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Fostering Students' Oral Communication Skills in the Second Language Classroom

*Främja elevers muntliga kommunikationsförmågor i
andraspråksklassrummet*

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Sammanfattning <i>Summary</i> <p>This thesis was carried out with data collected from a school in the south of India and written by two students becoming teachers of English. The aim of this thesis is to find out how a teacher can foster and develop student's oral communication skills so that they have the ability, willingness and confidence to speak English. The thesis is based upon the following research questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors, according to the students and teachers, are important for developing and fostering oral communication skills? • What speaking activities did the students and teacher find important for developing and fostering oral communication skills? <p>The main findings of this study showed that the teachers found a comfortable environment, expansion of vocabulary, letting students choose their own topics and importance of good communication skills important when fostering students' oral communication skills. The students in this study expressed that choosing topics and feeling comfortable in natural communicative situations was important for the development of their oral communication skills: This study, as well as previous studies, found that a teacher can in fact help students increase both their motivation and confidence by planning lessons revolving around topics that are of interest to students, as well as give them the scope to choose their own topics when practicing oral communication activities. Furthermore, the result for the second research question showed that there were several speaking activities that the teachers and students found important for developing and fostering oral communication skills. Some of these were everyday activities which increased their vocabulary, carrying out speeches that allowed the students to choose topics and role-play, such as debates.</p>

Nyckelord <i>Keywords</i> English, second language acquisition, communicative classroom, oral communication skills, ability, confidence, willingness, vocabulary, speaking activities, topics

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Love,
Yasse-Maja

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Aim and Research Questions	1
2. Theoretical Background.....	2
2.1. General Field of Oral Communication in Second Language Learning.....	2
2.2 Empirical Studies	8
3. Data and Method.....	10
3.1. The Nature of the Data	10
3.2. The Procedure for Gathering the Data	10
3.3 The Procedure for Processing and Analyzing the Data	13
4. Results.....	16
4.1 Connecting Confidence with Vocabulary and Expression.....	16
4.2 Connecting Confidence with Favorite Topic	17
4.3 Creating a Comfortable Classroom Environment	18
4.4 Encouraging Students for Public Speaking.....	20
4.5 Developing Students' Speaking Skills through Structured Activities	22
5. Discussion and Conclusion	25
5.1 Factors Students Consider Important for Speaking Activities	25
5.2 Factors Teachers Consider Important when Fostering Students' Oral Communication Skills ...	26
5.3 Speaking Activities at the Indian School	28
5.4 Conclusion.....	30
References	32
Appendix 1 - Focus Group Questions.....	35
Appendix 2 - Interview Guide	37
Appendix 3 - Letter of Consent	39
Appendix 4 - Letter of Consent Teachers	40
Appendix 5 - The Collaboration Between the Writers	41

1. Introduction

This thesis was written by two students who are becoming upper secondary school teachers of English in Sweden. Both of us carried out our final teaching practice at an English-medium school in the south of India, where we came to notice that there was a lot of emphasis on speaking activities in all age groups. Furthermore, we observed that the students at the Indian School were confident speakers and most of the time they were willing to perform speaking activities. Developing and fostering students' oral communication skills are important aspects of the subject English in Sweden. The Swedish Curriculum states "the subject of English should aim to help students develop their English skills for them to *be able, want, and dare to use* the language in different situations" (Skolverket 2011: 53, our translation). Acknowledging that the Indian School in many ways fosters the communicative aspects mentioned in the quotation from Skolverket (2011) led us to the aim of this thesis.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to investigate what the teachers and students at the Indian School perceived as important factors when developing and fostering oral communicative skills. Moreover, we wanted to analyze if the speaking activities at the Indian School correlated with the factors that the teacher and students considered important. Furthermore, we wanted to investigate whether the knowledge gained from the data collected in India could be utilized in a Swedish classroom and thereby facilitate the aim from the Swedish curriculum stated above. Consequently, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate how one as a teacher can foster students' oral communication skills so the students are able, want and dare to use English regardless of the situation. Based on this purpose, the aim of this thesis is to answer the following research questions:

- What factors, according to the students and teachers, are important for developing and fostering oral communication skills?
- What speaking activities did the students and teachers find important for developing and fostering oral communication skills?

2. Theoretical Background

In this chapter, a theoretical framework of this thesis will be presented and contextualized within the relevant field of research. The content will be presented in two sections: the general field and empirical studies regarding similar research as this study.

2.1. General Field of Oral Communication in Second Language Learning

In this section, the development of spoken language learning from a historical perspective will be presented. The ‘communicative classroom’ will be described in accordance with the theories behind the concept of ‘communicative competence’. Furthermore, the rationale behind the importance of a classroom environment will be explained, followed by a section regarding ‘comprehensive knowledge’ and ‘pushed output’.

A Historical Perspective on Oral Second Language Learning

Until this day, no one exactly knows how one acquires a new language. However, many different theories have been presented over the course of time. During the late 1950s, a behaviorist called B.F. Skinner published *Verbal Behavior*, a book which included a theory that suggested that one acquires a language by positive or negative reinforcement (Skinner 1957). This paved the way for several researchers who responded to Skinner’s theory regarding language acquisition (Harmer 1991: 33). The linguist Noam Chomsky published *Review: Verbal Behavior by B.F Skinner* where he presented his ‘Cognitive Theory’ (Chomsky 1959). According to Chomsky, language is learned by learning the rules of the language system and thereby one gradually acquires the competence to produce the language (ibid).

Several sociolinguistics criticized Chomsky for not taking any socio-cultural aspects into consideration (Malmberg 1993: 72). As a response to the criticism towards Chomsky, Dell Hymes, a sociolinguist, published a work that expanded Chomsky’s concept of “competence” and developed a new concept called ‘communicative competence’ (Hymes 1968). Hymes believed that *competence* should include the learner’s knowledge of how language is used in different social situations besides having knowledge of a language’s forms and structures (Young 2005: 429). Furthermore, Hymes argued that a learner must have knowledge of four different aspects in social situations: “what is possible to do with language, what is feasible, what is appropriate and what is actually done” (loc. cit). This combination of ability and

knowledge of language presented by Hymes, came to be known as ‘the communicative competence’ (ibid: 249). This perspective presented by Hymes influenced English language teaching during the 60s and 70s (Hedge 2000: 46). Simultaneously, the Council of Europe created a new syllabus for English language learning based on both the functional and situational use of language. The combination of these two movements led to the development of ‘the communicative classroom’ (loc. cit).

The Communicative Classroom

Hedge (2002: 46) describes the communicative classroom as where one develops the students’ communicative language ability in five key components:

- *Pragmatic competence* refers to the ability to know how to use the language to achieve communicative goals.
- *Linguistic competence* refers to knowledge of the language itself (spelling, vocabulary, pronunciation etc.).
- *Discourse competence* refers to the ability to know how ideas are linked across utterances (linguistically and between sentences).
- *Strategic competence* refers to using communicative strategies to express oneself.
- *Fluency* refers to the ability to communicate easily without hesitation and “inappropriate” slowness (ibid: 46–55).

Thus, the teacher’s role in a communicative classroom goes far beyond presenting and providing the students with new language. They need to build the students’ competence as well as their confidence (ibid: 63–67). Furthermore, Hedge (2000: 273) clearly states that “the communicative classroom will need to expose learners to input which they can attend to, and opportunities to produce output in more controlled activities”. The concept ‘controlled activities’ refers to activities where the focus on language is made conscious for the students, while the teacher still has control of the students’ output to a large extent (loc. cit).

