Oral Communication Strategies in English as a Foreign Language

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The syllabi for the subject English in both Swedish compulsory and upper secondary school state in the core content for English that it should provide the opportunity to learn how to use linguistic strategies in speech, i.e. oral communication strategies. However, we as teachers are not informed by these documents what oral communication strategies are and which ones are to be preferred. For this reason, we as future teachers of English, posed the following research questions: What are oral communication strategies according to the literature, and how are these assessed in terms of being positive and negative strategies? According to research what factors correlate with strategy use, and what are the potential pedagogical implications for the Swedish school context? To answer these questions, we have read and analyzed fourteen different empirical studies regarding communication strategies. The first question was answered by analyzing the empirical studies and relevant theory. We found various definitions in our studies, stemming from different theoretical perspectives. However, they all define oral communication strategies as serving the purpose of furthering interaction. Furthermore, by comparing the definitions in the Swedish syllabi for English and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to our literature, we were able to answer the second part of the first question. The literature shows that there is a preference for achievement strategies over avoidance or reduction strategies. To answer the first part of the second question, some studies indicated a positive correlation between strategy use and the level of proficiency. Regarding pedagogical implications, some studies indicate that explicit strategy training has a positive effect on oral performance. Drawing on the results of these studies and the theoretical framework provided, we conclude that achievement strategies are to be preferred and that they should be taught explicitly.
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1 Introduction
All learners of a language as well as native speakers are from time to time faced with problems in communication, such as being at a loss for words or somehow struggling to get their point across. At this point, communication strategies are employed implicitly or explicitly. The Swedish syllabi for English state that students should be able to apply linguistic strategies, e.g. oral communication strategies, in order to improve communication as well as to solve communicative obstacles (Skolverket 2011a: 34; Skolverket 2011b: 53). However, there is confusion as to how to teach these strategies, how to assess the use of them, let alone how to define exactly what communication strategies are. A professional teacher should not only be knowledgeable in their subject but also be able to interpret the curriculum and syllabi. Therefore this issue became an area of importance and interest to us as future teachers of English.

1.1 Aim and Research questions
Due to the lack of information regarding communication strategies in the Swedish syllabi for English, we wish to investigate existing research regarding these strategies as well as relevant theory. Furthermore, we wish to investigate if research indicates any pedagogical suggestions in relation to these strategies. In order to adequately address this area of interest, we have posed the two following research questions:

1. What are oral communication strategies according to the literature, and how are these assessed in terms of being positive and negative strategies?
2. According to research what factors correlate with strategy use, and what are the potential pedagogical implications for the Swedish school context?

1.2 Outline
This thesis is divided into five chapters. After this introduction, a background providing a historical perspective on the inclusion of communication strategies in the syllabi of the subject English in Swedish compulsory and upper secondary schools will be presented. We also examine the definition of linguistic strategies, e.g. communication strategies, in these syllabi as well as in the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR). After the background chapter, we present our methodology for this thesis and the nature of our sources, the method used for finding literature as well as the method for processing it. We also provide the mind map used to organize the empirical studies. The fourth chapter is our research review, where we analyze our empirical studies based on our research questions. In our last chapter, the discussion chapter, we discuss our findings in order to answer our research questions, and then
present our conclusions. The chapter finishes with implications for future research.

2 Background

In our background chapter, we will present Swedish syllabi, ranging from 1994 to 2011, with a historical perspective concerning the subject English. The Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) will also be presented in relation to the current Swedish syllabi.

Syllabi dating before the 1990s do not focus much on the communicative aspects of English nor, understandably, on oral communication strategies. In the Swedish syllabus of 1994 called Lpo94 (Utbildningsdepartementet 1994a), English as a subject is recognized as important since it connects the world in terms of communication, whether in commercial contexts or simply for travelling. Moreover, the focus is clearly communicative. Linguistic strategies are not explicitly mentioned nor are oral communication strategies, although the syllabus states that there is a value (“ett värde”) in trying to find ways to understand or to be understood, even in situations where the person’s language ability is not yet fully developed (Utbildningsdepartementet 1994a: 17). Although the term “strategies” is not mentioned in the syllabus for English in the upper secondary school (Lpf94) (Utbildningsdepartementet 1994b), the Code of Statutes (SKOLFS) concerning upper secondary education (SKOLFS 1994:11) mentions that students should be able to apply strategies when there is a lack of linguistic knowledge. Interestingly, the Code of Statutes (1994: 11) was published only three months after Lpf94.

A few years later, in 2000, the curriculum Gy2000 was published in which the syllabus addressed the matter of compensating for gaps in linguistic knowledge in a similar manner. In the 9th grade of the Swedish school system, the student should be able to apply different strategies contributing to communicative interaction to achieve a passing grade (Skolverket 2000: 62). However, for a passing grade in the first course of English in upper-secondary school, a student should be able to apply different types of strategies in order to compensate for gaps in their knowledge of English (2000: 88). Consequently, there was a development in how the syllabi, from 1994 to 2000, address the matter of solving linguistic problems.

The current curricula are Lgr11 and Gy11, the former referring to compulsory education, the latter referring to upper secondary education. The aims for English as a foreign language in both Lgr11 and Gy11 mention linguistic strategies with the purpose of improving communication as well as solving communicative obstacles (Skolverket 2011a: 34; Skolverket 2011b: 53). These linguistic strategies are mentioned in relation to interaction and oral
communication. Therefore, oral communication strategies can be considered a subcategory of linguistic strategies. In the syllabus’s core content for English in Lgr11, regarding linguistic strategies, suggestions of these are provided: paraphrasing, questions and explanations (“omformuleringar, frågor och förklaringar”) (Skolverket 2011a: 37). Lgr11 also provides suggestions of linguistic strategies when contributing to, and actively participating in an interaction, such as confirming (“ge bekräftelse”) and posing follow-up questions (“ställa följdfrågor”) (ibid.). For a passing grade, i.e. an E, in the 6th grade of compulsory school in English, a student should be able to select and use some type of strategy (“någon strategi”) in order to solve communicative obstacles and improve interaction. In contrast, for an A grade, the students should be able to use several different strategies (2011a: 38–39). In addition, the commentary provided for the syllabus for English presents suggestions for solving communicative obstacles: synonyms, questions and body language (“synonymer, frågor och kroppsspråk”) (Skolverket 2011c: 9).

For the students in upper secondary school, the grading criteria for strategies are identical from courses English 5 to English 7, only differing between the grades, i.e. from E to A (Skolverket 2011b). For an E in English, regardless of the course, a student should be able to apply generally functioning (“i huvudsak fungerande”) strategies that to some extent (“i viss mån”) solve communicative obstacles and improve interaction (2011b: 56). However, the criteria for an A require a student to apply well-functioning strategies (“väl fungerande strategier”) that solve communicative obstacles, improve interaction, and advance interaction in a constructive manner (Skolverket 2011b: 57). The same requirements regarding said strategies apply for the 9th grade of compulsory education, the grade preceding upper secondary education. Concerning linguistic strategies when improving interaction and solving problems, there are suggestions provided in the commentary for English at upper secondary level, such as turn-taking (“turtagning”), indicating agreement or disagreement (“hur man visar att man håller med eller har en avvikande uppfattning”) and introducing new topics (“om hur nya aspekter eller ämnen introduceras”) (Skolverket 2015: 9).

The present syllabi are more closely connected to CEFR than previous ones. In CEFR, the term “strategies” is defined as a means to organize and balance language resources. This includes, but is not limited to, strategies simply coping with insufficient linguistic knowledge; furthermore, the word strategies is implied as “the adoption of a particular line of action in order to maximise effectiveness” (Council of Europe 2001: 57). Regarding the production of speech and writing, the Council of Europe (2001: 63) defines production strategies, and utilizes the terms achievement strategies and avoidance strategies. The Council of Europe (ibid.) defines
achievement strategies as a means to cope when scaling up ambitions, whereby the user “adopts a positive approach with what resources he or she has” (Council of Europe 2001: 63). Conversely, avoidance strategies are defined as a means to scale down ambitions in order to accommodate linguistic resources ensuring success in a more delimited area (ibid.). While there are definitions provided by the current Swedish syllabi for English in Lgr11 and Gy11 regarding strategies, it is of interest to further define them and understand which types are used by EFL learners and the implications for us as future teachers.

3 Method
In this chapter, we will present the nature of our sources and the procedure for gathering them. Moreover, we will justify our selections of empirical studies and how we have gone about processing and categorizing them.

3.1 The Nature of the Sources
For this study we have used various sources, among them articles of empirical studies, a licentiate thesis, the syllabi for English in both upper secondary education and compulsory school with their commentaries, CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). We have also used handbooks about language strategy use and other relevant articles and publications in the research field of communication strategies.

