HOW A GROUP OF ENGLISH TEACHERS USE AUTHENTIC MATERIAL IN THE CLASSROOM

Fredrik Larsson

HÖGSKOLAN I BORÅS

INSTITUTIONEN FÖR PEDAGOGIK

Sammanfattning

Arbetets art: Lärarprogrammet, Engelska med didaktisk inriktning mot äldre åldrar 270 högskolepoäng. Examensarbete "Att utforska pedagogisk verksamhet" 15 högskolepoäng i utbildningsvetenskap.

Titel: Hur Engelskalärare använder autentiskt material under Engelsklektioner i årskurs nio

Engelsk titel: How English teachers use authentic material in the English classroom in year nine

Nyckelord: English authentic lesson education whole language

Författare: Fredrik Larsson

Handledare: Anna Hellén

Examinator: Ann-Louise Petersen

BAKGRUND:

Jag har skrivit om användandet av olika typer av autentiskt material som lärare i engelska använder sig av i sin undervisning i årskurs nio. Detta användande av autentiskt material har jag sedan kopplat till Whole Language-teorin samt aktuell forskning om autentiskt material.

SYFTE:

Undersökningens syfte är att undersöka vilka autentiska material som används av aktiva lärare och hur dessa används. Ett vidare syfte är att på en hemsida samla de tips och råd som jag erhållit för att vidarebefordra till lärare som använder autentiskt material i sin engelskundervisning.

METOD:

Jag har använt mig av ostrukturerade kvalitativa intervjuer för att samla in data.

RESULTAT:

Lärarna som jag intervjuat, vilka alla var positiva till att använda autentiskt material, visade på att en stor variation av aktiviteter med olika typer av material som användes. Gemensamt var att autentiskt material användes för att göra undervisning mer omväxlande och roligt, vilket stämmer bra överens med huvudtankarna i Whole Language-teorin.

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1 Introduction

The idea of investigating the use of authentic material came from two reports from the Swedish Board of Education, together with my experiences during the practical parts of my teacher training. One report (Skolverket 2008, p.40) stated that learning a foreign language is not best done in a specific order, the so called hierarchic order, which most teachers followed because it is a common belief that the hierarchic order is the best. Another report stated that the earlier statement had had no impact; teachers still followed the hierarchic order (Skolverket 2006, p.132). According to these reports, the teachers only used the textbook and the workbook and not any other material, for example authentic material. During the practical parts of my teacher training, I experienced that pupils found working in the textbook or workbook quite boring; they read the text and learned the words because "they had to." Sometimes the teachers used authentic material, which the pupils enjoyed. I found it strange that the teachers did not work more with material which seemed to engage the pupils. I believe there is a limited knowledge of what kind of authentic material can be used in class and how it can be used. In this study I also the teachers I interviewed also mentioned a special reason to use authentic material; there seem to be a discrepancy between the curriculum and the national test in the subject English. According to some of the teachers, using the textbook and workbook is not enough in preparing the pupils for the national tests. One reason that knowledge is limited is that whilst each teacher has their idea, they do not have the opportunity to exchange ideas. In this report, I have created an opportunity to do so and all my respondents have shown interest in a summary of my findings, in this report and on a web page[1] (2009, Larsson, F) which I believe can become a platform for English teachers who are interested in using authentic material, and help increase the knowledge among teachers within this field.

1.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate the different ways teachers are using authentic material when teaching English as a foreign language in year nine. I wanted to find out which kind of material worked, how teachers made exercises with the material, and how they connected this work to the syllabus.

2 Background and previous research

In this part, I begin with a definition of the term authentic material, followed by what the steering documents have to say about authentic material. Then I present some research done in this field.

2.1 Definition of authentic material

There are different arguments regarding which material used in education should be considered authentic, and the issue has been discussed for decades. One definition is that materials are authentic if they are "unaltered language data, and if they are produced by and for native speakers of a common language and not for second language learners" (Adams 1995, p.3). According to this idea, an authentic text should not be written specifically to be used in a learning situation, as is mostly the case with textbooks. Widdowson (1978, p.80) has

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[1] Larsson, Fredrik, (2009) http://frdrklrssn.se/aem.html

another view; he says that a material that the reader experiences as authentic is authentic. This is further explained by Mishan (2004, p.222) who says that authenticity really has to do with how the text is received by the pupils. The authenticity is not about where the text or other material comes from, it is about whether the pupils receive the material with some sort of engagement. It is the pupils' choice to authenticate the data, and according to Illés, this can also be done with well written texts from a textbook. Illés (2008, pp.145-148) investigates why a 30 year old course book series, "*Access to English*" is still popular in competition with an enormous amount of modern course books and authentic material. Illés explains the popularity with the amount and quality of the texts, but even more important is that the story is revolving about the life of one character, a young man named Arthur Newton. Chapter after chapter the readers follow his life and according to Illés the book has an excellent storyline with well-written, engaging texts, something that is seldom found in modern ELT[2] material. By setting the learners' knowledge about the world in the context of a natural step in Arthur's life, the text will make sense to the pupils since the context makes sense.

Illés (2005, p.148) argues that the text in these books should be considered to be authentic since it makes the pupils engage in procedures for making meaning of it. Pupils respond in a normal communicative behaviour, as they would have, had it been a real authentic text. The main factor to the success of "*Access to English"* is, according to Illés, that the narratives and dialogues are similar to literary texts, like the chapters often ending in suspense. The story is timeless, and there is no need for any pre-knowledge. Illés' conclusion is that "*Access to English*" seems to have ingredients that many ELT course books lack: interesting and motivating content, the use of fiction and an engaging text that stimulates the imagination of learners.

I believe it is a wise idea to let the pupils decide what texts they find authentic because it is their experience of reading a text that is important. With this thinking authentic material can be just about anything, including authentic-like texts in textbooks. I agree with Mishan and Illés because I believe the most important thing is how the pupil experiences the material, not the origin of the material. In my opinion authentic material are films, music, books, magazines, cookery-books, documentaries and other texts that were not written for an educational purpose. I also consider simplified versions of these texts as authentic. I do not consider the textbook and workbook as authentic since these books were produced for education.