Hedge (2000: 273–276) raises four needs that have to be fulfilled to create these ‘controlled activities’. Firstly, one needs to *contextualize* the activity by demonstrating the link between linguistic form and communicative function. That is, to find a suitable situation for when the current structure would be applied in real life. Secondly, the activities need to allow the students to *personalize* their language to freely express their own ideas, feelings and opinions. Thirdly, the students need to become aware of the *social use of language*, which means understanding which language and social behavior is suitable in a specific situation. Lastly, the teachers need to *help the students develop their confidence*, for them to learn how to produce language automatically and quickly. By letting students work and try out their language together, the teacher is creating a positive climate for classroom communication where the students’ confidence can develop (loc. cit).

The Communicative Classroom in Sweden

The rationale of the communicative classroom can in many ways be related to the productive aims for the subject of English in the Swedish Curriculum (Skolverket 2011). For example, the curriculum states that the subject of English should aim to help students develop their oral skills for them to be able to (*linguistic competence*), want to, and dare to use the language in different situations (ibid: 53). Moreover, students should be given the opportunities to develop the ability to use different strategies (*discourse competence and strategic competence*) to support and solve their communicative problems when their linguistic knowledge is not enough (ibid: 53). Furthermore, students should be given opportunities to develop comprehensive communicative abilities (*fluency*), which they can use in functional and meaningful contexts (*pragmatic competence*) (ibid: 53). Hence, all five key components of the communicative classroom can be interpreted into the Swedish curriculum for the subject of English.

Classroom Environment Creating Motivation and Confidence

The physical conditions of the classroom environment when learning a second language can affect a student’s motivation, either positively or negatively (Harmer 1993: 5). As mentioned above, a teacher needs to create a positive climate where classroom communication can take place and at the same time give students’ the scope to develop their confidence. Furthermore, Hedge (2000: 21) discusses the phenomenon of anxiety in a classroom, which she states is highly linked with speaking activities. She claims that a teacher has the task to decrease anxiety in developing students’ self-confidence by providing reassuring feedback, self-

perception and giving students the scope to develop proficiency. Another aspect that a teacher must take into consideration to make students feel safe and confident, is ‘peer approval’ (Harmer 1993: 7–8). Harmer discusses that adolescence are in the stage in life where they are more likely to feel less motivated due to the fear of embarrassment in front of their peers rather than their teacher. Furthermore, Harmer states that it is crucial for a teacher to create an environment where students feel that their peers are assets in their learning rather than critics (loc. cit).

Yule (2010: 192) claims that motivation is an obvious factor of importance for a successful learning of a second language. Furthermore, he states that there is a clear connection between being a successful language learner and being motivated to learn. That is, students who are motivated are more likely to be successful learners and successful students are more likely to be motivated. Ellis (1993: 75–76) states that motivation is a complex phenomenon, which can be divided into four different types; *instrumental motivation* refers to a learner who wants to learn the target language in order to achieve a goal, such as passing an exam or getting a job. *Integrative motivation* refers to a learner that wants to use the target language for social purposes. The third one, *resultative motivation*, means that the learner is motivated by previous success in learning the target language, and finally, *intrinsic motivation*, refers to learners who learn without being motivated by the target language itself.

The connection between success and motivation is also mentioned by Harmer (1993: 7), who in contrary to Yule claims that success does not automatically lead to motivation, but can in fact lead to de-motivation. He discusses the role of a teacher in the sense that, if a teacher sets the bar too high, or too low, students might find a task too hard or too easy and thereby feel de-motivated. Hence, it is vital that a teacher tries to find carefully balanced activities that are at an appropriate level for students. However, he does mention that students need to take responsibility for their own learning but a teacher can influence the course of events in their favor (ibid: 7). That is, keeping students’ interests in mind when planning activities can consequently keep them motivated (ibid: 265). In conclusion, motivation is strongly connected with balanced activities that challenge students on an appropriate level and engage them on a personal level. In addition, the classroom environment has significant effects on students’ motivation and successful second language learning.

Comprehensive Language Learning and Student Output

Within the field of second language learning, grammar has historically always been seen as more important than vocabulary (Czifra 2013: 111). However, today vocabulary is considered equally important to grammatical structures when it comes to developing communicative competence within a second language. According to Czifra (2013), grammar is needed in order for the learner to communicate in a logical manner; however, the importance of vocabulary is emphasized since that is how a learner transmits a message (loc. cit). Nevertheless, Gass et al. (2013: 212) mention that vocabulary learning is a time consuming process and it is unrealistic to believe that a language learner will have full knowledge of a word after only hearing it one time. Words are commonly learned after being encountered frequently; that is, a learner must hear the word used in different contexts to fully understand its meaning and as a result utilize the word as a part of their own vocabulary. This process can be enhanced by using a platform created by Paribakht and Wesche (in Gass et al. 2013: 212) known as the ‘Vocabulary Knowledge Scale’ consisting of five stages: “a. the word is unfamiliar, b. the word is familiar but the meaning is not known, c. translation into the native language can be given; d. the word can be used appropriately in a sentence and e. the word is used accurately, both semantically and grammatically” (loc. cit).

The linguist Stephen Krashen put forward a theory called the *Input Theory*, where he claimed that a learner must build comprehensive knowledge of the target language before any spoken language can occur (Krashen 1985). His stance was based on an approach called the *Comprehensive Approach* which meant that, if output is produced before input, a learner could make errors which persisted. However, if input knowledge of a language is acknowledged before output is produced, these errors can be avoided. Though input is important for a second language learner, it is not enough. However, Merrill Swain (2005:) took a different stance by arguing for *Pushed Output*. She claimed that, pushing students to produce language would help them notice gaps in their language knowledge. ‘Pushed output’ is basically when a learner has to produce language that “pushes” them to perform outside their normal comfort level. Several speaking tasks can lead to a pushed output with a desirable result. For example, research shows that when learners are given the opportunity to prepare a speaking task, it can in fact lead to improvements in fluency and grammatical complexity. Furthermore, repetitions of task preparation permit the learner to develop their performance continuously (Nation 2005: 446).

Eriksson (1996: 9) claims that practicing prepared oral production is a forgotten activity in the second language classrooms. He states that motivation can increase when learners are able to express their own ideas and opinions in the target language (ibid: 18). Creating personal meanings is essential for communication; we need something to communicate about. Besides, Eriksson states that oral activities are of importance. Therefore, in accordance with Nation's statement above, students should be provided with repeated opportunities to express content of their own when practicing the target language. This can be achieved by having students prepare speeches unfamiliar content to the listeners. The reasoning behind having students deliver a speech on an unknown topic is to create a communication gap. This gap will create a natural communicate situation between the student conducting the speech and the other students listening to the speech. This can start from an intermediate stage from prepared speeches and going to higher levels of spontaneous speeches. This is a creative communicative activity, which takes away the focus from accuracy and correctness (loc. cit)

This is also supported by Hedge (2000: 283), who claims that when students attend higher levels of second language learning, there should be an increased focus on fluency-based activities. The rationale behind the increased focus on fluency is that learners should have developed their skills within grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation during the lower levels of second language learning. Consequently, they should be able to combine previous knowledge and apply that to "real-language use" during the fluency-based activities (loc. cit). Examples of such activities are presented by Hedge as 'free discussions' and 'role-play'. Free discussions can provide students the opportunity to freely discuss and express their ideas regarding different topics. This can engage students in meaningful discussions allowing them to use their communicative skills. These types of fluency-based activities can also be supported by the following quotation:

Important as the accuracy may be, it will be during the fluency sessions [...] that the strategies for independent learning and indeed the real internalization of the language will be developed (Brumfit 1981: 49).