The empirical studies have been carried out in different areas of the world, which gives an international perspective. However, our future profession will most likely take place in Sweden. Therefore, we have attempted to gather Swedish studies in order place this thesis in a relevant context.

In order to assure reliability and legitimacy, the articles we have used have been published in peer-reviewed journals, which means they have been critically reviewed by experts within the field (Eriksson Barajas, Forsberg & Wengström 2013: 61). Furthermore, most of the selected sources stem from the 21st century so as to increase their currency for our literature review. Some sources are older yet provide an important perspective on the research which laid the foundation for the empirical studies we have selected.

3.2 The Procedure for Gathering Sources
Mainly, the method applied in order to find relevant articles has been searching through Linköping University Library collective database Unisearch, the database ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center), as well as LIBRIS (the LIBRARY Information System). The keywords that we used to find relevant articles were the following: “communication strategies”,
“second language”, “speaking strategies”, “oral communication strategies”, “proficiency”, “linguistic strategies”, “ESL”, “EFL”, “SLA”, “L2 and upper secondary”. To find more articles within the field of investigation, we used keywords and strings from the aforementioned articles, such as “compensation strategies”, “OCSI”, “OCS”, “SILL” and “strategic competence”.

By manually searching the reference lists of the empirical studies (Eriksson Barajas, Forsberg & Wengström 2013: 74), as well as the handbooks, for well-known authors, we discovered the renowned researchers within the field of oral communication strategies at an early stage. Moreover, in order to establish the legitimacy of the studies, we examined their theoretical frameworks and sources.

To delimit our thesis, we restricted our search to oral communication strategies in English spoken as a foreign language (EFL), or as a lingua franca (ELF). Furthermore, we exclusively selected empirical articles carried out in school contexts.

There has not been much recent research done within the field of oral communication strategies in Europe, although a lot of research has been carried out in Asian countries such as Japan and Iran. Due to this fact, our findings on Swedish studies on oral communication have been limited.

As future EFL teachers in Swedish upper secondary education, we would have preferred to only examine studies in that particular setting. Due to the fact that our findings have been limited, we have chosen to include studies whose participants were students of various ages in different school contexts, e.g. elementary school and university. The participants of the studies have had varying levels of proficiency and learning experience, some of which may resemble that of upper secondary students. Furthermore, all of the studies selected examine communication strategies in an EFL context, which consequently makes them relevant to the teaching profession of EFL.

### 3.3 The Procedure for Processing and Analyzing Sources

Having selected our empirical articles, we read and organized them into a mind map (see figure 1) in order to acquire a clear and manageable overview. Here we organized the studies along with the essential information necessary to identify and analyze them; this information consisted of participants, methods of data collection, aims and origin of the studies. Based on this information we were able to construct categories and situate the empirical studies accordingly, i.e. according to their main method of data collection, since most of them apply multiple methods of data collection. This resulted in four categories: questionnaires,
interactional analysis, classroom observations and quasi-experimental studies. Consequently, we began analyzing the empirical studies within each category by comparing and contrasting their findings. To further improve our understanding and analysis of these empirical studies, we studied the literature, such as handbooks and articles, relevant to the field of research on oral communication strategies.
Figure 1: Mind map showing the categorization of reviewed empirical studies
4. Research Review
In this chapter we will present the two major perspectives within the field of communication strategies used in our sources. Afterwards, a review of empirical studies on communication strategies will be presented along with critical syntheses for each category. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of all studies.

4.1 Theoretical Framework
The two major perspectives in the field of communication strategies are the psycholinguistic view and the interactional view. Important terms and concepts will be presented for each perspective. The division of these views is drawn on Færch and Kasper’s own division, as presented in the article ‘Two Ways of Defining Communication Strategies’ from 1984.

4.1.1 Psycholinguistics and a Psycholinguistic View of Communication Strategies
Psycholinguistics is a prominent interdisciplinary perspective on language, combining elements of linguistics, neuroscience and psychology, as well as other disciplines. It focuses on language acquisition, production and comprehension aiming to understand the cognitive processes and neurological functions affecting language use (Carroll 1999: 4).

Drawing on the psycholinguistic perspective, Færch and Kasper (1984) provide a psycholinguistic definition of communication strategies by applying the term “plans”. This term is a concept of cognitive structures categorized under verbal reception and production. Communication strategies are categorized under verbal plans. Furthermore, communication strategies are distinguished by two main aspects: problem-orientedness and potential consciousness. The problem-orientedness relates to the language user encountering linguistic problems, when their current knowledge is somehow insufficient. The potential consciousness is a delimitation of the psycholinguistic perspective regarding problem-solving plans, referring those which can be employed consciously. Whereas the opposite of conscious problem-solving plans are automated functions, for instance regarding motor and neural processes in articulation. Furthermore, consciousness is not defined as a constant state, therefore the word potential is included in the term. The potential in acquiring and learning a language is also implied in this concept (Færch & Kasper 1984: 46–47).

Færch and Kasper (1983) further describe the psycholinguistic definition and classification of communication strategies, i.e. Færch and Kasper’s taxonomy. They classify communication strategies as two approaches: avoidance behavior and achievement behavior. Then, they divide these strategies into two major types: reduction strategies, in conjunction with
avoidance behavior, and achievement strategies in conjunction with achievement behavior (Færch & Kasper 1983: 36). An important difference between these two major categories is the fact that achievement strategies aim at preserving the original communicative goal, instead of reducing it, and possibly avoiding it (Færch & Kasper 1984: 48–49). Compensatory strategies are a further classification of achievement strategies which are aimed at solving obstacles during the planning phase, i.e. when the user is retrieving linguistic knowledge from his or her memory. An example of a compensatory strategy is code switching, i.e. switching from the second language (L2) to the first language or mother tongue (L1). Regarding avoidance strategies, there are some examples: message abandonment, topic avoidance and meaning replacement. What these all have in common is that they reduce or change the original communicative goal (Færch & Kasper 1983: 44). Furthermore, Færch and Kasper examine the possible learning effects of communication strategies. While achievement strategies generally provide a potential learning opportunity, reduction strategies do not. However, code switching, a compensatory strategy, does not provide a potential learning effect (Færch & Kasper 1983: 54–55).

Rebecca Oxford is another prominent researcher in the field of learning strategies, related to communication strategies. There are aspects very similar to the psycholinguistic view on cognitive processes in Oxford’s research on language learning strategies, which can be seen in her definition of learning strategies. Oxford’s definition of learning strategies refers to strategies that augment learning-acquisition (1990: 5). Furthermore, Oxford divides learning strategies into direct and indirect which can be further divided into memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies. The term compensation strategies relates to strategies used when overcoming linguistic limitations in speaking and writing, such as: switching to one’s mother tongue, using mime, avoiding communication to a greater or lesser degree, adjusting the message and circumlocution (Oxford 1990: 19). These compensation strategies for overcoming obstacles are defined by Oxford as contributing to learning since they allow the learner to achieve sustained practice (Oxford 1990: 94). While Oxford admits that avoiding communication either partially or totally is a strategy that contradicts the aim of interacting as much as possible, it is mentioned that the learner may consequently be emotionally protected. In contrast, Færch and Kasper (1983: 54) mention the fact that topic avoidance does not provide a potential learning effect. Oxford’s justification for the positive effects of topic avoidance is supported by the emotional protection it provides, which requires an explanation of affective strategies concerning emotions. Oxford strongly emphasizes the fact that negative emotions may heavily impede learning, while positive emotions may have a significantly positive effect on learning (Oxford 1990: 140). Based on her research on learning strategies, Oxford created a
strategic questionnaire, the Strategic Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The SILL is an objective survey measuring language learning strategy use across language skills, using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “never or almost never” to “always or almost always” (Oxford 1990: 199). The overall average indicates the frequency of strategy use in general by the student and the averages based on each part indicate which strategy category the learner uses most frequently. The SILL has been employed all over the world by learners of different languages (Oxford 1990: 199).

4.1.2 Interactional Linguistics and an Interactional View of Communication Strategies

Another interdisciplinary perspective on language is interactional linguistics; it is interdisciplinary in the sense that it combines linguistics, anthropology and conversation analysis. This perspective aims to better understand how interaction shapes language, as well as how language itself shapes interaction. It views speech as an emerging product in a social semiotic event, i.e. a communicative event, and language as providing the resources to accomplish the goals within this event (Selting & Couper-Kuhlen 2001: 3).

To cover another aspect of communication strategies, Tarone (1983: 64–65) added an interactional perspective in response to the psycholinguistic focus on cognitive processes. She highlighted that language is not only an object used by the speaker, but a living organism created by the speaker and the hearer, and therefore a part of communication. Tarone broadens the definition of these strategies by referring to the fact that “a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared” (Tarone 1983: 65). Therefore, the view of communication strategies from the interactional perspective may be interpreted as attempts to bridge the gap between the linguistic knowledge of the interlocutors in authentic communicative contexts (Tarone 1983: 65).