2.2 The steering documents

The steering documents do not mention the use of authentic material. In the presentation of the subject English, the Swedish Board of Education states that the teaching of English should aim to prepare the pupils for studies, travel, and social contacts all over the world, as well as providing the choice of an international career in an "all-round communicative ability." The steering documents say that the subject has the aim to broaden the pupils' perspective of the many different cultures within the English-speaking world. By the end of year nine, the pupils are expected to understand "clear speech, even though regional in nature." The pupils are also expected to be "able to read and assimilate the contents of relatively simple literature and other narratives, descriptions and texts." Finally, the pupils are also expected to "have knowledge of everyday life, society, and cultural traditions in some countries where English occupies a central position." When it comes to testing knowledge that the pupils are expected

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[2] English Language Teaching

to have, the word authentic is used when the common principles are presented by the constructors of the national tests. They state that the ambition is that the material and the tasks in the tests shall be as authentic as possible[3].

2.3 A comparison between textbooks and workbooks and authentic material

Here I present one research report that describes differences between specially written texts for workbooks and textbooks and authentic material. Then follow two research reports that suggest there are advantages of using authentic material.

Gilmore (2004, p.364) investigates what makes artificial dialogues used as listening exercises in the average textbook less realistic compared to authentic dialogues. He also investigates if there is a difference in effectiveness between a textbook listening exercise and an authentic interaction. The examples used in this study are all from what Gilmore calls "Service encounters" from different ELT workbooks. Service encounters are situations where two strangers talk, one person requesting information from the other. It could be about asking for train times, car rental prices, directions on the street, or making a reservation for a hotel room. According to Gilmore, these situations could be replicated outside the classroom and then be compared to the original.

The differences found in the comparison, Gilmore argues, are drawbacks for the non-authentic material. The lengths of the authentic conversations were twice as long as the workbook version, because the authentic conversation bumped into problems along the way. The sentences in the authentic conversations were easier to understand because there were fewer words with an independent meaning compared to the workbook conversations that had a higher vocabulary workload for the pupils. One example is that textbook writers often write out the noun, which leads to fewer opportunities for the pupils to learn how to handle pronouns. Authentic sentences contain many errors, for example false starts and repetitions, and pupils have to learn how to ignore the errors and at the same time pay attention to the important words. Moreover, the workbook conversations are often perfect, which leads to two things. First, the pupils could not practise ignoring errors and concentrating on the lead words. Second, it leads to a belief among the pupils that they would never reach that level of perfection themselves, which made them feel bad. Another difference that made it hard for the pupils to understand the workbook conversations was the lack of pauses that are common in authentic conversations. While the pauses in the workbook were only one second, the real pauses were a lot longer. Another feature missing in the workbook examples was what Gilmore describes as hesitation devices. These are the sounds used when signalling, "I'm not finished talking yet," for example "*erm*" or "*er*." These utterances are good for the pupils to learn because they give the pupils the time to think about what to say next. Other short words or utterances missing in the workbook are back channels, which are the responses given in a conversation, words like "*mm*," "*uhum*" and "*yeah*." A person not using back channels will sound cold or even unsympathetic (2004, pp.366-369).

Gilmore (2004, p.370) states that textbook writers perhaps have deliberately chosen to write simplified conversations, but he believes that it is more likely they have just overseen how real dialogues are constructed. The workbook conversations do not reflect the tempo and the unpredictable nature of an authentic conversation. He understands that in the early stages of learning a language it is probably better with simplified conversations, but he stresses the fact

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[3] http://www.ipd.gu.se/enheter/sol/nafs/gemensamma_principer/

that if teachers want to help the pupils become competent users of their second language, they have to show the pupils the true nature of conversation .

Peacock (1997, p.144) examined two groups of second language learners. He taught both of them and mixed using authentic and artificial material. The authentic materials he used were poems, television, short articles, advice columns, pop songs, and magazine advertisements. Peacock measured the pupils' levels of motivation when they worked with authentic material and compared it to the motivation when they worked with artificial material. He noticed some small but significant differences; the pupils were on task 86 percent of the time using authentic material, and 78 percent of the time using artificial material. On a test that both groups took with a maximum of 40 points, the mean score of the authentic material group was 29, and the group using artificial material had a mean score of 23. This indicates that the whole class benefited from using authentic material (Peacock 1997, p.148). The reason to why the pupils learned more, Peacock argues, was that they found authentic material more interesting than textbook and workbook material and therefore worked more during class which resulted in better results.

Erkaya (2005, p.9) showed American TV commercials to her pupils because the commercials are authentic, they can be up-to-date, they are short, they can contain many kinds of language registers for example slang and reduced speech as well as idiomatic expressions. The commercials have visual, verbal, and written images, which helps the pupils understand the message. Since the commercials are often rather fun to watch, the commercials motivate the pupils and according to Erkaya, the pupils improve their listening skills and their ability to communicate in a natural way.

The drawback of commercials or other authentic material is that sometimes the language used is not correct and also if the teacher has something special in mind, it might be hard to find that feature in an authentic text. To be sure to give the pupils a correct language or to present a special feature, there are advantages with using constructed texts. As Gilmore (2004, p.336) argues; the text in textbooks is constructed in a certain way for a good reason; a certain text can present a certain grammatical feature or a certain vocabulary. Illés (2005, p.152) also argues that an advantage of using produced texts is that the lexical workload can be just about right for the pupils at a certain level.

3 Theory

In this chapter, I present the Whole Language theory, which supports the use of authentic material for educational purposes.

Goodman (2005, p.5) explains that there are two ways for a child to learn a language. The easy way is usually at home, where grown-ups surround the child. They speak with the child about everything as the naturally curious child asks questions to understand the world. The hard way is in school, where the language is divided into small abstract bits and pieces that the child has problems making sense of, since the bits and pieces are nonsense. In time, the pupils will start to think that in school nothing really makes sense.