Consequently, it is important to give students the scope to make mistakes so they can play around with the language and internalize it during fluency-based activities. However, free discussions can lead less confident students to feel anxiety over the fact that they have to express their own thoughts and opinions in a second language regarding topics unfamiliar to

them (Hedge 2000: 277–280). One way to deal with this problem is through structured ‘role play’. This can in fact lead students who feel less confident during free discussions to open up and want to be a part of role-playing since they are “somebody else” and do not have to represent their own opinions (loc. cit).

2.2 Empirical Studies

This section will present a brief overview of two empirical studies with aims similar to this thesis. When selecting the articles, reliability as well as their currency has been taken into consideration; they are peer-reviewed articles and were published in 2010 and 2014. Several studies have been made regarding speaking skills, although in-depth research regarding factors such as confidence in speaking as well as willingness is limited. Two articles regarding willingness and confidence in speaking activities in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context were however found.

One of the researchers carried out a qualitative study on 18 EFL undergraduate Thai students taking an English course (Boonkit 2010: 1305). The background to this study was that language instructors in a Thai context experienced that the majority of undergraduate EFL learners were unable to speak English confidently. The aim was to find out why they had a lack of confidence when communicating in English. The findings from the interviews conducted in this study revealed that the students considered confidence as an important factor when carrying out public speaking. Furthermore, the students stated that preparation for speaking tasks was crucial for minimizing anxiety. Moreover, the result showed that appropriate task-design and the promotion of speaking confidence were important factors for the development of EFL students’ speaking skills. Furthermore, the results from the recordings revealed that when the students performed speaking tasks, they were comfortable, confident and motivated when they spoke about topics they had selected by themselves (ibid: 1308).

The other article aims to present the participants view on ‘willingness to communicate’ (WTC) through carrying out an in-depth qualitative investigation (Cameron 2014: 76–78). The participants in this study were two Iranian women who had migrated to New Zealand; both of them had previous experience of English language learning from Iran. The article identified the following factors as being of importance to their WTC; past learning experiences, personality traits, self-confidence and lack of anxiety, and motivation. In addition, the participants experienced that the context affected their WTC and that their self-confidence to speak English had increased as a result of the authentic communication opportunities they had been given.

3. Data and Method

This chapter will be present the different ways in which this study has been carried out. Firstly, detailed information will be given regarding the nature of the data. Secondly, a description of how the participants were selected and how the data was collected will be given. Thirdly, there will be a presentation of which research method has been used to analyze the data as well as a short section regarding some methodological problems.

3.1. The Nature of the Data

The data used when conducting this study consists of multiple audio recordings from two different sources: focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. The focus group discussions were carried out with students in 12th grade at the age of 16–17, both male and female. The participants in the semi-structured interviews were all female teachers in 10th – 12th grade, with three to twelve years of teaching experience in the subject of English. The discussions had a pre-defined *Discussion guide* (see Appendix 1) and the interviews were based on an *Interview Guide* (see Appendix 2). Both focus group discussions lasted around 45 minutes, while the three interviews lasted 20 to 30 minutes each.

3.2. The Procedure for Gathering the Data

This section is divided into three parts. The first one will be presenting the focus group discussions and the second one describing the semi-structured interviews. Both of these parts will include a justification of the method, recruitment of participants and the recording process. The third part will present the ethical principles that were taken into consideration while conducting the data collection.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions are increasing in popularity since they can be modified in several ways as well as function for a wide variety of purposes (Morgan 2008: 2). The data collected from a focus group discussion is the conversation or discussion that emerges from the interview with the participants. In correlation to this, using focus groups as a method brings people together where they can engage in meaningful discussions about the research topic, giving the researcher a broader spectrum to understand the topic from a rather open environment. From a researcher's point of view, one gets a valuable insight into the perspectives of the participants (loc. cit). Based on these factors, we concluded that focus

group discussions were a preferable method to use with students as participants in our study. Moreover, discussions seemed preferable to conduct with students since they are in a safe environment with peers, which may create less pressure on one student compared to a single-person interview.

All 12th grade students at the Indian School were eager to participate in the study. We wrote down all names on pieces of paper and then divided them into two boxes, one for the female students and one for the male students. After this we randomly picked eight names, four from each box. This action was taken to get the results as veracious as possible. The reasoning behind having two boxes divided by gender was firstly due to us wanting to have both female and male students represented in the study. Secondly, a clear majority of the 12th grade students were female; therefore, pulling names out of a single box would statistically have led to most of the participants being female.

Before the focus group discussions started, the interviewer encouraged the students to discuss the topic as well as not being afraid of sharing their thoughts. Furthermore, our goal was to cover predetermined issues but wanted the participants to follow their own path during the interview. The rationale behind this aim was that we wanted to hear as much as possible about the students' perception of the topic and at the same time allow them to interpret and discuss amongst themselves to explore and discover new ideas about the research agenda. To achieve this, the interviewer functioned as a "director" as well as a "facilitator" by taking a step back after asking a pre-defined question (Morgan 2008: 2, 4). The interviewer did not interrupt the ongoing discussion until she found that the participants did not have anything more to add before going on to the next question

During the discussions, the students were seated around a table with two smartphones placed in the middle of them to record the entire conversation simultaneously. The data were recorded with the help of an app called *Voice Memo*, which is a pre-existing app on the smartphones that were used. The reason for having two recording devices was to have a backup device in case of any technical issues such as poor sound quality or similar problems.

Qualitative Interview

Since ‘developing confidence in speaking skills’ is a rather narrow field of investigation, using semi-structured interviews is the approach chosen for collecting data. As Bryman (2015: 472) states, a semi-structured interview is the more suitable approach when an investigation has a clear focus and aims to investigate a narrow field.

A semi-structured interview is usually based upon an interview guide where researchers have listed topics and questions which are to be covered within the interview. However, the interview guide does not have to be followed religiously. Questions may be added or the question order might be changed depending on the answers provided by the interviewees (Bryman, 2015: 471). When creating the interview Guide for this study an initial question was asked: “Just what about this is puzzling [us]?” (Lofland and Lofland 1995: 78). From our very first day at the Indian School we were puzzled by the confidence with which the students were speaking in English, which is not the students’ mother tongue, when standing in front of over 2400 people. This confidence that we observed among the students became the foundation of our interview guide, where all the questions aim to find out how this confidence is developed and what strategies the teachers are using to make the students confident speakers. Furthermore, when creating the interview guide all the basic elements presented by Bryman (2015: 473–474), such as not asking leading questions as well as creating a flow between our topics and questions were included.

The participants in the semi-structured interviews were selected through convenience sampling (Bryman, 2015: 201). That is, we chose these teachers simply because they were the only English teachers at the higher levels. Each of the interviews was conducted at a different location, at the convenience of the interviewees. Two of the interviews were conducted in the offices of the teachers in question, whereas the third one was conducted in one of the teacher’s homes. During the interview, the interviewer was seated opposite the interviewee, while the other one of us was seated next to the main interviewer taking notes and asked additional questions. An interview guide was used; however, the interviewee was encouraged to talk freely regarding the subjects brought up by the interviewer who did not strictly follow the guide.

The interviews were recorded in a similar way as the focus group discussions. The main difference was that one of the smartphones was connected to a microphone device attached to the interviewee to increase the sound quality of the recorded answers. The microphone device was not used during the focus group discussions since we only had access to one device. Attaching the microphone to a student could decrease the fluency of the discussion since it would have to be reattached to a new speaker every time.

Ethical Principles

When collecting data for this study, several ethical principles were taken into consideration. According to Bryman (2015: 135) there are four main areas to be considered: *avoid harm to the participant*, *obtain their consent*, *avoid invasion of privacy*, and *deception*. To protect all participants from invasion of their privacy and harm, all names have been changed as well as the name of the school not being mentioned. To keep the participants anonymous, the students will be referred to as STU1-STU8 and the teachers as TEA1-TEA3. Furthermore, one activity contained the name of the school and has therefore been changed to ‘Speaker at the School’ (S@S). The data collected will only be used within this study. We obtained the participants’ consent to participate in the study by having them sign a letter of consent (see Appendices 3 and 4).