Yasuo Nakatani is a researcher who adopted a view similar to the interactional view presented by Tarone. In contrast to other researchers within the field of communication strategies, Nakatani (2010) uses the term oral communication strategies (OCS), as he wants to highlight the “interlocutors’ negotiation behavior for coping with communication breakdowns and their use of communication enhancers” (Nakatani 2010: 118). In 2006, Nakatani developed a questionnaire, the Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI), to be able to study the use of oral communication strategies. Whereas SILL examines language learning strategies regarding reading, writing, speaking and listening, the OCSI focuses on strategies for oral communication tasks, involving speaking and listening. Furthermore, Nakatani wanted to create
a questionnaire better suited to oral communication strategies used in classroom tasks (Nakatani 2006: 153, 158). The participants report the questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale, in order to determine the frequency of certain oral communication strategies (Nakatani 2006: 154). The OCSI is divided into two parts with several items, i.e. questions. The first part consists of 32 items and the second consists of 26 (Nakatani 2006: 154). The first part examines strategies for coping with speaking problems, including eight categories of strategies: social affective, fluency-oriented, negotiation for meaning while speaking, accuracy-oriented, message reduction and alteration, non-verbal strategies while speaking, message abandonment and attempt to think in English (Nakatani 2006: 123). The second part examines strategies for coping with listening problems, such as: scanning, getting the gist and negotiation for meaning while listening, to name a few (Nakatani 2010: 123).

In the OCSI, Nakatani has included some elements which are drawn on previous research, such as Færch and Kasper’s (1983) definition of communication strategies, when mentioning message abandonment, akin to topic avoidance, and Oxford, when addressing social affective strategies. Furthermore, the inclusion of the terms reduction and achievement strategies are drawn from Færch and Kasper who consider achievement strategies and achievement behavior to be prerequisites for potential learning effects. While Færch and Kasper (1983) refer to these behaviors as achievement behavior and avoidance behavior, Nakatani (2010) refers to students’ positive behavior when using achievement strategies, and to students’ negative behavior when using reduction strategies.

4.2 Empirical Studies
In this section of our thesis we will present our literature review based on 13 empirical studies and one licentiate thesis, all of which are concerned with strategic competence or oral communication strategy (OCS) use in English as a foreign language (EFL), or lingua franca (ELF). For a comprehensive overview, the studies are organized into the following categories: questionnaires, quasi-experimental studies, classroom observations, and audio-recordings. After each category a critical synthesis will be provided, and a synthesis comparing all the empirical studies will be presented at the end of the research review.

4.2.1 Studies Using Questionnaires
Several researchers have collected quantitative data through questionnaires when studying oral communication strategies (Nakatani 2006, Días Larenas 2011, Tajeddin & Alemi 2010, Rohani 2011, Khan & Victori 2011, Nakatani 2010). These studies have also included EFL proficiency in relation to various factors, e.g. the correlation between proficiency level and strategy use.
Furthermore, proficiency tests have been administered in order to select participants and determine level of proficiency.

Three of our selected empirical studies have used questionnaires to collect their data (Nakatani 2006, Díaz Larenas 2011, Tajeddin & Alemi 2010). Nakatani (2006) carried out a study, consisting of two phases, with the purpose of creating the Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI). The first phase consisted of 80 Japanese university students filling out an open-ended questionnaire with the purpose of eliciting strategy items. Based on the results of the open-ended questionnaire, 70 items were selected and then tested on 400 university students. 58 out of 70 items were selected for the final version of the OCSI. The second phase focused on confirming the validity of the OCSI, by having 62 Japanese female students fill out the OCSI and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). In order to research the correlation between proficiency level and OCS use, conversation tasks were carried out to ascertain the students’ proficiency level. Immediately after the task, the students filled out a questionnaire, the OCSI, assessing their use of strategies during the task.

Another author who applied the OCSI was Díaz Larenas (2011), who examined potential differences between 8th and 12th graders’ use of oral communication strategies in EFL, and between different schools, e.g. public, semi-public and private. The data was collected by 108 Chilean students from different school contexts, filling out the OCSI.

The OCSI was validated by Nakatani (2006) using the SILL which was modified and used by Tajeddin and Alemi (2010) to study compensation strategies on 229 EFL learners in Iran. In their study, the participants were grouped by proficiency after having taken the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The students scoring within the low-level range, and those within the high-level range were selected, whereas the students scoring within the middle-range were not selected to participate in the study. After taking the TOEFL exam, the students filled out the questionnaire at home.

The results of Nakatani’s (2006: 160) study indicate a difference in strategy use between high and low oral proficiency learners. The high oral proficiency learners tended to apply the following strategies more frequently than the low oral proficiency learners: social affective strategies, fluency oriented strategies and negotiation for meaning. Tajeddin and Alemi (2010: 51–52) were also interested in the difference in strategy use between low- and high-proficiency learners. Their results indicated that high-proficiency learners more frequently applied L2-based strategies, while the low-proficiency learners tended to use L1-based and avoidance strategies. However, the results from both of these studies showed that both high- and low-proficiency learners used roughly the same total amount of strategies.
In contrast, the results of Díaz Larenas’ (2011) study contradict the findings of Nakatani (2006) and Tajeddin and Alemi (2010). Díaz Larenas’ first hypothesis was that 12th graders would use more speaking strategies since they theoretically have a higher level of language competence, i.e. a higher proficiency level, after more years of studying EFL than 8th graders. According to the results of the questionnaire, the 8th graders had more knowledge of oral communication strategies in English, although the results did not indicate differences between the different school contexts. Furthermore, Díaz Larenas proposed that the difference between 8th and 12th grader, i.e. proficiency and level, might be due to the fact that the “8th graders seem to be more motivated towards language learning; therefore, they are more willing to orally communicate and express their thoughts, feelings and opinions in English” (2011: 95).

The remaining three empirical studies in this category have made use of questionnaires along with complementary methods (Khan & Victori 2011, Nakatani 2010, Rohani 2011). Nakatani (2010) and Rohani (2011) both used the OCSI and similar complementary methods in these two studies. Nakatani (2010) examined “whether the use of specific communication strategies can improve learners’ English proficiency in communicative tasks” (Nakatani 2010: 116). 62 Japanese female students took a “strategy-based conversation course” (2010: 119) as well as oral pre- and posttests which were used to determine their oral performance. These tests were used to examine the potential change in communicative performance. The data collection consisted of: videotaped interactions from the oral posttest, the OCSI, as well as recordings of retrospection, i.e. a verbal report protocol. These protocols were analyzed to examine perception of OCS use, and whether there was a difference between high- and low-proficiency students (Nakatani 2010: 120–123). The discourse data from the oral posttest included the production rate, the number of errors and the students’ actual strategy use. In addition, the OCSI was filled out directly after the oral posttest and was used to measure the variety and frequency of students’ OCS use, and compared to the retrospective protocol data concerning their oral test performance (Nakatani 2010: 116).

Similar to Nakatani, Rohani’s study (2011) also focused on the students’ change in the use of oral communication strategies. By implementing Task-Based Learning aimed at developing oral communication skills during one semester, the students’ shift in OCS use was examined. The participants, Indonesian university EFL students, took a one-on-one oral test in order to ascertain their proficiency. The students filled out the OCSI after this test, as well as at the end of the semester to collect data. Furthermore, interviews were held, at the beginning and end of the semester, to “more deeply explore and elaborate how students employed the strategies” (2011: 87) as well as to examine any shift in OCS use.
Akin to Nakatani’s study which developed the OCSI, Khan and Victori (2011) developed a strategic questionnaire. Their study “sought to explore differences in strategy use across three oral communication tasks” (Khan & Victori 2011: 27). Firstly, a strategy questionnaire (SQ) was developed using existing descriptions from previous studies in the field of research. This SQ was filled out by 22 students on three different occasions after three separate oral tasks to examine their perceived strategy use. These consisted of a picture story, describing art and an information gap task. After the third and final task a Reflective Questionnaire was filled out to “see if [their] predictions about the tasks matched learners’ perceptions” (Khan & Victori 2011: 34). The 22 university students who participated in the study were selected based on the speaking segment of the Preliminary English Test (PET). In addition, four of these students selected for a case study were videoed performing the tasks. The recordings were transcribed in order to analyze their actual strategy use. Afterwards, they completed a stimulated recall in order to recall their thought processes with the aid of a digital recording of their performance. These recalls were tape recorded and transcribed. The data analysis was focused on observing potential differences in perceived strategy use across the three tasks, as well as examining whether perceived strategy use reflected actual strategy use.