To make language easy to learn in the classroom, Goodman (2005, pp.6-7) has listed some ideas. First, the language has to be whole; it has to be meaningful and relevant to the child. Goodman argues that dividing the language in small parts, like filling in words in grammar

exercises, does not make sense to the learner. Secondly, the language must have a real purpose for the learner. The classroom should be as in real life where language always has a purpose; every time someone says something, he or she has an intention of some sort. Thirdly, language is best learned when the focus is not on the language but on something being communicated which is meaningful for the learners. We do not learn how to read by reading, we learn how to read by reading different things like stories, newspapers and signs with focus on what is communicated. The pupil learns the language while he learns other things. Fourthly, the language development should build on every child's previous experience. Every pupil has their own language development that is dependent on the history and experiences of the individual child. If the school respects the child's unique background, who the child is and where the child is in its language development, there will not be any disadvantaged children as far as the school is concerned.

Lindö (2002, pp.13-18) is talking about the same issue using the holistic view. She says that the teacher needs to have faith in every pupil's will to learn and make sure there is authentic material in the classroom which is meaningful and interesting for the pupils, relating to their experiences and interests.

4 Method

In this part, I describe the methods I used and how the interviews were conducted to help me find answers to my questions in this study. I then introduce the teachers I interviewed, the research ethics I complied with and how I analysed the material. Lastly, I describe the measures I took to sustain a high level of reliability and validity.

4.1 Choice of method

My aim was to explore how teachers used authentic material; therefore the choice of unstructured qualitative interviews seemed to be the best choice. In a qualitative interview the inquirer can find out how the respondent reason around or react to a certain subject. The inquirer can also discover patterns while comparing the different respondents' answers that I found important for this study. Kihlström (2006, p.53) points out that it is important for the inquirer to know the aim of the interview. With a clear aim, it is possible to reduce the influence made on the respondent and conduct a well-done interview similar to an ordinary conversation.

Since my goal was to understand how the teachers dealt with, and interpreted, the different phenomena within the use of authentic material I chose to have a hermeneutic perspective in this essay. When using a hermeneutic perspective the facts that appear are dependent on time and place, thus it is impossible to draw general conclusions. According to Thurén (1991, p.48) the meaning of hermeneutics is interpretation, and therefore it is impossible to make a totally impartial research. When this interpretation is being done, it is according to Gardamer (in Dostal, 2002 p.38), necessary for the interpreter to apply meaning to the situation to him or herself. It is the understanding of the interpreter that matters with a hermeneutic perspective.

4.2 Procedure

The interviews were unstructured and made individually; in most cases they started with question one[4], but the other questions came up spontaneously in no particular order during the interviews.

The respondents often switched back and forth between the questions depending on what they came to think of. I used follow-up questions throughout the interviews, asking about more details, where they had found a certain material or how they used it in a classroom situation. I gave out the missive about one week in advance which included the four main questions I wanted to raise. The reason for giving out the questions in advance was to give the teachers the possibility to prepare themselves. After asking for permission from the informants, I recorded the interviews to better enable me to be active in asking attendant questions, a procedure recommended by Kihlström (2007). I followed this recommendation because I believe I would not have been as active asking questions had I taken notes at the same time. The teachers had different approaches to the interviews; some were prepared, others did not prepare at all. I let the teachers choose where to sit, which sometimes meant they had access to their material, sometimes not. Lantz (1993, p.13) points out that what characterizes a professional interviewer is knowledge about the field in question, and skills having to do with the interview process and the dynamic flow of the conversation. She also mentions that the interviewer must be aware of his or her own attitudes and experiences. This I found important since I am a rather talkative person. Being talkative is of course a nice quality when it comes to creating a nice atmosphere during an interview, but it can be a drawback since I might talk too much and influence the respondent. Since I wanted to avoid that, I had to be aware of my own talking.

4.3 Selection

I conducted interviews with two teachers at each of three schools in three different small towns. School A had 540 pupils, school B had 430 pupils, and school C had 350 pupils. The catchment areas were slightly different; schools A and C had more pupils living in areas with lower socio-economic standard, whereas the catchment area for school B mainly contained house-owners with middle to high socio-economic standard. There was one important difference regarding the possibilities to use authentic material. All teachers had their own laptops with wireless Internet, provided by the school. School B and C also had projectors installed in their classrooms, something that school A did not have. All of the six teachers had been teachers for more than ten years except one who was teaching her second year. In this essay I call the six teachers by false names; Ana and Amy from school A, Bea and Bella from school B and Cara and Cloe from school C. According to Holme and Solvang (1997, p.101) the choice of respondents can be deliberate if they are meant to participate in qualitative interviews. Since I was going to investigate how teachers used authentic material in class, I deliberately asked for teachers that enjoyed working with this kind of material to be sure that the interviews would generate facts for this essay. Hence, this research is not describing teachers' general opinions concerning the use of authentic material. The questions were limited to the activities in the ninth grade of regular classes, this was to allow the respondents to have time to be more detailed about their thoughts about a limited amount of material used in year nine rather than going through all materials used in year seven to nine. I also used this limitation in order to be better able to compare the results from the different respondents.

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[4] See Enclosure 1

4.4 Ethics

The Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2005) has put together ethical rules to make respondents feel safe and secure when participating in a study. The Swedish Research Council has divided these ethical rules into four main obligations, which deal with information, consent, confidentiality, and usage. The obligation about information is that the inquirer has the responsibility to inform everybody concerned about what is happening and why. I wrote a missive with information about my investigation, which I gave out to the teachers about one week in advance, which also has to do with the next obligation. The obligation of consent implies that the persons asked to be participants shall have some time to reflect if they want to participate. The obligation of confidentiality functions as a security against revealing the participants' identity. This signifies that personal information must be kept secret and secure according to the Official Secrets Act. I followed this by using false names in my essay. The demand of usage is to keep the respondents protected from letting the information from the investigation fall into the wrong hands. The collected data must be kept safe, inaccessible to unauthorized persons. I will keep the written information from the interviews on my own computer alone, and I will keep the mini-disc I used when recording the interviews using a mini-disc recorder in a safe place.