Regarding the focus group discussions, both the participant’s signature and a signature from the parent was to be filled in. From a legal point of view, we did not need the permission of the parents since the students were above the age of 15. However, we wanted to take extra precautions and make sure that everybody involved, including the parents, were aware of what we were doing and why. Before any data were recorded, all participants were informed of their right to cancel their participation at any time during the recording as well as giving the information regarding the ethical principles mentioned above.

3.3 The Procedure for Processing and Analyzing the Data

The collected data were transcribed based on the guidelines presented by Walsh (2011: 70–71). We decided to do a basic transcript with standard orthography, which did not include pauses or intonations. This was done since we were interested in the participants’ utterances, rather than how they spoke about different topics (Ochs 1979: 45). Moreover, we only transcribed the parts that were likely to contain information suitable for our research e.g. the preface was not transcribed. The data were transcribed by inserting the recordings into the

multi-track audio editor and recorder Audacity¹. We ended up with 36 pages of transcribed data. The data were analyzed in accordance with a research methodology called *phenomenographic analysis* (Dahlgren & Johansson 2009). The reasoning for selecting this methodology is because it aims to describe the way in which people understand their surroundings. That is, the phenomnographic approach was suitable for our aim since we wanted to analyze the perspective of our participants.

There are seven steps to follow according to the phenomenographic approach when analyzing the data. The first step was to get familiar with the material by reading it repeatedly until we got a clear overview of the collected data. The analyzing process began in the following step, called *condensation*, where we chose the data material which we found the most significant and interesting for our thesis. This was done by printing out hard copies of the transcriptions and then cutting out the selected parts. According to this model, step three is where one searches for similarities and differences in the data. Once we were familiar with the data, we came to notice words that kept on reoccurring. We decided to focus on these words since they reflected the reality of the participants without us trying to steer them towards these words. In addition, this process showed where the participants shared perceptions as well as where their perceptions varied.

Step four is where one combines the collected data into categories. To organize our findings, we created mind maps using the words found; *vocabulary*, *comfortable*, *topic*, and *public speaking*. We surrounded the keywords with quotations where they were expressed. Upon doing this, it became clear that the words were used in different contexts, consequently leading the process to step five. This step is where one articulates the main categories by dividing them until the core of the similarities cannot be separated further.

¹ Audacity ink version 2.1.3. [online] available at <<http://www.audacityteam.org/>>

Since one of the research questions concerned oral activities at the school, we decided to have a category with this focus. We were now at step six according to this model, when one names the categories. The five categories are as follows:

- Connecting confidence with vocabulary and expression
- Connecting confidence with favorite topic
- Creating a comfortable classroom environment
- Encouraging students to do public speaking
- Developing students' speaking skills through structured activities

Finally, step seven is where one once again investigates whether there are distinct differences between the categories or if the passages should be moved around in order to suit the category. However, we were satisfied with our findings and the five categories we had discovered and so we came to the results presented in the following chapter.

Methodological Problems

There were no significant problems that occurred before or during the recordings. However, when we transcribed the data we did face that it was troubling to hear what the participants were saying due to us having a different English accent than our participants. Furthermore, there were some expressions that were unfamiliar to us as well as some sentences being grammatically incorrect, which lead us having to listen to some sections of the recordings repeatedly.

4. Results

This chapter will present the five categories listed in the methodology chapter. Each category consists of an overview of its characteristics and a detailed analysis of the findings. The chapter will be concluded with a section regarding S@S an activity found at the Indian School.

4.1 Connecting Confidence with Vocabulary and Expression

‘Confidence’ was one of the themes in the interview guide as well as in focus group discussion guide. Our findings showed that there was a difference in how the participants interpreted the word ‘confidence’. The different interpretations have been divided into two separate categories. This category (4.1) will present the participants who connected the word ‘confidence’ with *vocabulary* and *expression*. The following category (4.2) will present the participants who connected the word ‘confidence’ with topic of talk.

All three teachers connected ‘confidence’ with the words *vocabulary* and *expression*, neither word introduced by the interviewer. Upon being asked what comes to mind when hearing “developing students’ confidence to speak English”, TEA 3 gave the following answer: **“They don’t have confidence because they don’t have strength of vocabulary to express.”** This answer shows that TEA3 makes a connection between a students’ confidence and their ability to express themselves. Furthermore, when she was asked to prioritize the importance of willingness, ability, and confidence, she made a similar statement: “They should also have **ability in the sense that they know how to express** whatever is the idea in their mind. This **automatically gives them confidence**”.

When TEA1 answered the same question, regarding how to prioritize the importance of willingness, ability, and confidence, she provided us with this answer:

I would say **confidence**. I have seen a lot of people who **use English as a medium of expression**, even if their **English is not very great** they understand that **expression is of value**. **If they have the confidence**, I think **English becomes another language in which they express** (TEA1).

The two teachers approach the connection between these words from opposite sides. That is, TEA3 claims that the vocabulary to express oneself will lead to confidence and TEA1 claims that students with confidence will dare to express themselves, even if their English “is not very great”. In accordance with TEA3, TEA2 claims that increasing a student’s vocabulary will lead to an increase of confidence. She, however, emphasizes that this is a gradual process, which she explains when asked how she would help a student who is weak at speaking English:

When they speak, they can speak to a certain extent, but if there’s a requirement **I keep adding in words for their vocabulary**. So he picks up those words, one at a time I find that he’s getting more and more **confident** with that. [...] Because if I speak all those words which he is not familiar with he will not be able to connect to this, so **I will also make him use those words** from there and as he is doing that **I see him building his confidence and he is able to speak properly** (TEA2).

Another aspect in this quotation by TEA2 is that she exemplifies how she works with expanding and activating the student’s vocabulary. That is, she does not only provide the student with new words but also makes the student use the words which she has provided. Moreover, she explains that when making “him use those words” she can see that the student’s confidence builds as well as his ability to “speak properly”.

4.2 Connecting Confidence with Favorite Topic

The results show that the students discussed that choosing a topic or talking about their own interests could increase their confidence. Unlike the teachers, none of the students correlated the importance of being able to express oneself or having a large vocabulary with feeling confidence. However, we did find that one of the teachers shared the students’ perspective regarding the phenomenon of students choosing their own topic.

During the focus groups, students were asked if they could think of anything that would make them more confident. STU1 provided us with this answer: “Maybe talking about my favorite **topic**, that would make my **confidence** grow”. A similar answer was provided by STU4 when asked which activities the student did not enjoy: “I don’t like speaking about stuff that I’m not really **confident** about [...] if one of the teachers comes and asks me to talk about something I wouldn’t be ready to do that, because the **topics** that they choose are something that I don’t like”. These quotations demonstrate how students feel that the topics affect their confidence,

both positively and negatively. What can be seen here is that students, unlike the teachers, do not express a connection between a lack of confidence and a weak vocabulary. As previously mentioned, one of the teachers commented upon the effects the choice of topics can have on the student's confidence. TEA2 gave the following example:

I would take up a particular lesson which maybe talks about education and Einstein's view on education. [...] it's a very **current topic for them**, it's a topic which is very associated with them. [...] then they come out and present their ideas, **they will be able to build in confidence**.

TEA2 exemplifies how she would incorporate "very current topics which are associated" with the students in order to build in their confidence. However, as STU4 states, topics that are selected by the teachers are not always appreciated by the students, which can in fact mean that a teacher cannot simply choose a "current topic associated" with the students and expect them to be confident to talk; one must also consider their interests.