The results of Nakatani’s study (2010) indicated that high-proficiency students were clearly aware of “using strategies to fill communication gaps and negotiate meaning to enhance mutual understanding” (Nakatani 2010: 128). These results were corroborated by the questionnaire and the retrospection. In addition, the results indicated that participants’ posttest scores correlated negatively to the use of message abandonment strategies, although this correlation was not significant (Nakatani 2010: 125). While Nakatani (2010) only applied the OCSI after the posttest, Rohani (2011) had the participants fill out the OCSI both at the beginning of the study as well as at the end; thus, this gave Rohani the ability to measure change in OCS use. Similar to Nakatani’s findings concerning negative correlations between posttest scores and use of message abandonment strategies, Rohani found three significant changes in strategy use, i.e. a decrease in using message reduction and alteration, and the increase of non-verbal strategies (Rohani 2011: 94). Consequently, Rohani’s findings show significant changes regarding the use of message abandonment strategies, while on the contrary Nakatani’s findings were not significant.

Khan and Victori (2011) investigated the difference in strategy use across three different tasks. Their results showed that their actual use of strategies differed across tasks, although the SQ did not indicate such differences (Khan & Victori 2011: 43). For instance, compensation strategies were more frequent in the information gap task, due to the fact that “learners were
required to describe lexical items they did not know” (Khan & Victori 2011: 43). In relation to the two previous studies, Khan and Victori explicitly address the fact that strategy use differed according to the characteristics of each task. Rohani (2011) and Nakatani (2010) have not implemented this perspective, although their settings for the study have been focused on communication. Furthermore, Khan and Victori address the reliability of their SQ, which “even after contextualizing strategies to a specific task” (Khan & Victori 2011: 44) was not completely reliable as an instrument. The result showed that perceived strategy use did not vary much, which may owe to the fact that “learners do tend to use a similar set of strategies for different types of task” or to the fact that “the questionnaire was not a reliable instrument to retrieve possible variation in strategy use (Khan & Victori 2011: 44). In the light of this statement, these three studies implement additional methods for data collection in order to provide with more reliable information.

Critical Synthesis of Studies Using Questionnaires

The different studies in which questionnaires have been used as a main method of data collection show evident results of a positive correlation between proficiency and actual strategy use (Nakatani 2006, Nakatani 2010, Rohani 2011, Tajeddin & Alemi 2010). In contrast to these studies, Díaz Larenas (2011) found that the younger students’ perception of used strategies was greater than that of the older and more experience students, which contradicts the findings of the aforementioned studies. This aspect was discussed in her study and Díaz Larenas reasoned that this contradiction owes to the fact that 12th graders focus less on English as it is not assessed in the university entrance exams.

Nakatani (2010) and Rohani (2011) used retrospection, e.g. verbal report protocol or one-on-one interviews, both of which point toward the fact that low-proficiency learners all experience affective difficulties, such as anxiety. In Khan and Victori’s (2011) study, which also used retrospection, a reflective questionnaire, participants experienced more anxiety in some tasks than others. Anxiety is related to affective difficulties which correlate with low proficiency. Furthermore, Nakatani’s (2010: 127–128) findings show that low-proficiency learners require specific training in strategy use to combat affective difficulties. In summary, the studies by Nakatani (2010), Rohani (2011) as well as Khan and Victori (2011) apply multiple methods of data collection to complement the questionnaire, in order to acquire more reliable and elaborate results.

Instead of focusing on the correlation between proficiency and strategy use, Khan and
Victori’s (2011) study focused on how strategy use differs across different types of tasks. Consequently, it is important to adapt the instrument assessing strategy use according to the type of task in order to increase reliability.

4.2.2 Studies Using a Quasi-Experimental Design

We found two studies where the researchers based their study on a quasi-experimental design (Nakatani 2005, Rabab’ah 2015). What distinguishes quasi-experimental design from truly experimental design is the randomized assignment of groups, e.g. control group (Benati 2015: 76–77). Participants were divided into a control group and an experimental group, a strategy training group, in both studies, where the latter received explicit strategy training.

Rabab’ah’s study (2015) “examines the effect of communication strategy instruction on EFL students’ oral communicative ability and their strategic competence” (Rabab’ah 2015: 625). The participants, Jordanian university EFL students, consisted of a strategy training group, 44 students, and a control group, 36 students. Both groups were taught using the same textbook. However, the control group was taught all ten units in the textbook while the experimental group was taught only seven units. In addition, the experimental group received explicit Communication Strategy (CS) training in order to raise awareness of these strategies. In order to examine the differences between the two groups after a 14-week EFL course, both a pre- and post-IELTS (International English Language Testing System) speaking test was administered. Along with these tests, transcription data as well as the exit tests from the textbook used in the course were used to evaluate the effects of the training.

Rabab’ah (2015) examined the effects of explicit teaching of oral communication strategies, as well as improvement in oral proficiency. Likewise Nakatani (2005) investigated the patterns of OCS use, and the effects of explicit teaching of oral communication strategies. The participants of this study, 62 Japanese EFL college students, were also divided into a strategy training group consisting of 28 students and a control group of 34 students. Both groups were taught by the same instructor using a communicative approach, although the strategy training group received explicit strategy training. Nakatani also used a pretest and posttest to be able to study the effects of the strategy training.

In conclusion, all groups in both studies were equivalent in their use of strategies during the pretests, which increases the legitimacy of the results and strengthens the quasi-experimental design applied, as aforementioned. In Nakatani’s study (2005), the participants “in the strategy-training group improved their proficiency in the oral communication tests significantly more than those in the control group” (Nakatani 2005: 83). Likewise, Rabab’ah’s
results regarding proficiency showed that the participants’ “proficiency has improved more than the control group” (Rabab’ah 2015: 641). Thus, this improvement in proficiency can be attributed to explicit strategy training which was central to both studies. As concerns strategy use in relation to strategy training, both studies reported an increase in strategy use in both experimental groups (Nakatani 2005: 87; Rabab’ah 2015: 643).

**Critical Synthesis of Studies Using a Quasi-Experimental Design**

The most important aspects derived from these two studies are that explicit training, or teaching, of oral communication strategies contributes to increasing students’ proficiency level, and their actual strategy use is increased as well. What may have further improved the results of both studies could have been the implementation of a longitudinal aspect, for instance a delayed posttest. Such a test could have indicated retention of the participants’ strategies and strategy use. Both Rabab’ah (2015) and Nakatani (2005) highlight the effects of explicit strategy training and raising awareness of the taught strategies.

According to Nakatani (2005), achievement strategies are to be preferred while reduction strategies are to be avoided. The strategy training group, in contrast to the control group, became aware of this preference. Consequently, one could infer that students trained in strategy use will attempt to avoid reduction strategies and therefore use achievement strategies that “maintain conversation flow and [...] solve potential communication problems” (Nakatani 2005: 87).

**4.2.3 Study Using Classroom Observation**

Classroom observation studies are conducted in the participants’ natural environment, i.e. the classroom. Furthermore, a researcher in this type of study tends to avoid interfering in the object of study, in order to observe “a behavior in its natural context” (Benati 2015: 101). Selin (2014) is the only study which has applied this method. Therefore, in accordance with our categorization, we have placed it separately.

Selin (2014) is a licentiate thesis, and it focuses on two learning studies carried out in two Swedish school contexts. The aim of the study is to explore the differences in students’ abilities to apply strategic competence, especially in order to adapt language to context and interlocutor (2014: 19). The learning studies both had an “iterative model of planning, performing, assessing and evaluating teaching and learning” (Selin 2014: 45). In other words, the teachers and researchers planned, carried out, analyzed and revised the lessons to adapt and improve them. The study was carried out over a period of three months. A number of lessons
were carried out which were tailored and redesigned to better suit the object of learning, i.e. the content of the lesson. The object of learning can be divided into a direct and an indirect object, the former referring to what is actually taught, and the latter referring to what the students are to supposed to able to perform based on what they have learnt. The way the object of learning is then realized in the classroom can be divided into three types: the intended object of learning, the enacted object of learning, and the lived object of learning. These types refer to what the teacher intends the students to learn, what actually happens in the classroom, and what the students retain after the lesson (Selin 2014: 40). The learning studies revolved around three cycles, i.e. one cycle per lesson. The participants were divided into groups, and different groups attended each lesson. For each lesson, a pretest was carried out in order to assess participants’ ability to adapt their language, and then before the end of the lesson a posttest followed; in addition, a delayed posttest was administered six weeks after the lesson. All the results of each lesson were analyzed in terms of the intended, enacted and lived object of learning. Following the analyses, the lessons were redesigned for the next group of students. All the lessons and tests used in collecting data were then analyzed in order “to find out which pattern of variation seemed to make the object of learning become most discernible for the pupils” (Selin 2014: 48).