4.5 Analysis

Since I made unstructured qualitative interviews, I wanted structure to analyse the data. After transcribing the interviews, I analysed them and made a summary with the most important points marked on each interview. I then collected the data from all the interviews into one document to get an overall view of the data. When I analysed the data, both from the summaries of each interview and the survey, I searched for data to understand how the teachers were thinking when they chose a particular authentic material, the thoughts of why they chose to work in a specific way and how the teachers reasoned in how to connect this work to the syllabus. I also looked to see if more than one teacher was using the same or similar material or the opposite, if one teacher used unique material. In the same way I looked for common and unique thoughts about how to use the material and how to connect it to the syllabus. On some occasions I went back and read the full interview again, to be sure I had understood the respondent correctly. I want to point out that I have influenced this analysis by choosing the data I have found interesting. If another person would analyse the same data it would most probably be a completely different analysis. I have also chosen the learning theories that I used to connect the data in the results, which of course also gives a personal touch to this essay.

4.6 Reliability and validity

To increase the reliability and validity in this essay I took some measures described in research in this field. Validity deals with whether I have found answers to the questions in the aim (Thurén, 1991, p.22). My aim was to find out what authentic material was used, and to try to understand how the respondents were thinking about why they used a specific material, how they used it and how they made connections to the syllabus. I also wanted to see if there were any similarities and differences between the respondents. Kihlström (2006 pp.47-57) is describing ways to increase the validity. It is important to have an educated person examining and giving advice to the project, it is important that the reader will understand the essay, and it is important to use the best method for the project. By making unstructured qualitative

interviews, having a supervisor and trying to write an understandable text, I believe I have increased the validity.

To increase the validity of the research I have studied and to avoid research that is unreliable, I only used articles that either was written in well-known pedagogical magazines or found on known websites for research articles, for example BADA, GUNDA or Google Scholar. The magazine where I found most of the articles was The ELT Journal, which is a Oxford University magazine that has been dealing with the questions about learning English as a second or foreign language since their first issue in October 1946. The fact that the magazine has been active for more than 60 years I argue increases the credibility of the magazine. To understand the articles I spent quite some time to read them. Some articles were written with a rather advanced language, which meant I needed to look up the meaning of many words to really understand the article.

Reliability is about credibility, trustworthiness and authenticity. The investigation must have been done correctly, with accurate measurements. (Thurén, 1999, p.22). When the measurement is in form of interviews, it is important that an outsider can take part and examine the material. This is possible since the questionnaire is included in this report as an enclosure, and the interviews are recorded and put in a secure place.

Making unstructured qualitative interviews is tricky, I chose to bear in mind the following piece of advice; Lantz (1993) says that an interviewer has to hold back his own attitudes and experiences, focusing on not influencing the respondent in any way. Even though I focused on this, I believe I still have influenced the interviews for example by choosing which attendant questions to ask. I made these interviews with six different teachers at three schools, two from each school. To make sure that I would get facts about the use of authentic material, I made a selective choice. I only interviewed teachers that were actually working with authentic material. To give the teachers some time to prepare, and to make sure they knew what I wanted to talk about, I gave out the missive with the questions included about a week in advance. I used the same questions for all interviews. To make sure not to miss anything that the teachers talked about and to be able to concentrate on attendant questions, I recorded and transcribed all the interviews. This was good for two reasons; I could go back and read or listen to the full interview if I was unsure if I had misunderstood something, and it is possible for an outsider to take part and look into the material, which is positive for the reliability.

5 Results

In this part, I present the result of the interviews. First a brief description about where the teachers found their material. The main part is about how the teachers reason about how and why they use authentic material.

5.1 Finding authentic material[5]

The teachers all had their special ways of getting hold of authentic material. Bella had friends in England that sent her material. Cara had a relative living in the United States who contributed with advice and material. Most teachers used the Internet to search for information, and in many cases new material was "stuck in the hand" by a colleague. Music

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[5] For a list of all the materials used, see enclosure 2.

connected to a certain theme was often previous knowledge or recommended by a colleague, while songs for stand-alone exercises often came from the pupils. TV-series were often recommended by a fellow teacher or found searching the "Mediapoolen[6]" website. Sometimes pupils wanted to see the same TV-series as another class. To find books to read in class, Cara and Cloe searched English websites and found lists of popular books among English teenagers. The same teachers used to buy English magazines when they were abroad on vacation, or at international newsstands in Sweden. Recommendations for the pupils to find books for supplementary reading could come from classmates, teachers, and librarians. Generally, the teachers experienced the pupils not being very good or interested in suggesting which material to use, but instead seemed pleased with what the teachers presented.

5.2 Language skills training

All teachers agreed on authentic material being an excellent tool to let the pupils practice the four language skills; listen, talk, read and write. The following text is divided into these skills, and since authentic material was often part of themes practicing two or more skills, I sometimes describe the use of the same material in more than one section or mention the multiple use in one section.

5.2.1 Listening

Making the pupils concentrate on listening to English, the activity had to be interesting, fun, or both. The teachers often wanted to complete the listening exercises from the CD belonging to the textbook and workbook with other listening activities. Bea and Cara mentioned that the CD from the textbook mostly let the pupils listen to a standardized British English or an unrealistic Texas "twang." They instead tried to use using streaming media through the Internet to listen to different accents.

A popular activity among the pupils was watching film or a TV-series. By showing the film without subtitles or with English subtitles all teachers considered this a good listening exercise. Cara, who showed most films, had recently let the pupils watch popular films like "*Hannah Montana*" and "*Inkheart*" as well as animated films from Disney and Pixar like "*Ice age*" and "*Finding Nemo*." Almost all teachers had used the TV-series "*Goal*" at various occasions and the pupils had appreciated it.

Another activity was listening to music. Bea had musical themes, for example music dealing with school, with songs like "*Don't know about history*" by Sam Cooke or "*School's out for the summer*" by Alice Cooper. She also used songs in a theme about letters, starting up with "*Hella mudda hello fadda*" by Alan Sherman. Both these themes started with listening and ended with writing.