4.3 Creating a Comfortable Classroom Environment

During the interviews, all teachers were asked how important the classroom environment is in order to develop students' ability to speak English. The results show that two of the teachers, TEA1 and TEA2, developed another part of the question and started talking about comfort rather than developing students' speaking skills. The word *comfortable* was never brought up by the interviewer, once again showing similarities between the interviewees' perceptions. TEA1 stated, "If the environment of the classroom is not very nice the child is never **comfortable**. If the child is not **comfortable** the learning is always partly". Furthermore, both teachers emphasize that it is the teacher who has the responsibility to create a comfortable classroom environment and that this needs to be done before any learning can take place.

You know for a student to improve their ability in anything [...] the classroom should be **an open classroom where he feels that his ideas and thoughts are valued and not laughed at**. So that's the first thing **a teacher should create in a classroom. Then a child feels comfortable. Comfortable to speak right, equally comfortable to speak wrong.** (TEA2)

TEA2 talks about the classroom environment in a sense that it should be an open classroom so that the students feel that "his ideas and thoughts are valued and not laughed at". Furthermore, TEA1 and TEA2 expressed the importance of creating a classroom environment where students feel safe enough speak without the fear of making mistakes.

Making a mistake I think in a lot of contexts is a luxury. Because first thing a child doesn't want to attempt doing anything is because the child **fears his own classmates**, plus he also fears his teacher, of letting the teacher down. **If the teacher makes the environment comfortable** for the child to express himself or herself, **without the fear of failure**. (TEA1)

The data from the chosen quotations expressed by TEA1 and TEA2 show that they highlight the importance of creating a classroom that allows students to make mistakes and that learning only happens when the students are comfortable. One variation in their answers is that TEA2 talks about creating an open classroom where all students' opinions are valued whereas TEA1 emphasizes the importance of creating a classroom where the students do not fear each other or the teacher.

During the focus group discussions, the students were asked questions regarding how comfortable they felt speaking English. Their answers to this question showed that they talked about feeling comfortable outside the classroom in contrast to the teachers who spoke about comfort inside the classroom. STU3 expressed that the comfort level increased when using "complete grammar" was not required.

At times, when making speeches, I'm not so **comfortable** because to make it interesting we have to use proper English. At times, **I don't want to use complete grammar**, sometimes I want to make it [rhyme] to make it interesting. Sometimes using perfect English is not so good, so at times I'm feeling a bit **uncomfortable** (STU3).

STU4 talked about feeling more comfortable when speaking in the mother tongue when it comes to feelings, jokes, and emotions rather than speaking in English. Furthermore, STU4 expressed that English was a good language to use in formal situations.

I think I'm pretty comfortable, but as my mother tongue is Telugo so when it comes to, you know, like laughter and humor or really emotional things, I like to convey that in my mother tongue, rather than English. Speaking my heart in Telugo. English is perfect for formal. So, it depends on the situation, so I'm pretty comfortable (STU4)

One thing to be noticed in the students' answers is that they felt freer to express themselves when it happened naturally whereas in the classroom, they felt the need to speak proper English. The variations between the students' answers can be found as they are emphasizing

different aspects of comfort in speaking activities. STU3 felt uncomfortable when using “complete grammar” as when delivering speeches, whereas STU4 felt comfortable speaking English in formal situations.

TEA1 acknowledges the fact that the students feel this pressure, both from their peers as well as “the fear of letting the teacher down”. TEA1 gives an example of how the comfort level can be increased within a classroom so that the environment is good, which is by having “discussions”:

The best activity that we can have in a classroom is discussion. **In a discussion, everybody is free to tell their own part and be heard.** As a teacher, **I give chance to everyone to speak in the discussion, that brings out the comfort level** of a child. That makes the classroom environment also good, because **they know their voice is being heard.** That makes the environment good.

TEA1 acknowledges that the best activities are free discussions which in fact means that the students are “free to tell their own part”, this indicates that when discussions happen, everybody has the chance to be heard which leads to a good environment.

4.4 Encouraging Students for Public Speaking

During the focus group discussions, the students were asked if they could mention any specific activities that had either led to boosting their confidence or improving their ability to speak English. When analyzing their answers, there was a reoccurring phenomenon that the students kept on mentioning, which was that the school encouraged them to do public speaking: “we have ‘Speaker at [the school]’, which was basically conducted to **encourage people for public speaking.**” (STU6). This quotation demonstrates the students’ awareness of the purpose of the activity S@S.

The following quotation is expressed by STU5 who mentions that the school encourages everybody to speak in the assemblies.

This school **encourages everybody to speak in the assemblies.** And if people don’t come out by themselves **they select people, they make them speak** in the morning assemblies and also alert them that tomorrow you will be speaking (STU5).

One thing to be noted from the quotation by STU5 is that the school makes students speak by selecting them, even though students have not volunteered to speak. However, by looking at the teachers' answers, one can comprehend why unwilling students are selected to speak. The teachers' emphasized that being able to communicate well is crucial for most professions and therefore of great importance for the students' futures:

You make an initial impression only with how you speak, how you can express. Normally if you see many successful people, especially in the field of politics or anybody, whatever might be their credentials but one striking attribute of their personality **will be their ability to communicate.** That differentiates them from others right? [...] Everybody can't be a good speaker but **it can help them achieve whatever they want to in a better way** (TEA3).

TEA3 expresses the significance of the impression one make with how one speaks and expresses oneself. Moreover, she points to the fact that the striking attribute of successful people is their ability to communicate, which she even claims differentiates them from other people. TEA2, in accordance with TEA3 expresses the importance of good communication by claiming that people will judge them on their ability to communicate. This is the answer she provided when asked how she would motivate a student who was unwilling to speak:

I think first and foremost I would tell them the fact that it's a language wherein most of the time **professionally whatever they do, more than their skills people will judge them on how well they communicate.** [...] if a person is not very skilled, but is very good in communication they get an edge over people who are not very good in communicating but yet good in skills (TEA2).

Furthermore, upon being asked what comes to mind when hearing developing students' willingness to speak English, TEA1 claimed that this is not something teachers in India need to focus on, since the students are aware of the fact that English is a language that is going to help them professionally. "Willingness is something I think we don't have much of a problem with in India because **they do understand this is one language which is going to help them professionally.**" None of the students mentioned the importance of English when they talked about being encouraged to do public speaking. However, just like TEA1 claimed, they demonstrated that they were aware of the importance of the English language. During the focus group discussions, the students were asked to explain how important it is to be able to speak English and this elaborated answers was given:

It is very good to speak English because it is a universal language. If we want other people to understand. Literate people, well educated people can understand English. For example, if I go to Pakistan they might not understand Bengali, but they will understand English. So, it is good to learn English and make it a habit to speak English because we can interact with more people (STU3).

STU3 clearly understands that being able to speak English facilitates communication across borders since English is a “universal language”. The student also talks about “literate and well-educated people” when addressing this question, which can be related to TEA3’s statement about the ability to communicate well in accordance with being successful. That is, STU3 has acknowledged this aspect of being a good communicator and that speaking English is something that well-educated people do.

4.5 Developing Students’ Speaking Skills through Structured Activities

The students were asked if the school offered any specific speaking activities, and if they could think of any activities that had help them boost their confidence. Furthermore, they were asked if there were any activities that they would like to do more of and if so, explain why. There were three activities that kept on being brought up by the students: Model United Nations (MUN), Speaker at the School (S@S) and public speaking during the morning assemblies. S@S and morning assemblies are activities taking place at the school, whereas MUN is an extracurricular activity that takes place out of school.

