läxförhör,
inlämnningar, muntliga presentationer, redovisningar, grupperna etc.
6. Upplever du att eleverna förstår syftet med bedömningen? Hur?
7. Jobbar ni med bedömningsexemplet? Exempel?
8. Jobbar ni med matriser eller liknande checklisten? Exempel?
9. Bedömer du resultatet och/eller processen på uppgiften?
12. Om du ger återkoppling i form av kommentarer, är dessa kopplade till målet med
uppgiften?
13. Hur upplever du att eleverna förstår och kan använda sig av den återkopplingen?
14. Vilken typ av återkoppling (poäng, betyg, kommentarer) upplever du att eleverna föredrar
och varför?
15. Arbetar eleverna med någon form av självbedömning? Hur går det till och hur verkar
eleverna uppfatta detta?
16. Arbetar eleverna med någon form av kamratbedömning? Hur går det till och hur verkar
eleverna uppfatta detta?
17. Hur dokumenteras den bedömning som görs och hur följs bedömningen upp?
18. Arbetar eleverna med att förbättra sina produktioner, utifrån den återkoppling de får?
19. Ingår bedömningen som en naturlig och integrerad del i undervisningen eller innebär bedömningen särskilda situationer eller tillfällen?
20. Vilka för- och nackdelar upplever du i samband med bedömningsarbetet? Tex. bedömning av förmåga/motivation kontra måluppfyllelse/kunskapsutveckling?