5.2.2 Talking

All teachers used English as the classroom language, trying to make the pupils talk and listen to English every lesson. All teachers brought up news for the pupils to discuss; for example the death of pop star Michael Jackson and the elections in the United States. Ana brought up themes important to young people, like the common value-system, leadership, friendship, alcohol or something funny, like how to flirt. A fixed goal of using discussion that all teachers

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[6] http://www.mediapoolen.se/

brought up was that they tried to lure pupils into speaking English by choosing an issue so important and up-to-date that the pupils just had to speak. Cloe mentioned that the pupils could practice rephrasing and other strategies to express themselves in these discussions. However, as Amy said, normally only two to eight pupils are really taking an active part in the discussions, and for the rest of the class the discussion is transformed into a comprehension exercise.

To get all pupils involved at once, Ana used nursery rhymes and jazz chants which the pupils learned by heart. The idea was to let them practice pronunciation, and get used to hearing themselves speak English in an easy and funny way. To make this even funnier, the class was sometimes divided in two halves with one jazz chant each. They were given time to practice and then they had a battle to see which group knew its chant best. Amy had found a way to let all pupils use English in class; her class enjoyed singing the authentic songs in the textbook, for example "*Nothing compares to you*" sung by Sinead O'Connor, and "*Tears in heaven*" by Eric Clapton.

5.2.3 Reading

Books were used by all teachers. Most teachers used books in two ways; the first when the whole class read the same book at the same time, with follow-up discussions after a certain amount of pages giving all pupils an opportunity to catch up with the story. This kind of reading of a book often ended up with a written report. Popular books for this activity were "*Holes*" by Louis Sachar, "*The Wave*" by Morton Rue and "*The diary of Anne Frank*" by Anne Frank. The advantages of these books, according to the teachers, were that they were not very difficult to read, they dealt with important issues and they often caught the interest of most pupils, which often led to interesting discussions.

The second way of using books was to let pupils that often found the regular tasks easy read a book of their own choice. Ana and Bella let this reading be without obligation, the pupils just enjoyed the book without having to think about a report to write. Recommendations came from teachers, the school librarian, or classmates. Popular books were the books in the Twilight Saga by Stephanie Meyers, the books about Harry Potter by J.K Rawling, and Bram Stoker's "Dracula."

Ana sometimes read sonnets by Shakespeare "*Daffodils*" by Wordsworth to the class, to show the pupils the beauty of the language. She did not try to make the pupils understand the poems word by word, only the message. Cloe used the poem "*Red red rose*" by Burns to inspire the pupils to write their own poems.

To involve the pupils in reading, Ana and Cara had different approaches into "luring" the pupils into reading. Cara used glossy magazines like Marie Claire and Glamour to let the pupils read about things they were interested in; celebrities, the Readers' Queries and the horoscope. Ana used quizzes from teenagers' magazines, for example to find out if they were romantic or not. When the pupils made a quiz like this, they answered a questionnaire about what they would do in a certain situation, then there was a way to summarize the result, and the pupils then found out how romantic they were. Ana also used material specially made when she worked at another school. She had material about horses, technical terms and medical terms. By using these magazines, quizzes, or special materials, Ana and Cara made

the pupils forget they were actually reading in English, since they became so interested in the things they were reading.

Amy let the pupils read aloud to her in a supplementary reader of their own choice. According to Amy, letting the pupils read something unfamiliar instead of a text from the textbook was a good way to listen to the pupil's reading skills as well as pronunciation and flow.

5.2.4 Writing

The theme works often ended up with the pupils writing a text, especially when the whole class read the same book. Amy had produced a questionnaire that could be used on any book, and the answers from the pupils gave her a good hint of what they have understood. One question was: "describe how you have got to know the main character" after reading forty pages. By the written response Amy could see to what extent the pupil had understood the text if the text produced by the pupil was superficial or analysing.

Bea used a theme work named The English speaking world, where the pupils worked in small groups and produced material about a country of their own choice. Bea had made a paper with information that the pupils should find out facts about, for example the status of English in the country, when English began to be spoken, peculiarities of that particular English and famous persons from that country. Bea also had a theme work about writing letters, starting up with the song "*Hella mudda hello fadda*" by Alan Sherman, ending with the pupils writing letters.

Bella let the pupils choose a song each which they listened to and translated, and then the pupils wrote a story inspired by the song or a part of the song, for example the beginning or the chorus. Bea used songs to make fill-in-the-blanks exercises, and sometimes she let one pupil at a time choose a song and make a fill-in-the-blanks exercise which the rest of the class tried to fill in.

5.3 Authentic material as life and institutions information

The pupils often learned about life and institutions information in a theme work about a certain country. A typical theme work started with a text in the textbook or a song with an artist from that country, the theme work then continued with the pupils looking for data in authentic material, which they wrote down for some sort of presentation. The theme work then ended with a film connected to the theme. The teachers had many suggestions of films to use; Ana used "*The snapper*" for Ireland, Bella showed "*Ocean deadliest*" for Australia and "*Billy Elliot*" for Scotland as well as bringing up discussions about the sex roles in society. Bea used "*JFK*" and the speech of Martin Luther King in a project about the elections in the USA. Ana used "*Cry Freedom*" and Cloe used "*Goodbye Bofana*" for South Africa and apartheid. To present themes about Shakespeare, Ana used "*Much ado about nothing*"" and Cara used "*Shakespeare in love*."

The teachers also used books, TV and TV-series to deal with life and institutions information. Cara used cookery books that gave opportunities to talk about the recipes, the names of foodstuff, and the glossary of the different systems of measuring. Cloe let the class watch the inaugural speech of Barack Obama the morning after it had happened to let the pupils take part of a historic event as it happened. Cara and Cloe showed the TV-series "*The old curiosity shop*" which let the pupils experience London in the 19th century. Most of the teachers had let

the pupils read the book "*The wave*" about a classroom experience made by an American teacher when he tried to explain to his pupils why the Nazis could succeed in Germany in the 1930's. The teachers often used this book in the English classes in cooperation with the History teacher when the pupils studied the Second World War.