The participants of the first learning study were 29 8th graders, who were videotaped and audio-recorded individually. The assessment and analysis of the learning was carried out at an individual level. The direct object of learning for this group of students was the use of formulaic phrases, more specifically their use and adapting them to appropriate contexts. “The formulaic sequences are phrases such as “Excuse me, where is...” and “Do you know where..., please”.” (Selin 2014: 63). In the second study, the participants consisted of 78 first-year high school students, who were also videotaped and audio-recorded in groups. The assessment and analysis of the learning, in contrast to the previous study, was performed at group level. The direct object of this study was to improve the understanding of the relation between interlocutor and context in communication (Selin 2014: 81). Consequently, both studies, although having different direct objects of learning, were directed toward the aim of exploring the adaptation of students’ language to interlocutor and situation.

The result of the analysis of the last lesson in the first learning study indicated that the students were able to adapt their language to the interlocutor, owing to the design and adaptation of the lesson. The adaptation of the lesson plans improved the students’ ability to adapt their language. An essential factor for the students’ adaptation was to understand the traits of the interlocutor, such as age and relation to themselves (Selin 2014: 104; 113). The results from the delayed post-tests from lesson two and three, i.e. the later cycles of learning study 1, indicated
that students from these lessons performed better than those from the first one in adapting their language.

Similarly, the results of the second learning study showed that the students improved their adaptation of language concerning inviting people to join discussions and in referring to what other people had said (Selin 2014: 104). It was imperative that the students were able to distinguish the direction of the utterance, i.e. to the interlocutor, in order to create and maintain conversation. The interlocutor may address the speaker, which is one type of direction, while the speaker may address the interlocutor, which is another direction (Selin 2014: 114). In addition to the positive results already mentioned, the assessment of the delayed post-tests which were carried out at group level indicated that the majority of the groups retained the learning from the lessons.

Critical Synthesis of Study Using Classroom Observation

The learning studies were assessed differently. The participants in the first learning study were analyzed at individual level, in contrast to the second study where they were analyzed at group level. However, it was still possible to deduce conclusions and measure results in both studies regardless of the assessments’ characteristics. The results of the two learning studies showed students’ progress in the use of strategic competence concerning adaptation of language. The progress between lessons owed to the design of the studies, i.e. the adaptation made by researchers in collaboration with teachers. Consequently, the importance of explicit teaching of strategic competence is indicated by the results of the delayed post-tests in both learning studies. These results show students’ retention of the ability to adapt their language. To supplement the method of data collection, a retrospection could have provided insights into students’ perception of strategy use.

4.2.4 Studies Using Audio-Recordings

This category will present studies that have used audio-recordings as their main method of data collection (Karbalaei & Negin Taji 2014, Rodríguez Cervantes & Roux Rodriguez 2012, Taheri & Davoudi 2016, Björkman 2014, Malmberg et al. 2000). Along with the audio-recordings, transcriptions of them have been analyzed in order to study strategy use. Furthermore, some of the studies have used additional methods to acquire in-depth results.

The studies carried out by Karbalaei and Negin Taji (2014), Rodríguez Cervantes and Roux Rodriguez (2012), Taheri and Davoudi (2016) are all international, in contrast to Malmberg et al. (2000) and Björkman (2014) which were both carried out in Sweden.
Rodríguez Cervantes and Roux Rodriguez (2012) studied communication strategy use in two beginner-level EFL classes and their two teachers in Mexico. The participants of the study consisted of 50 high-school students, university students and employed adults; the majority of the participants were between 18 and 20 years old. The data analyzed consisted of transcriptions of audio-recordings of classroom interactions, observation notes of six class sessions and interviews with the two teachers. The transcriptions were coded based on Færch and Kasper’s taxonomy from 1983 in order to identify the communication strategies used by the students in the two groups and the observation notes were used to provide information on behavior (2012: 117). The teacher interviews were only held to acquire information on the teachers’ earlier experience and their knowledge of communication strategies (2012: 116–117).

The studies carried out by Karbalaei and Negin Taji (2014) and Taheri and Davoudi (2016) examine specific type of communication strategies, namely compensation strategies. Karbalaei and Negin Taji (2014) wanted to identify what type of compensation strategies are used by Iranian EFL learners and specifically examine potential differences between male and female participants regarding strategy use. They created a checklist based on Oxford’s categorization of compensation strategies with the purpose of facilitating a fast recording of the use of these strategies used in oral exams. These oral exams were only administered to create a setting in which the students would use compensation strategies. The participants of the study were 120 Iranian EFL learners who were between 11 and 25 years old who were homogenized into groups according to the results of KET (Key English Test). KET is a test measuring proficiency at an A2 level, equivalent to elementary level, according to CEFR (Cambridge English 2017). The oral exams were tape-recorded, transcribed and analyzed in order to determine strategy use.

As mentioned, Taheri and Davoudi (2016) also looked at the use of compensation strategies among Iranian EFL learners. However, they were interested in the use of compensation strategies in groups with different proficiency levels, and the potential difference in use between genders (2016: 166). The participants consisted of 48 students who were divided by proficiency, i.e. intermediate level and advanced level, which resulted in four groups: advanced male, advanced female, intermediate male and intermediate female (2016: 167). The method used in investigating the participants’ use of compensation strategies consisted mainly of interviews whose sole purpose was to provide as natural a communicative situation as possible. The observer in the interviews also took notes on non-linguistic behavior and other aspects which cannot be recorded solely on tape. Furthermore, retrospection was added to their method of data collection in order to increase the validity and to complement the main method.
The data from both methods were then processed and analyzed.

Both Malmberg et al. (2000) and Björkman (2014) are studies carried out in a Swedish school context. Malmberg et al. carried out a longitudinal study where they followed a number of students from 5th grade up to the 1st year of upper secondary school. The aim of the study was to examine learning strategies in English, Spanish, German and French, the most common modern languages taught in Swedish schools. In this review we have only included the parts of the study that concern strategies in English. To collect their data, Malmberg et al. used a mixed method consisting of video-recordings and retrospection. Later on audio-recordings became their main method of data collection. They also implemented a questionnaire and introspection, although the data collected by these methods regarded only the students’ general thoughts on language acquisition and their thought processes during written language production (Malmberg et al. 2000: 8–10). For this research review, the focus will be on chapter 6 “speaking and conversation” (our translation). The main data used in this chapter to measure strategy use in English were recordings of: conversations between a native speaker and a Swedish student, retellings of a story and picture descriptions. A researcher in Malmberg et al.’s study (2000), Inger Bergström, studied the students’ use of English, followed eight students who met with different native English speakers once each school year during five years. In order to collect data from the conversations with the native speakers, conversations were recorded and transcribed (Malmberg et al. 2000: 119). The other two tasks were used to measure proficiency, especially with regards to fluency and accuracy. The conversations with the native speakers are the most interesting results for this research review, since this is where they examined the use of communication strategies.

Björkman (2014) studied communicative strategies used by university students in a lingua franca English (ELF) setting. Björkman’s aim was to present a framework for the communication strategies used in this setting by using a bottom-up approach. The 38 participants were from different countries with a different L1, and English was used as the lingua franca, i.e. the main language of communication. To enter the university, students had to have a high level of language proficiency. In contrast to the other studies, these participants were not enrolled in any English courses, i.e. they did not focus on language acquisition. The setting in which the students were studied consisted of tasks assigned by their lecturer. The tasks required a final product, such as an oral presentation, a report, or a solution to a problem presented in the task (2010: 128). The group-work sessions of these tasks were the basis for the audio-recordings. The data collected in this study consisted of fifteen group sessions with a total of fifteen hours of speech, which was analyzed for communication strategies. Furthermore, five
hours of the 15 were transcribed and analyzed thoroughly, using software which enables linking the transcript to the audio file.

Karbalaei and Negin Taji (2014) found that switching to the mother tongue, i.e. code-switching, and “avoiding communication partially or totally” (2014: 97) were the most prominent compensation strategies used along with circumlocution. Regarding gender they found that male students tended to use more strategies than female. Furthermore, male students used code-switching and “avoiding communication partially or totally” more often than female, while female students used circumlocution or synonyms more frequently (2014: 97–98).

Taheri and Davoudi (2016) also examined compensation strategy use in relation to gender and proficiency. In contrast, their results showed no major differences in strategy use between the genders. However, their study found that there was a relationship between the amount of compensation strategies used and the proficiency level of the students. The advanced learners used more compensation strategies than the intermediate learners (2016: 173–175). Furthermore, their results contrasted with those of Karbalaei and Negin Taji regarding the use of code-switching. They found that code-switching was one of the least frequently used strategies of all. In summary, the results showed self-repetition, direct appeal for help and approximation to be the most frequently employed strategies (2016: 177).