We noticed that all students considered the same activities rewarding when developing speaking abilities. In order to show different activities, two answers have been chosen: “[S@S] and also **speaking in the assemblies which makes us more fluent** when speaking English. Because we have morning assemblies where we speak in English” (STU3). STU3 mentions two activities, S@S and morning assemblies. Furthermore, this student claimed “morning assemblies makes them more fluent when speaking English”.

This school has actually offered this activity called [MUN]. It is a mock of United Nations where you can go and debate about issues. I feel you learn a lot from it because you see other **people communicate in English and their vocabulary** (STU1).

STU5 mentioned MUN as an activity that one “learns a lot from since you see other people communicate in English and use vocabulary”.

When the students were asked if they could think of any speaking activities that had helped boost their confidence, STU5 and STU6 gave similar answers regarding this activity.

This school has given us exposure to ambience and also in the assemblies we talk. Honestly, I'm a shy person I don't like speaking in public, so when I go for these activities [MUN] **it kind of boosted my confidence** (STU6).

STU6 refers to MUN as an activity that has boosted this student's confidence, even though being a shy person who does not like to speak in public. A similar effect of MUN has been experienced by STU5:

When I came to this school I discovered something this [MUN] where we go to different places and there will be debates and we are the people who speak in front of people we don't know and that is the thing which made me confident and **increased my confidence** (STU5).

Moreover, the data from this category clearly shows that students from both groups connected the different speaking activities with abilities such as *fluency*, *vocabulary*, and *confidence*. The interviewer did not ask the students to connect the activities with skills. This was entirely the participants' association.

Speaker at the School

S@S was an activity that was continuously brought up during all the teacher interviews as well as during the focus group discussions. This activity contained many of the skills that were emphasized by teachers as important, and skills that the students felt they had benefited from. Moreover, S@S included an important factor that was expressed by the students, which was that they preferred choosing topics based on their own interests (4.2). S@S has therefore been placed at the end of our result chapter since this activity ties all the threads together from all the different categories. This activity was described in detail by two of the teachers:

[S@S] runs throughout the year, the intent we have is to **build the speaking abilities** in students. [...] They will prepare and come and **speak in front of the class** [...] Many students have benefited from that also. At the end of the year we see students who were hesitant to come and stand in front of the class, now they could come and stand prepare themselves. [...] **It's a lot of emphasize on the speaking skill because it is considered as a very important life skill** (TEA3).

TEA3 explained the rationale behind S@S by stating that the intention with this activity was to build the speaking abilities in students. Furthermore, she emphasized that she had seen the effects of this activity. She also mentioned that speaking skills are an important life skill.

There is one practice in this school where they got every fortnight they have to speak for two minutes in front of their class. So it can either be **a topic given by the teachers or they can choose their own topic**. I have seen this thing **working a lot when the students choose their own topic to speak**. [...] So if you give them that choice and ask them to freely express themselves for two minutes, this practice is something I think that it's great and I have seen the results. [...] There are times when we allow them to choose their own topic and there are times when we feel to teach them to think and speak in a structured way and give them a topic. So it's both ways (TEA1).

TEA1 explained the rationale in depth when she said that the activity gives the students the opportunity to choose topics by themselves when performing the task. Furthermore, she stated that she had seen the effects of them choosing topics, unlike TEA3 who said that she had seen the effects of the activity itself in the long run. She also talked about how “they freely expressed themselves when choosing their own topics”. However, she did explain the reasoning behind selecting topics for the students by stating that they do so if the teachers have a goal such as making the students “think and speak in a structured way”.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to our research questions. The discussion is supported by previous research and theory. The discussion is divided into three sections, the first two presenting the students' and teachers' answers to the first research question separately. This section will be followed by a discussion regarding the second research question that will be presented in alignment with findings from the students' and teachers' answers. The chapter ends with a conclusion about the whole thesis.

5.1 Factors Students Consider Important for Speaking Activities

The results of this study showed that the students acknowledged two key factors that they found important for developing their speaking skills, i.e. the free choice of topics and discussions without having to consider "complete grammar". These two factors will be discussed individually in relation to relevant research.

Confidence by Choosing Topics

The students felt that they gained confidence when they were speaking about topics they were interested in as well as when they had the opportunity to choose topics by themselves. That is, students considered the choice of topic as important factors for developing their speaking skills. This relates to Harmer's (1993: 265) statement that keeping the students' interests in mind could in fact lead students to feel more motivated so a successful second language learning can take place. Moreover, the research done by Boonkit (2010: 1308) came to the same conclusion as in this study: the participants felt more confident, comfortable and motivated when they had selected topics themselves.

Comfortable when natural discussions

Another factor from the results showed that the students felt comfortable when they were exposed to situations where they either conveyed feelings and thoughts in their mother tongue and when they did not have to think about grammatical rules or feeling pressured to use 'proper English'. The students' statements can be connected to Malmberg's (1993: 127) claim that students must be allowed to make mistakes independently, be creative and play around with the language so their oral language skills can develop and gradually become internalized.

The benefits of these natural discussions can also be supported by Cameron's (2014: 77) findings, where the participants in her study experienced an increased WTC when being in authentic communication situations.

5.2 Factors Teachers Consider Important when Fostering Students' Oral Communication Skills

The results showed that the teachers expressed four key elements which they found important when fostering students' oral communication skills: the classroom environment, the importance of vocabulary, the importance of topic selection, and the importance of being a good communicator.

Classroom Environment

The teachers expressed that the foremost aspect one must consider before any oral communication can take place is the classroom environment. That is, without a classroom environment that allows a student to feel safe enough to make mistakes, learning will not happen. Furthermore, the classroom environment must be a space where the student feels that his or her thoughts are valued. It is vital that the classroom environment is a positive space for the students to develop their oral skills without the fear of doing 'wrong'. As Hedge (2000: 273) claims, creating a positive classroom environment and letting students try and work out the language together can develop student's confidence. Another aspect of the classroom environment was classmates. This is expressed by TEA1 who claimed that a student would not attempt anything due to the fear of his or her classmates. This is something that Harmer (1993: 7-8) touches upon when he discusses the impact students have on each other due to the fear of making mistakes in front of one's peers. One way of solving this problem is by what he calls 'peer approval'. That is, the teacher must create a classroom where the peers are assets to the learning environment rather than critics.

Importance of vocabulary

According to the teachers, it was vital that the students had a strength of vocabulary in order to express their thoughts or ideas. The importance of vocabulary is also expressed by Czifra (2013: 111) who emphasized that vocabulary is needed for a learner to be able to transmit a message. Moreover, the teachers discussed the connection between students' vocabulary and their confidence. This can be related to Hedge (2000: 274) who states that vocabulary is

needed for a student in to express their own personalized language, which is one of the necessities in a communicative classroom. Furthermore, the teachers emphasized the importance of expanding the students' vocabulary or expression in order for them to gain confidence. Hedge (2000: 21) discusses the link between speaking activities and anxiety within students where she mentions that a teacher can reduce the risk of anxiety by giving the students the scope to develop their proficiency, and thereby increasing their self-confidence. Moreover, one teacher expressed that she activated vocabulary use as an everyday process. The teacher's description of her activity shares many similarities with Gass et. al's (2013: 212) statement regarding vocabulary building. It is a time-consuming process. However, letting the students encounter the words frequently and hear the words used in different contexts will lead to the word becoming a part of the students' own vocabulary (ibid: 212).