The teachers had similar strategies regarding the use of subtitles. If the aim of the film was to present something that the teachers wanted all pupils to comprehend, Swedish subtitles were used. If the aim of the film was to practice language comprehension, the teachers used English subtitles or no subtitles at all depending on the difficulty of the language in the film and the level of the class. Using English subtitles gives an extra dimension according to Cloe, since the pupils listen and read how the word is spelled.

5.4 Authentic material as motivation and inspiration

All authentic material described by the respondents was used for some kind of inspiration or motivation. According to Cloe the key to success in being an English teacher is to find issues that the pupils find interesting and fun. Amy says that many pupils do not like working in the textbook or workbook and therefore almost anything else is better. The main idea among the teachers was that variety is the spice of life, which is true also in the classroom. The instruments to motivate and inspire the pupils were films, music, TV-series, books, magazines, and specially made material. The teachers emphasized that an important detail in motivation and inspiration was that the pupils were given choices about what to do. With finding good, interesting material and creating an environment that motivate the pupils, the learning will follow. When the pupils enjoy the lessons, when they understand they are making progress, learning can take place.

5.5 Result summary

The teachers in these interviews were all using authentic material on a regular basis. The results do therefore not reflect how the "average teacher" uses authentic material.
All teachers in this study agreed on authentic material being an excellent tool to let the pupils practice the four language skills; listen, talk, read and write. They also agreed that authentic material was a good way to break the monotony of the school, the teachers and the pupils enjoyed to do something else every now and then. Many exercises were part of themes and a theme work often included two or more of the four skills. The way to find material was to find it on the Internet or get it from a colleague. The most common uses of authentic material were reading books and showing film and other popular activities were reading magazines, watching TV-series and listening to music. The tricks to make the pupils love studying English was to find interesting and up-to-date things to do and let the pupils make some choices of what they wanted to do. There was no difference between the three schools about what kind of authentic material the teachers used except the one that one school had fewer opportunities to use technical equipment. The main factor of difference was the individual teacher. The fact that there were some socio-economic differences between the schools did not show at all in my study.

6 Discussion

In the interviews the teachers gave me a lot of examples of what kind of authentic material they used and how they were thinking about how to use it. I will bring up some of these ideas to give my own thoughts as well as connecting them to the Whole Language theory and the research I wrote about earlier. I will also discuss some of the goals of the curriculum in the text.

6.1 Language skills training

All respondents in the interviews believed authentic materials were good for the pupils' learning, and that the four different language skills listening, talking, reading and writing could be practised with the help of authentic material. These teachers have built up a lot of knowledge of what they have studied earlier, collecting tips and tricks from colleagues and pupils and remembering their own experiences. I have chosen to write about every skill in a separate part. First, I present some general ideas about language learning.

Goodman (2005, pp.6-7) specifies some ideas that he considers crucial for language learning to take place. A main idea is that the language has to be meaningful and relevant to the child. A lot of work done by the teachers was dealing with this question. The teachers discussed, searched and tried different authentic material to be able to hand out material that was meaningful and interesting to the pupils. When one authentic material was successful in one class, the teacher tried it in other classes and other teachers tried it in their classes as well.

6.1.1 Listening

The most common activity practicing listening comprehension to authentic material was watching a film or a TV series, because it was a popular activity among the pupils. According to research, the activity of watching films is a good idea. According to Goodman (2005) the main idea of the Whole Language theory is that language is best understood in its context. In a film there are different ways for the spectator of the film to understand the context. There are pictures, sounds, gestures and facial expressions which in an English lesson situation help the pupils to understand the dialogue.

Since there was no point at all in showing films the pupils did not enjoy, the teachers chose films with a bit too difficult language. The teachers handled the difficulties of understanding in different ways. Some teachers talked about the film before showing it, some teachers stopped the film to explain difficult sections of the dialogue. English subtitles were used if the film was a bit hard to understand, and Swedish subtitles were used if the film was very hard to understand.

Showing TV series was also popular. This activity can be compared to Illés' (2008, pp.145-148) ideas as to why a textbook is still successful some thirty years after it was written. According to her the success came from the text being well written and that the pupils could follow the main character in a natural way through the entire textbook. I think the same thing happens when a class is watching a well produced TV series. They soon get to know the main characters and after some episodes the pupils will be familiar with the story. When the pupils know the main character, the things happening to him or her will be natural. The most successful TV series mentioned was "*Goal!*" According to Cloe the pupils loved this TV

series, and the reasons for this I believe are first of all that the series apparently has a well-written story and also that it consists of 13 episodes. The 13 episodes give the pupils enough time to get to know the characters and the story, an important part of success as Illés (2008) conclusion about the successful books showed.

To make the pupils listen to the activities mentioned above the same idea applies; the activity needs to capture the interest of the pupils as Goodman, Lindö and Illés describes in different ways. If the pupils enjoy the activity, they will be concentrated on the task, doing their best.

6.1.2 Talking

According to Goodman (2005), language is best learned when the focus is not the language but on something being communicated which is meaningful for the pupil. Gilmore (2004, p.364-370) compared dialogues in textbooks to real ones, and his conclusion was that the textbook dialogues were not very realistic. Therefore, I believe it is important that teachers talk and discuss with the pupils to show them and letting them be a part of realistic dialogues. The teachers I interviewed did this and also said this was the most difficult goal in the curriculum to work with. The teachers themselves used English as much as it was practically possible as the classroom language, trying to make the pupils answer in English. To make the pupils communicate in English as much as possible, the teachers tried many different ideas to create interesting discussions, which also included discussions about issues that were not connected to the English lessons. So what did the teachers do to try to make the pupils speak? All teachers took the opportunity to let the class get involved in a news discussion if something special had happened. The key to good discussions was to find an issue that the pupils wanted to say something about. According to Erkaya (2005, p.9) dealing with something that is fun or emotional or a subject the pupils are familiar with can make them step out of their habits of not talking and be more willing to take risks and speak freely. The death of Michael Jackson or typical teenage issues like alcohol and love worked fine as topics.