Rodríguez Cervantes and Roux Rodriguez’s (2012) results indicated that one group used the following three communication strategies the most, in descending order: code-switching, comprehension checks and repetitions. Results indicated that the other group used the following three strategies the most, in descending order: code-switching, clarification requests and asking for confirmation (2012: 120). In addition, there were differences in frequency of strategy use between the groups. Similar to Karbalaei and Negin Taji’s findings, code-switching was the most frequently applied strategy by both groups.

Similar to the previously mentioned studies in this category, code-switching was also a strategy used by the students in Malmberg et al.’s study (2000). For Inger Bergström’s results (in Malmberg et al. 2000), five out of the eight students studied were selected. The results were presented as excerpts of the transcriptions. Bergström appears to have recorded certain instances of strategy use among the students, e.g. communication strategies, code-switching, fillers and non-linguistic behavior, i.e. gestures. For this research review, two of the most contrasting students were selected, Emil and Lisa. In her first conversation with a native speaker, in the 5th grade of the Swedish school system, Lisa was mostly passive, avoiding communication due to linguistic shortcomings and did not signal to her interlocutor with gestures, i.e. non-linguistic behavior. Furthermore, Lisa used code-switching. In 8th grade, Lisa
demonstrated longer sentences, but code-switching was still apparent. In contrast to Lisa in the same grade, Emil was to some extent proficient in non-linguistic behavior and in maintaining conversation. Similar to Lisa, Emil used code-switching, although he was more proficient in general than Lisa. In 9th grade, Emil code-switched much less frequently, owing to his increased proficiency. Contrary to his previous performance, Emil used less non-linguistic behavior, such as imitating sounds in order to compensate for lack of vocabulary. In summary, these two students had very different experiences in their acquisition of EFL and their use of communication strategies.

While Björkman (2014) also focuses on communication strategy use, the study as well as the context are different from the previous ones; the study has a bottom-up approach and the setting is English as a lingua franca (ELF), as opposed to EFL. The findings resulted in a framework mainly consisting of two categories of strategies, self- and other-initiated strategies. Self-initiated strategies are those which the speaker initiates, while other-initiated are consequently initiated by the speaker after a communicative need has been indicated. Furthermore, the most frequently applied strategies in the self-initiated category were explicitness strategies, such as repetition, simplification and paraphrasing, as well as comprehension checks. The most frequent strategies in the other-initiated category consisted of confirmation checks and clarification requests.

**Critical Synthesis of Studies Using Audio-Recordings**

The studies in which audio-recordings have been the main method of data collection present various aspects of communication- and compensation strategies. Regarding code-switching, a prominent feature in the studies of Karbalaei and Negin Taji (2014) and Rodríguez Cervantes and Roux Rodriguez (2012), they found it to be one of the most used strategies among their participants. In contrast, Taheri and Davoudi (2016) found code-switching to be one of the least used strategies. Malmberg et al. (2000) examine communication strategies used in English and modern languages in Sweden. Their longitudinal study discovers the differences between students’ strategy use and their development in oral performance.

Björkman’s (2014) study is altogether different from the previous ones; however, there are themes which these studies have in common. Taheri and Davoudi (2016) were keen on providing an environment for speech to occur naturally for collecting data, e.g. interviews, just as Malmberg et al. (2000) were concerned with providing an environment stimulating students to speaks as much as possible, also in an interview setting but with an English native speaker.
While Malmberg et al. and Taheri and Davoudi both were concerned with the naturality of the setting of data collection, both studies are focused on language acquisition, in contrast to Björkman. Moreover, Björkman (2014) highlights the fact that the setting affects the strategies used, for instance a different context, e.g. small talk. The students in Björkman’s study were engaged in communication frequently and in an ELF setting, which affected the amount and type of strategies used. Rodríguez Cervantes and Roux Rodríguez’s (2012), concerning the effects of specific settings, commented on the fact that several aspects impeded students’ interaction in the classes observed. Both classes had a low amount of student-to-student interaction, partially due to teacher-fronted interaction, which contrasts the setting of Björkman’s participants.

In terms of generalizable results, Karbalaei and Negin Taji (2012) showed results contradicting those of Taheri and Davoudi (2016). The former found a difference in compensation strategy use between genders while no difference was found in the latter’s study. This might owe to a variety of factors, possibly the method of analysis.

In summary, context matters greatly when assessing strategy use, whether it concerns the environment of the data collection or the communicative context in which the participants find themselves. As a consequence, the methods of these studies, although similar in collection, i.e. audio-recordings, vary in terms of context, analysis and thoroughness.

4.3 Synthesis of the Research Review
All of the studies selected, regardless of method and research design, have examined oral communication strategies. There are three themes relevant to oral communication strategies in these studies: proficiency, explicit teaching, and context. This synthesis will address each of these themes in turn. The themes will include studies from all four categories, meaning that some studies will be situated in relation to those of other categories.

Several studies found correlations between strategy use and proficiency (Nakatani 2006, Tajeddin & Alemi 2010, Rohani 2011, Nakatani 2010, Taheri & Davoudi 2016). Taheri and Davoudi (2016) examined potential correlations between proficiency and strategy use as well as between gender and strategy use, while Karbalaei and Negin Taji (2014) examined strategy use among their elementary-level participants and the potential difference between gender and strategy use. While the latter did not examine correlations between strategy use and proficiency, they found code-switching to be the most frequently used strategy. Karbalaei and Negin Taji found that male students used more compensation strategies than female students, although Taheri and Davoudi did not find such a difference. The contradicting results of these two studies
mean that they are not generalizable. However, the correlation between strategy use and proficiency is generalizable since there are multiple studies confirming it.

The studies examining proficiency and strategy use found a positive correlation between proficiency and strategy use, implying that as proficiency increases so does the use of strategies. Furthermore, Rohani (2011) found correlations between proficiency and certain types of strategies used, e.g. achievement strategies and reduction strategies. The higher the proficiency, the higher the frequency of achievement strategies, and the lower the proficiency, the higher the frequency of reduction strategies. The implications of these two categories will be discussed later on. In contrast to the results concerning the positive correlation between strategy use and proficiency, Díaz Larenas’ (2011) results indicated that 8th graders perceived strategy use, as measured by the OCSI, was greater than that of 12th graders who presumably have a higher proficiency. Díaz Larenas (2011: 92) suggested that this difference might be due to the fact that 12th graders in Chile intentionally prioritize other subjects over English, as English is not assessed in the university entrance exams. In addition, Díaz Larenas also suggested that the Chilean syllabus might be an important factor since it focuses more on reading and listening rather than speaking (2011: 92). The importance and effects of syllabi will be further discussed later on. What becomes clear in this study is that the context in which the students found themselves had an effect on their OCS use.

While Björkman (2014), Malmberg et al. (2000), Khan and Victori (2011), Rodríguez Cervantes and Roux Rodriguez (2012) do not share the same aim nor research design, they all indicate and address the fact that the context affects the use of oral communication strategies. Björkman (2014) mentions the fact that another context, e.g. small talk, might have produced different results than an academic ELF context. Similar to Björkman’s (2014) awareness of the importance of context, Khan and Victori (2011) found that although students did not perceive themselves as applying different strategies, they did apply various strategies for different types of tasks. Therefore, different strategies will occur under different circumstances. Malmberg et al. (2000) sought to produce a context as natural and fruitful to communication as possible, similar to Taheri and Davoudi (2016). In both cases the reason was to avoid guiding the students toward a specific set or use of strategies. Rodríguez Cervantes and Roux Rodriguez (2012) focused on strategy use and found differences between the two classes who had different teachers. While both classes’ interaction was teacher-fronted, one class was more interactive. In summary, the context affects communication and OCS use. Teachers and their pedagogical implementations also affect communication and OCS use, as seen in Rodríguez Cervantes and Roux Rodriguez (2012), which brings us to the effects of explicit teaching in relation to oral
communication strategies.

Nakatani (2010) focused on the effects of strategy training in relation to oral performance and found that explicit strategy training had a positive effect. However, there was no control group present, which reduced the generalizability of the study. In contrast, Nakatani (2005) and Rabab’ah (2015) used a quasi-experimental design, which includes control groups, to investigate the effects of explicit strategy training. Both studies found that the strategy training group performed significantly better than the control group. Due to their research design, their results are more generalizable, underlining the positive effects of explicit strategy training. Furthermore, in relation to categories of strategy use, Rabab’ah (2015) and Nakatani (2005) found that achievement strategy use increased in the experimental groups. Nakatani (2005) also found that reduction strategies in his experimental group were less frequently used. Providing a more in-depth perspective than Nakatani (2005) and Rabab’ah (2015), Selin (2014) used delayed post-tests, which allow for a longitudinal aspect providing insight into the participants’ retention. The results showed retention of the material learnt. Moreover, Selin’s results indicated that strategic competence, e.g. oral communication strategies, can and should be explicitly taught. In accordance with Rodríguez Cervantes and Roux Rodríguez (2012), Selin also underlined teachers’ importance and impact on students’ performance and learning. In summary, these studies (Nakatani 2010, Nakatani 2005, Rabab’ah 2015, Selin 2014) highlight and argue the importance of explicit teaching and its positive effects on students’ oral performance and the retention of knowledge.