The Effects of Choosing Topics

Another aspect that the teachers pointed out was equivalent to the students' perspective regarding the impact of choosing topics. TEA1 expressed that when students are to speak about topics they have chosen by themselves, their confidence level increases and so they dare to speak in the classroom. Furthermore, she expressed that she had seen the effects of this and noticed that when the students choose topics they are passionate about, they are able to express themselves very freely and their fear is not there. This corresponds with Harmer's (1993: 265) and Boonkit's (2010: 1308) claims that keeping the students' interests in mind is effective because it can increase students' motivation, confidence and comfort.

Importance of Being a Good Communicator

By looking more closely at the results from the data, one can comprehend that the teachers discussed that being a good communicator is an important factor when fostering oral communication. The teachers encouraged the students to do public speaking so they could develop their communicative skills to achieve goals professionally. That is, the students are provided with *instrumental motivation* (Ellis 1997: 75). Furthermore, when the teachers encourage the student to do public speaking they are making them conscious of the target language by emphasizing how this knowledge will be useful for them professionally. By making the students conscious of the language, the teachers are fulfilling the need which Hedge (2000: 273) refers to as the 'social use of language'.

As was mentioned by one of the students, there were situations when teachers made unwilling students speak. This provided the potential for pushed output, where students were “pushed” outside their own comfort level (Nation 2005: 445).

5.3 Speaking Activities at the Indian School

The results showed that there were several speaking activities that the students and teachers found developing and fostering of oral communication skills. The students expressed MUN and S@S as activities that they found developing for their oral communication skills. In addition to these activities, the teachers mentioned some everyday activities that were practiced in their classrooms that they considered enhanced their students’ oral communication skills.

Vocabulary on a Daily Basis

An example of a ‘contextualized practice’ can be found when TEA2 explained how she helped her students develop their vocabulary on a daily basis by gradually increasing the amount of words she used in her teaching. That is, by using words in their own context, she enhanced the students’ learning of that particular word as well as providing them with a context to utilize that specific word in. Enhancing students’ development of their vocabulary through this everyday activity can be supported by Gass et al. (2013: 212), who demonstrated the importance of using words in a context and doing so repetitively.

Fluency based Activities

Hedge (2000: 283) states that when students attend the higher levels of English, the focus should be on fluency-based activities. This correlates with our data, where TEA2 expressed that free discussion is the best classroom activity, because it gives all students the opportunity to express their own opinions and ideas, which consequently leads to an increased comfort level in the classroom. Moreover, Hedge claims that free discussions can provide students with the opportunity to freely discuss and express their ideas regarding different topics as it engages them in meaningful discussions, allowing them to use their communicative skills. However, as stated in the theoretical background, free discussions can make students feel anxiety about having to express their own thoughts and opinions (ibid: 277).

One student expressed dislike of public speaking, but stated that MUN was an activity that had in fact given the student confidence. This is closely linked with Hedge's statement regarding structured role-play being a possible option to reduce anxiety for students who do not feel comfortable when they must express their own opinions or thoughts as in free discussions or similar speaking activities.

Speaker at the School

S@S is another activity that seemed to be suitable for students who are less confident in public speaking. The students expressed this activity as a platform that includes a lot of the factors that they felt important in order for them to feel confident and at the same time foster their oral communication skills. One teacher expressed that she had seen the results of this activity since it allowed students to choose topics based on their interests, and so they can express themselves freely. When letting students express themselves freely, the need for 'personalized language' within a communicative classroom is met (Hedge 2000: 274). As previously stated, letting students choose their own topics can increase their motivation to learn (Harmer 1993: 265), which as stated in the theoretical background is connected with increased success in second language learning (Yule 2010: 192).

Moreover, S@S could be a balanced activity since it challenges students to do public speaking. However, they are talking about something they are genuinely interested in or passionate about and therefore it is appropriate for their learning level (Harmer 1993:7). Furthermore, as Eriksson (1996: 18) states, oral production activities where students express their own thoughts and ideas can lead to increased motivation since they are communicating without focusing on accuracy or correctness. This aspect was mentioned by one student who expressed feeling uncomfortable when carrying out speaking activities where 'proper' English was required, but felt comfortable when conversation happened without having to think about "complete grammar". Based on this student's statement, S@S is an example of a creative communicative activity without a focus on accuracy and correctness (Eriksson 1996: 18).

5.4 Conclusion

Speaking activities are something that can make students feel anxiety. However, the findings from this study show that there are several factors that could reduce the anxiety. By taking students' preferences as well as the teachers' considerations into account, the conclusions that can be drawn from this study are that there are many factors a teacher can and should take into consideration when planning oral communication activities. The first step towards fostering students' oral skills is to create a comfortable classroom environment where students do not fear their peers or teacher, a space where they feel free to make mistakes and thus develop their speaking skills. Furthermore, the teachers emphasized the importance of expanding students' vocabulary, since it allows students to develop their confidence in speaking activities so that they can properly express the thoughts and ideas on their minds.

This study, as well as previous studies, found that teachers can help students both increase their motivation and build their confidence. This can be done by planning lessons revolving around topics that are of interest to students, as well as giving them the scope to choose their own topics when practicing oral communication activities. Finally, S@S is an oral activity that includes many of the factors that the students in this study expressed as important for the development of their oral communication skills: choosing topics and feeling comfortable in natural communicative situations. This was also expressed by a teacher who saw S@S as beneficial for the students due to them being able to express themselves freely when they talked about topics they were passionate about since the fear of speaking was not there. S@S is one of the most important findings from this study since it is an activity that shows the benefits of taking the students' interests into account and letting them independently carry out speeches where they speak about topics they really care about.

In addition to these findings, the conclusion that can be drawn relating to the Swedish Curriculum is that there are many factors that can facilitate the process of helping students to be able, want to, and dare to use English. As was stated above, keeping students' interests in mind and creating an open environment in which the students feel motivated and not limited by a fear of making mistakes can lead to a successful outcome. A teacher can help the students be able to speak English by gradually giving them balanced activities and appropriate tasks that challenge them. Moreover, a teacher can enhance a student's willingness to speak English by having free discussions about topics familiar to them, or having them deliver

speeches on topics that they are passionate about. Lastly, a teacher can help a student dare to use English by creating role-plays where the student does not have to fear sharing his or her own ideas and thoughts, or by simply challenging them at appropriate levels through the gradual input of the language, and then moving on to pushed output.

Limitations and Further Research

This study is only based upon two focus group discussions and three semi-structured interviews. That is, this study is limited and the conclusions drawn cannot be generalized on a larger scale. Furthermore, the research area is quite limited and there were difficulties in finding empirical studies that was suitable for this study. Moreover, this study is carried out in an Indian context, and conclusions regarding a Swedish perspective can therefore only be drawn from our personal experiences. In accordance to these limitations, a suggestion for further research is firstly, to carry out a research in a larger scale using more participants. Secondly, one can investigate this area from a Swedish perspective using participants from Swedish schools, which consequently leads to filling the research gap regarding empirical studies focusing on students' confidence and willingness to speak.

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Appendix 1 - Focus Group Questions

- How old are you?
- What grades are you in?
- How long have you been students at this school?
- Why did you choose to attend this school?
- How important is it to be able to speak English?
 - Why is it important to be able to speak English?
- Can you think of anything that you do in school that helps you learn to speak better English?
 - If so, what do you do?
- Would you want to have more activities that helps you learn to speak better English?
 - Can you think of any ideas of activities?
- Are there any speaking activities which you enjoy doing in school?
 - If so, what are these activities?
 - Why do you prefer them?
- Are there any activities which you do not enjoy?
 - Why not?
- Are there any activities that you would like to do more of than you are able to today?
 - If so, what activities?
- How much does your teacher encourage you to speak English in class?
 - In what ways does your teacher encourage you?
 - Do you feel that you would want to be encouraged more?
 - Why?
 - Why not?
 - How would you want to be encouraged?
- How comfortable do you feel speaking English?
 - What helps you feel comfortable?
 - What makes you feel less comfortable?
 - Is there anything that would make you feel more comfortable?