6.1.3 Reading

Reading was mentioned in a positive way by all teachers. According to Goodman (2005 pp.6-7) reading a book is a good example of focusing on the story and not the learning of a language. Goodman suggests that the pupils do not learn how to read simply by reading, they learn how to read by reading different things like stories, newspapers, and signs. I believe this also applies when it comes to reading with the aim of learning a foreign language.

Peacock argues that pupils using authentic material learn more than pupils only working with textbooks and workbooks. I believe that this is in line with Goodman's main points. The pupils Peacock studied used authentic material which was funnier or more interesting than working with the textbook, and they could relate to the authentic material, the same argument Goodman brings up as one of the main ideas of the Whole Language theory. A language learner needs to be able to relate to a story to enjoy it and to learn the language the learner needs to enjoy the reading. The teachers in my study tried to realize this by choosing books that were interesting or exciting and on an appropriate language level for the pupils.

The activity of having a supplementary reader was optional and recommended by the teachers. This kind of reading Ana and Bella thought should be without obligation, the pupils

should just read for their own learning and amusement. This is again the idea that Goodman (2005, pp.6-7) describes, that the pupil can relate to whatever he or she reads or listen to. In this case, when the pupil can read something of their own choice, this idea really applies. Many pupils are now reading the very popular Twilight saga, and letting the pupils read these books in English in class I believe is an excellent idea. Bella also mentioned that letting the pupils read a book of their own choice is a good way for the pupils to reach one of the goals in the curriculum, to take responsibility for their own learning.

One fact that came up in the interviews that I found very interesting was that one of the teachers, Cloe, brought up that there is a discrepancy in the difficulty level of the language in the textbooks and workbooks compared to the difficulty level in the National test. I found out that there is no mentioning of authentic text in the curriculum, but the constructors of the National test mentions that the test is made up to be as authentic as possible. According to Cloe, the pupils do not stand a chance to get good grades if they only work with the textbook and workbook. They have to practice reading a lot more advanced, more authentic-like texts to make sure they get a good grade in the National test.

6.1.4 Writing

Goodman (2005, p.5) argues that if the language is whole and not divided into grammatical parts, it is easier for the pupil to understand it. In the following examples from two teachers, the pupils were given a task to write down ideas about a book. When writing this way, the pupils have to write full sentences. Goodman argues that practising writing in this manner makes much more sense for the pupil compared to the traditional exercises where the language is divided into small bits and pieces.

Amy used a special writing process when the pupils read books with the goals of the curriculum in mind. She had written a questionnaire applicable to any book and the way she had constructed the questions, each pupil wrote freely about their own thoughts about the book. The questionnaire contained open questions; one question was that the pupil should describe how the author introduced the main character.

Bella had a project that started with the pupils listening and translating a song of their choice. Then the pupils wrote a story that was influenced by the text or a part of the text. By starting with a song of their own choice and letting them write about their own ideas, the whole project was in the hands of the pupils.

6.2 Authentic material as motivation and inspiration

Erkaya (2005) and Peacock (1997) argue that doing something that is "for real" instead of the textbook and workbook works as motivation and inspiration for the pupils. I heard similar arguments for using authentic material from the respondents in this study. The teachers experienced that both they and their pupils enjoyed doing something else than using the textbook and workbook. According to Amy, the pupils think that any kind of exercise that is not from the textbook or workbook is a better choice than these books; it does not really matter what the alternative exercise is since the change in itself is the most important issue.

The question about what the pupils found interesting or not was interesting, and with film as an example, some of the teachers tried to explain why some films were popular and others

were not. One animated film like "*Finding Nemo*" could be a success, while a similar film was not popular at all. I believe a successful film has to have three qualities and the difficult part for the teacher is finding films with all three qualities. The first quality is the language; it should not be too difficult to understand. This I believe is a reason why animated films are popular, since the language in those films often seems to be on a suitable level. The second quality is the story. It has to be a good, not childish story.

The third quality concerns the characters. The pupils are teens, in the age when the image can be very important. Therefore, the story has to have characters that are OK to enjoy, so the liking of a character in a film does not disturb the image. For some reason it was not OK to enjoy the characters in the film "*Wall-E*", but the characters of "*Finding Nemo*" were considered cool by the pupils.

I find the question why some characters are popular and some are not interesting. Lindö (2002, pp.13-18) says that authentic material needs to be not only meaningful and interesting but also has to relate to the pupils' experiences and interests. Taking the film "*Finding Nemo*" as an example, it has ingredients that the pupils can relate to. The film is about a young fish that was separated from his family, trapped in an aquarium. All the things Nemo goes through in this film the pupils can imagine since they are kids too. At the same time the characters in the film are funny and charming.

6.3 Authentic material as life and institutions information

Often a book or a film was included in a theme work or a project about an English speaking country. This was a good way to make sure the pupils reached the goals of the curriculum concerning life and institutions information. To be effective, the teachers often had double intentions about using a film or a book. The book "The Wave" is a good example of this. Bea let the class read the book at the same time they studied the Second World War in history class. The idea behind reading this book was not only practising English, but also gave the pupils knowledge about what propaganda and group pressure can do. The History teacher could then relate this to the historical events during the Second World War.

Using cookery books, as Cara did, is not only about a good way of teaching measurement systems and the names of items in a kitchen. It also gives the pupils information about what they eat in the country where the cookery-book comes from, as well as information about special food for special occasions, for example the traditional Thanksgiving turkey in the United States.

6.4 Didactic consequences

If I would describe a common core of the ideas in the research done by Goodman, Illés, Peacock and Erkaya as I have understood their reports, the idea of using authentic material is to let the pupils do something else than they usually do, to inspire them and to let them be an active part of their own education. Instead of using the textbook or workbook every day, let the pupils translate a song, read an article, watch a film, listen to a radio broadcast, read a poem, translate a recipe or read about their hobby on a web page.