5 Discussion
The discussion chapter will address each research question accordingly. The syllabi for English in both Gy11 and Lgr11, as well as CEFR will be taken into account when answering both research questions, in connection to our syntheses of the research review and the theoretical framework. This chapter will be finished with a presentation of the conclusions drawn from the review of selected literature in relation to the theories presented, as well as suggestions for future research within the field of oral communication strategies.

5.1 Definitions of Oral Communication Strategies
Having examined the empirical studies as well as relevant literature in the field of research, there are two frequent and important terms, communication strategies and compensation strategies, where the former is the most frequent in our studies. Furthermore, the studies selected have mostly been concerned with strategies used when speaking, i.e. oral communication
strategies. Some strategies are subcategorized under linguistic strategies, as in the Swedish syllabi, or under learning strategies, as in Oxford (1990), while others are categorized differently. Consequently, there are differing opinions on what constitutes and defines communication strategies. The following definitions are the most relevant for this literature review and our research questions.

As provided by Færch and Kasper (1983), the psycholinguistic definition of communication strategies focuses on them as cognitive structures, relating to verbal production and reception, which include speech. There are two main aspects to consider, namely problem-orientedness and potential consciousness, where the former refers to the speaker addressing linguistic inadequacies and the latter to a potential in acquiring a consciousness of strategies, as in being influenced by teaching. However, regarding the interactional perspective, communication strategies are defined differently. Based on the interpretation of language as a living object created between interlocutors, the term communication strategies is viewed as attempts to bridge the linguistic gap between the interlocutors during communication (Tarone 1983). Furthermore, having adopted a view close to the interactional perspective, Nakatani (2010) uses the term oral communication strategies, although the focus is placed on the negotiation between interlocutors when coping with communication breakdowns. While the psycholinguistic and the interactional views address and define communication strategies, Oxford applies the term compensation strategies. These strategies are similar to communication strategies and are categorized under indirect learning strategies. They focus on overcoming linguistic limitations in speaking and writing, facilitating language learning by extending sustained practice. Similar to these definitions, the Swedish syllabi for the English subject use the term linguistic strategies (“språkliga strategier”) when addressing strategies used to solve problems and improve interaction in communication (Skolverket 2011a; Skolverket 2011b). The suggestions in Lgr11 are paraphrasing, questions and explanations (Skolverket 2011a: 37). Regarding Gy11, there are a few suggestions, such as turn-taking and indicating agreement (Skolverket 2015: 9). These linguistic strategies apply to speaking, writing, reading and listening, although some can be interpreted as oral communication strategies in their specific context. As mentioned in the background, these syllabi are connected to CEFR which provides a definition for production strategies for speaking and writing. The interpretation provided for the term strategies is “the adoption of a particular line of action in order to maximise effectiveness” (Council of Europe 2001: 57). In summary, there are varying terms which all to greater or lesser extent refer to addressing a lack in linguistic knowledge, and tending to this lack in different communicative contexts.
5.2 Positive and Negative Oral Communication Strategies

While the Swedish syllabi for the subject English in *Lgr11* and *Gy11* and their accompanying commentaries provide suggestions for linguistic strategies and oral communication strategies, there are no explicit values applied for the strategies suggested; they are simply examples of linguistic strategies which further communication. Furthermore, the syllabi state in its aims that linguistic strategies are to be taught, which begs the question of what strategies are to be encouraged by teachers. The syllabi are connected to *CEFR* which provides definitions of oral communication strategies as well as definitions regarding potentially positive and negative ones. In *CEFR* (Council of Europe 2001: 63) the terms used are achievement and avoidance strategies, where the former refers to a student with a positive approach to solving deficits in linguistic knowledge, for instance by paraphrasing, while the latter refers to a student accommodating the goal to fit the linguistic resources. These two definitions are very similar to those found in the psycholinguistic perspective, in which there are two behaviors governing the two major definitions, i.e. achievement behavior and avoidance behavior. Achievement behavior governs achievement strategies, while avoidance behavior governs reduction strategies; reduction strategies rely on changing the communicative goal, although achievement strategies seek to maintain the goal. For a potential learning effect, it is generally recognized that achievement strategies should be used (Færch & Kasper 1983: 54). There is an apparent similarity in definitions between those in *CEFR* and the psycholinguistic perspective, therefore reduction and avoidance strategies can be interpreted as negative since they do not advance language learning.

In relation to the psycholinguistic perspective and *CEFR*, it should be mentioned that Nakatani (2010) uses the same terms, achievement and reduction strategies. In addition, Nakatani refers to students’ negative behavior when using reduction strategies, and to students’ positive behavior when using achievement strategies, which further implies a value to the type of strategies used. In contrast to these definitions, Oxford does not apply a value to certain compensation strategies. However, when addressing topic avoidance, Oxford (1990: 94) mentions the fact that it is normally counterproductive to communication by partially or totally avoiding it. Furthermore, Oxford mentions the fact that learners may avoid communication in order to feel emotionally secure; positive emotions may greatly affect students’ performance beneficially (1990: 140). This aspect contradicts the psycholinguistic implications of *topic avoidance*, a term similar to Oxford’s definition *avoiding communication partially or totally*. According to Færch and Kasper (1983) *topic avoidance* belongs to reduction strategies which does not advance language learning. In summary, some researchers and studies imply that
certain types of strategies are preferred over others. This is of importance regarding pedagogical implications for our future profession as teachers of EFL.

5.3 Correlation between Proficiency and Strategy Use
In our research review we have presented studies whose results indicate a positive correlation between proficiency and strategy use (Díaz Larenas 2011, Nakatani 2006, Nakatani 2010, Rohani 2011, Tajeddin & Alemi 2010, Taheri & Davoudi 2016). Even though these studies examine different types of communication strategies as defined by different perspectives and taxonomies, such as Færch and Kasper (1983) and Tarone (1983), they all indicate the fact that as proficiency increases, so does the use of communication strategies. Furthermore, some studies indicate correlations between certain types of strategies used and level of proficiency. Rohani (2011) found students of a high proficiency to use achievement strategies more, than low-proficiency students. The low-proficiency students also used more reduction strategies. Karbalaei and Negin Taji (2014) did not specifically examine strategy use in relation to proficiency level, although their participants were at an elementary level, which may be considered parallel to low-proficiency learners. The students used code-switching the most, which is a result similar to that of Rodríguez Cervantes and Roux Rodriguez (2012), whose participants also used code-switching the most frequently. There might be a correlation between low-proficiency students and using code-switching which is considered by Færch and Kasper (1983) to be less beneficial to potential learning. While the results of Rodríguez Cervantes and Roux Rodriguez (2012), Rohani (2011) and Karbalaei and Negin Taji (2014) indicate a possible correlation between proficiency level and use of certain strategies, their results are not generalizable. The studies mentioned in this paragraph have several methods of data collection and analysis which in turn provide different types of results.

It is important to note that some studies, Tajeddin and Alemi (2010) as well as Díaz Larenas (2011) only used questionnaires when collecting data, whereas other studies used mixed methods of data collection to ensure reliability as well as more in-depth results. Furthermore, Díaz Larenas only used a questionnaire which was administered to students who consequently filled it out at home, while Nakatani (2006: 158) administered a questionnaire to students which they filled out directly after a task. The fact that students filled out the questionnaire after a conversation task in Nakatani’s study (2006) also contrasts to Diaz Larenas’ study (2011) since there is no conversation task in relation to the questionnaire administered. This issue of communicative context in relation to collecting data is an item which may affect the participants and their use of strategies.
5.4 Pedagogical Implications for a Swedish School Context

Having analyzed the studies, there are aspects which affect potential pedagogical implications for teaching communication strategies, such as explicit teaching, communicative context and the school context affected by the syllabus.

Due to the quasi-experimental design of their studies, Rabab’ah (2015) and Nakatani (2006) found a correlation between explicit strategy training and increased oral proficiency. Selin (2014) found explicit strategy training to be beneficial to students’ learning of communication strategies. Furthermore, Selin applied a delayed post-test which increased the reliability of explicit strategy training having a durable effect on strategic competence. The fact that explicit strategy training has a positive effect on language learning is indicated by these three studies. In addition, the psycholinguistic perspective on communication strategies, as presented by Færch and Kasper (1983: 55), highlights the importance of raising awareness concerning these strategies. They argue that even if learners have implicit knowledge of communication strategies, they should be made aware of them and how to use them appropriately. Consequently, explicit teaching places a responsibility on the teacher and his or her practice.