- Do you have any classmates who are not comfortable in speaking English in class?
 - If so, how does your teacher handle that situation?
 - If not, why do think that all of you feel comfortable?

- How confident do you feel speaking English?
 - What helps you feel confident?
 - What makes you feel less confident?
 - Is there anything that would make you feel more confident?

- Are there any activities in school that have boosted your confidence?
 - Can you think of any activities that could boost your confidence while speaking English?

- How much do you speak English outside of school?
 - In what situations do you prefer your mother tongue to English?
 - In what situations do you prefer to use English rather than your mother tongue?

- Are there any situations outside school where you would want to speak English but feel like you are too limited?
 - If so, in what kind of situations?

- Can you think of any activities in school that have been “extra” important for your learning when it comes to speaking in English? (Key words if student does not understand: classroom/outside classroom activities, events in/outside school, etc).
 - If so, what activities?

- Do you have any other ideas or thoughts regarding “speaking in English” that you want to share?

Appendix 2 - Interview Guide

- What year did you get your teacher's degree?
- How long have you been teaching English?
- In which grades do you teach English?
- Why did you choose to be a teacher of English?

- How long have you been a teacher at this school?
- How would you describe this school?
- Is there anything that distinguishes this school from other schools?

- Have you been teaching at any other English medium school?
 - If so, are there any differences between that school and this school when it comes to having English as the medium of instruction?

- What comes to mind when you hear "developing students' ability to speak English"?
- How important is it to create an environment in the classroom that helps students to improve their ability to speak in English?
 - What could you do to help students develop their abilities to speak English?
 - Are there any activities that you do to help your students develop their abilities to speak English?

- What would you as a teacher do if a student was weak at speaking English?

- What comes to mind when you hear "developing students' confidence to speak English"?
- How important is it to create an environment where the student feels confident in oral situations?
 - What could you do to help students feel confident to speak English?
 - Are there any activities that you do to help your students feel confident to speak English?

- What would you as a teacher do if a student had low confidence when speaking English?

- What comes to mind when you hear “developing students’ willingness to speak English”?
 - What could you do as a teacher to create an environment where the student wants to speak English?
 - Are there any activities that you do to help your students develop a willingness to speak English?
- What would you as a teacher do if a student was reluctant to speak English?
- During your teacher career, are there any specific activities that you feel have contributed more than others to improving your students’ speaking abilities?
 - If so, what are these activities?
 - Why do you believe these activities have shown to be effective? (If the previous question was answered)
 - If not, what, according to you, could be a possible classroom activity which could improve students’ speaking skills?
- Do you have any other ideas or thoughts regarding “developing ability to speak in English” that you want to share?
- Would you prioritize any of these three aspects, ability, confidence, and willingness to speak in English?
 - Why, can you please develop your answer?

Appendix 3 - Letter of Consent

Dear Parent and Student,

We are two teacher students, Yasmin and Maja, from Linköping University in Sweden who are doing our final teaching training at ‘the school’ as a part of our education to become teachers at Upper Secondary level in the subject English. One part of our education programme requires us to conduct some research and produce a thesis that aims to broaden our knowledge of teaching and learning English. In relation to this, we found that ‘the school’ continually aims to strengthen students’ confidence and skills when it comes to speaking in English. We therefore want to research what contributes to the students’ confidence in speaking English.

In order to collect our data, we would kindly ask for your permission to let your child participate in a group discussion with other pupils. The discussion will take place sometime between 15-25 March, during school hours. The discussion will be audio recorded and all the data gathered will only be used for the purpose of the study. Furthermore, details about everyone taking part in this study will be treated with the greatest confidentiality possible and personal data about individuals will not be revealed to anyone outside the research project. Participation is voluntarily and participants have the right to cancel their participation at any time during the discussion or if they change their minds before or after the discussion is conducted.

I (parent) accept my child _____ (name of child) participating in the study and being audio recorded:

Signature

Printed name

I (student) accept being audio recorded for the purpose of the study:

Signature

Printed name

If you have any questions regarding our research, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your time and best regards,

Yasmin Ali and Maja Säberg

yasal947@student.liu.se

majsa547@student.liu.se

Appendix 4 - Letter of Consent Teachers

Dear teacher,

We are two teacher students, Yasmin and Maja, from Linköping University in Sweden who are doing our final teaching training at ‘the school’ as a part of our education to become teachers at Upper Secondary level in the subject English. One part of our education programme requires us to conduct some research and produce a thesis that aims to broaden our knowledge of teaching and learning English. In relation to this, we found that ‘the school’ continually aims to strengthen students’ confidence and skills when it comes to speaking in English. We therefore want to research what contributes to the students’ confidence in speaking English.

In order to collect our data, we would kindly ask for your participation in an interview. The interview will take place sometime between 15-25 March. The interview will be audio recorded and all the data gathered will only be used for the purpose of the study. Furthermore, details about everyone taking part in this study will be treated with the greatest confidentiality possible and personal data about individuals will not be revealed to anyone outside the research project. Participation is voluntarily and you have the right to cancel your participation at any time during the interview or if change of mind before or after the interview is conducted.

I accept my participation in the study and being audio recorded:

Signature

Printed name

If you have any questions regarding our research, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your time and best regards,

Yasmin Ali and Maja Säberg

yasal947@student.liu.se

majsa547@student.liu.se

Appendix 5 - The Collaboration Between the Writers

We carried out our final teaching practice at a school in the south of India. We initially came to the decision to focus on speaking skills, since this was emphasized in many ways at the Indian School. After discussing our ideas with our supervisor, Nigel Musk, we decided to carry out focus group discussions with students and teacher interviews to gather data from both perspectives. We started looking for useful sources and began forming the initial questions for the focus group discussions and teacher interviews with help from Nigel. Before collecting our data, we decided to divide the data workload between us, one overseeing the teacher interviews while the other conducted the focus groups discussions. The rationale behind the division of workload was mainly to create a structure where one of us had an area of expertise regarding each method. This made the pre-work more efficient since it came natural for each of us to prepare one of the data collections, thereby allowing the other to get a deeper insight into the other method. Coming to the end of the teaching practice, we carried out our data collection. Upon returning to Sweden, we started analyzing our data and the writing process began.

I, Yasmin Ali, am very pleased with writing this thesis with my partner, Maja Säberg. We divided the workload equally between us during the whole process. We decided early on, before any data collection took place, that one would oversee the focus group discussions, and the other one the semi-structured interviews to facilitate the workload. I was responsible for the focus group discussions whereas Maja was responsible for the semi-structured interviews. Besides this division, we wrote all the chapters together. We were always together when we wrote the thesis, and so this made the writing process easier as well as using *Google Documents*. The whole process has been enjoyable since we are good friends and wrote our first thesis together. For this reason, we knew how we would take advantage of each other's strengths and how to carry out the work process. Finally, I would thank Maja for a good partnership as well the support throughout this whole process, and the past years on the teacher's programme. Thank you for being a wonderful friend, I am so grateful for having you as my thesis partner.

I, Maja Säberg, agree with the statements made by Yasmin Ali, the workload has been divided equally between us, and most of the work have been done by us together. The close friendship between Yasmin and myself has been a great asset during the work on this thesis. We know how to support each other in the best possible way and this collaboration allowed us to take advantage of each other's strengths and make up for each other's weaknesses. This writing collaboration, as well as the data collection in India, has been a true pleasure. For the last words of this thesis, I would like to thank Yasmin for the partnership during the work process of this thesis, as well as during these past five years on the teacher's programme. I would not have made it without you - Thank you!