The world is full of authentic material; the problem is to find material that works. After summarizing the interviews and doing some thinking about which material is the most

effective according to the results, I have two answers. The first answer is easy; the most effective use of authentic material is reading a book, because all teachers let all pupils read books. The second answer is that the most effective use of authentic material is for the teacher to work with a material that he or she enjoys and is comfortable with, which in most cases will result in the pupils enjoying it.

The didactic consequences I have learned which I also can recommend to other teachers are: keep your ears and eyes open, listen to ideas from colleagues and what pupils have to say. One never knows what excellent ideas they might have. Do not be afraid of trying something new. It might be a new exercise, a new book or a new film recommended by someone you maybe do not know so well. If the teacher has trust in the pupils' urge to learn, they will do their best when something new is tried. If the pupils are given freedom and responsibility of their learning of the language, the majority of the pupils will learn. Authentic material that affects the pupils is a good way to create a situation for a discussion. It can be any feeling; joy, sorrow, pity or anger. The important thing is to create a situation where the pupils' different opinions are more important to speak out than their fear of speaking English.

6.5 Drawbacks of authentic material

Compared to the textbook and workbook, authentic material will contain text on any level of difficulty, while the textbook and workbook texts are on a level appropriate for the language level of the pupils. Moreover, the textbook often contains an amount of new words appropriate for that level. The workload of new words in an authentic text can be too much for many pupils. An authentic text might simply be too advanced and therefore the pupils loose interest. Teachers and pupils are used to having textbooks and workbooks that are increasing in difficulty; the grammar comes in a certain order. A drawback of authentic material in this sense is that there is no specific order of grammar, since all grammatical features are used in authentic texts, also the grammatical features the pupils at this level do not understand. The teachers I interviewed did what I believe is the wisest thing when teaching at this stage; they used the textbook and workbook as a base, and used authentic material every now and then, to make the lessons a bit more interesting and fun.

6.6 Suggestions for further research

The research I found on the Whole Language theory is made on first language acquisition. It would be interesting to do research with focus on learning a second or third language.

The most common activity of using authentic material in this study was reading a book. To use reading as a way to learn a language, it is essential that the pupils can read quite well. It would be interesting to compare how pupils that read well are able to learn a foreign language compared to pupils that are poor readers.

An important element in the Whole Language theory is motivation. Why a certain material or exercise is motivating and another not? Working with the same exercise; how come some pupils are motivated while other pupils are not? Is it possible to motivate all pupils?

In the interviews I was told that the texts used in the National tests are more advanced than the texts in the textbooks and workbooks. If they are, why does this discrepancy exist? Is

there a discrepancy between the curriculum and the National test, or is the difference in the interpretation of the curriculum?

6.7 Method discussion

My intention with this study was to increase my understanding of how teachers used authentic material and I think my choice of unstructured qualitative interviews was the best possible for this study. By recording and transcribing the interviews, I made it easier for myself to find the information that was interesting for this study. When I was writing this report and I read the interviews I sometimes wished I had asked more questions about certain issues, but it is always easy to be wise after the event. I had an idea to make a questionnaire to give out to a larger number of teachers. This would have given me more examples of authentic material that is used in the classrooms, but I believe a questionnaire would not increase my understanding of how and why the teachers use authentic material. I also considered making interviews or observations of pupils, but together with the questionnaire I found it too time consuming to be a realistic part of this study.

6.8 Thanks

I would like to thank the six teachers who let me interview them, my supervisor Anna Hellén and my two proofreaders Martin and Anna Milner.

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Enclosure 1
Autentiskt material i engelskundervisningen i årskurs nio

Hej
Jag heter Fredrik Larsson och går den nionde terminen på Lärarutbildningen i Borås. Jag läser min tredje termin Engelska och har valt att skriva om användadet av autentiskt material i engelskundervisningen. Det kan vara böcker (även förenklade), musik, film, serier, instruktionsböcker, dikter, barnvisor eller något annat på engelska som kan användas i klassrummet.

Mitt intresse i denna fråga är i hur man som pedagog kan använda material som finns på engelska, hur man kan involvera eleverna i valet och användandet av materialet och hur det arbetet kan kopplas till läroplanen.

Dessa frågor kommer jag att ta upp:

> Hur använder du autentiskt material?
> Var hittar du detta material?
> Är eleverna involverade i vilket material som används?
> Hur skulle du beskriva hur man kan använda autentiskt material för att nå upp till målen i läroplanen?

Om du har fått detta brev är det tack vare att du undervisar i ämnet engelska och att du ibland använder dig av autentiskt material i undervisningen. Jag ska försöka hitta två pedagoger i engelska på tre skolor som har årskurs 9, sammantaget sex pedagoger.

Eftersom det är frivilligt att ställa upp på denna intervju som jag beräknar ta 30 – 60 minuter så erbjuder jag som tack för hjälpen en sammanfattning av de olika tips som ni pedagoger ger mig. På det sättet kanske ni också kan få lite nya tips om hur man kan hitta och använda autentiskt material.

Jag kommer i min uppsats att följa de etiska råd som Vetenskapsrådet sammanställt (länk till hemsida nedan). Detta innebär bl.a. att både i den nämnda sammanfattning samt i min kandidatuppsats kommer du och dina svar att behandlas konfidentiellt.

Om ni har frågor, kontakta mig gärna.

Fredrik Larsson
0320-48765 0708-130694

frdrk.lrssn@telia.com

Vetenskapsrådets etiska råd
http://www.vr.se/download/18.668745410b37070528800029/HS%5B1%5D.pdf

Enclosure 2

Authentic material and where to find it

Film
The snapper
Cry Freedom
Billy Elliot
JFK
Finding Nemo
Ice age 1
Ice age 2
Cry Freedom
Farewell Bofana
Much ado about nothing
Shakespeare in love

You Tube
Documentary:
Ocean's deadliest

Music:
Don't know about history by Sam Cooke
School's out for the summer by Alice Cooper

SVT Play
Inaugural speech of Barack Obama

Mediapoolen
Goal - TV series
The old curiosity shop - TV series
Lab rats - TV series

International news stands
Magazines
Cookery-books