Classroom interaction in Rodríguez Cervantes and Roux Rodriguez’s (2012) study was teacher-fronted which in general limited communication in the target language. The results showed that one factor correlating with the communication strategies used was the teachers’ level of interaction with the students and their varying degree of promoting interaction. Another factor which affected the types of strategies used as well as their frequency was the classroom context and communicative context in Khan and Victori (2011). Communicative contexts imply different kinds of interaction and tasks. Björkman (2014: 135) highlights the fact that a different communicative context, such as small talk, would have affected not only the interaction itself but also the strategies used. Furthermore, the classroom context and communicative context is affected by syllabi which may place more or less focus on communication in EFL. Diaz Larenas (2011: 92) suggests that the results of the study were possibly affected by the Chilean syllabus which does not focus greatly on communication. However, Malmberg et al. (2000) conducted their study in a Swedish school context, for which the Swedish syllabus for English suggested the use of strategies to solve linguistic problems. In contrast to the Chilean syllabus mentioned in Diaz Larenas (2011), it should be noted that the Swedish syllabus at the time focused on communicative aspects of English. Furthermore, the Swedish syllabi still have a focus on communication and communication strategies. In interactional linguistics, the communicative event or context affects the language used, and the language used also affects the context.
Language is seen as a resource in attaining communicative goals which can be related to the use of communication strategies in order to solve linguistic obstacles in interaction. Based on this theory, the importance of context is made clearer, especially in relation to the classroom contexts in the empirical studies.

*Lgr11* (Skolverket 2011a) *Gy11* (Skolverket 2011b) draw on *CEFR* (Council of Europe 2001: 63) which defines communication strategies in greater detail than in the syllabi, by using the terms achievement and avoidance strategies. In *CEFR* these categories are defined similarly to Færch and Kasper’s (1983) definition, since achievement is seen as an attempt to cope with linguistic obstacles while avoidance is seen as altering or modifying the communicative goal to accommodate the linguistic resources. The Council of Europe (2001: 63) regards the use of achievement strategies as being based on the positive approach of a student. Hence, it could be inferred that a negative approach is adopted for avoidance strategies. Furthermore, Færch and Kasper (1983: 54) suggest that potential learning occurs when using achievement strategies. Færch and Kasper (1983: 55–56) argue that while some knowledge of communication strategies might be implicit, an explicit and conscious knowledge of them may allow students to communicate better in and outside classroom contexts. This could be an aspect where the psycholinguistic and interactional perspectives combined provide an integrated and comprehensive view of communication strategies and their functions. While Færch and Kasper (1983: 46) suggest code-switching to be an achievement strategy, Nakatani (2005) considers L1-based strategies to belong to reduction strategies. The contradiction in classifying L1-based strategies between Nakatani (2005) and Færch and Kasper (1983) implies that research is not unanimous. In a specific context, i.e. a classroom, code-switching could be a functioning strategy to further interaction. However, this requires that the interlocutors share the same L1. While code-switching may function in a classroom context, such strategies may not function outside a Swedish classroom where the L1 is not shared, e.g. in an English-speaking country. Therefore, focus should be placed on strategies that function well in specific contexts and how to properly apply them, potentially increasing students’ oral performance and language proficiency.

### 5.5 Conclusion

In this final part we will summarize and highlight our conclusions drawn from the literature reviewed for this thesis. With the help of our research questions we have investigated oral communication strategies and their potential pedagogical benefits.

There are various definitions of oral communication strategies and taxonomies of them
drawing on different theoretical perspectives, such as interactional linguistics and psycholinguistics. However, the common denominator for the various definitions is the fact that they are used to further interaction. Research indicates differences between proficiency levels and their use of strategies, as well as the increase in performance and strategy use due to explicit strategy training. Therefore, we as teachers should explicitly teach students oral communication strategies to increase their proficiency. The only positive or negative aspects found regarding certain oral communication strategies have been the terms achievement, and avoidance or reduction. Achievement is seen as the positive approach attempting to maintain the communicative goal, which provides a potential learning effect. In contrast, the use of reduction or avoidance strategies modifies the communicative goal and sometimes avoids it completely, which does not provide a potential learning effect. Since the Swedish syllabi for English do not specify linguistic strategies in the same terms as in CEFR nor the research reviewed in this literature, we consider the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) to be lacking in providing information on how to assess strategy use as well as defining what types are beneficial to language learning. Due to the potential benefits proposed by the research review, information on oral communication strategies should be more clearly defined in the Swedish National Agency’s documents for the subject English in order to aid teachers in their educational practice.

5.6 Implications for future research
In the studies reviewed for this thesis, the participants’ ages varied as well as their level of proficiency. It would have been interesting to find more studies on oral communication strategies set in a Swedish school context, preferably at upper-secondary level, since we are to teach at that level.

Drawing on Khan and Victori (2011), it would be interesting to compare students’ perception of strategy use and their actual strategy use. As seen in several of the empirical studies reviewed, multiple methods of data collection have been used to triangulate data. By using multiple methods of data collection, results would be more reliable and elaborate. For future research, we would like to use the OCSI (Nakatani 2006) to measure students’ perception of strategy use, and audio- or video-recordings to measure their actual strategy use. While having a large number of participants and using these methods would be time-consuming, a small-scale study of this type would be possible for our production thesis.

Some of our reviewed studies indicated that oral performance increases through explicit
strategy training. A large-scale study in Sweden regarding the effects of explicit strategy training on low-proficiency learners could provide information on how teachers can increase their oral performance. This type of study could also provide reliable information on what strategies are beneficial to second language acquisition. Consequently, this could provide teachers of English with tools to teach oral communication strategies geared towards increasing oral performance.
References


Appendix

To begin with, neither one of us has ever written anything this extensive before writing this thesis. The first week consisted of figuring out a topic to study and find an amount of relevant empirical studies within the field we wanted to study. Initially, we had error correction in mind as our topic, but realized that it was difficult to find articles that did not overlap with a similar topic chosen by two others writing their thesis. Consequently, we had to reconsider our topic and we ended up wanting to study oral communication strategies. We found that there were several empirical studies regarding communication strategies to be found. However, there were not many studies carried out in a Swedish context. Luckily, our supervisor Nigel Musk recommended a Swedish study (Malmberg et al. 2000) which was very useful for our thesis. In order to organize our research review, we used a tool called “MindMup” to create mind maps of our empirical studies. We had some issues in the beginning regarding what studies we could categorize under the same category. Later on, Nigel suggested that we categorize our empirical studies according to their methods of data collection in order to get a more structured and comprehensive overview. A few weeks in, we sat down and created an agenda for the upcoming weeks, and we wrote down objectives for each week and gave ourselves shorter deadlines in order to keep up with the deadlines given by our supervisor. We decided on writing the whole thesis together to avoid a fragmented text. Google Drive was of great use to be able to share documents with each other and to be able to access these documents from any computer. During almost the entire process, we have been sitting together while reading and writing, and therefore we have been able to discuss any questions or problems arisen.

I, Matilda Krohn, feel that the partnership with Christopher during the process of writing our first thesis has been very well-functioning and productive. We have worked together during almost every step of writing this thesis. In the beginning, we worked more separately when searching and gathering useful empirical studies in order to facilitate and reduce the amount of reading. However, the writing process has been carried out together and we have both been able to give our opinions on the content and the structure of the text and therefore we can surely say that the work has been done by both of us. I feel that our skills have complemented each other during the writing process. Furthermore, we have, at some points, worked on different parts of the document while sitting together. We have used Google Docs to be able to use separate computers and work with the same document at the same time. The only negative thing I can say about this process is that we were a bit less organized in the beginning which caused some stress, but we sat down and created a more structured plan with objectives for each week and
each day, which then reduced the stress and facilitated the work process a lot. Co-operating with Christopher has been a fun and rewarding experience and there have not been many disagreements during the process.

I, Christopher Kindbom, have been most pleased with this collaboration. The search for literature was done separately which was an effective way of processing large amounts of potential data quickly. Afterwards, the writing process was a joint effort with the intent of producing a correct text with a consistent style and flow. While we were not as organized in the very beginning of this work, we quickly became aware of the need to be so. Therefore, organizing, planning and joint decisions have been at the center of our work. I feel that our personal and academic qualities complemented each other which facilitated the process. I think that both of us have had high ambitions for this work which also contributed to it, allowing us to be critical to our process and pushing each other in the right direction. In the light of these aspects, not only was it a very interesting and rewarding process but I also had a lot of fun along the way.