Elisabeth Heinonen

Writing in English as a Second Language
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### Author
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### Abstract
The aim of this essay was to extend my knowledge of teaching writing and children's attitudes towards writing in English. I chose to focus my study on grade six, as I had the opportunity to work with two different classes in Linköping and Södertälje. I assigned them a free writing task as well as a questionnaire. In the literature study I intended to extend my knowledge of the process of writing in a second language.

Through the course of my research I have come to understand how important it is to choose subjects which inspire all pupils to write. They should also have the opportunity to choose subjects which interests them. It is the content which is important not the layout or spelling.

In my study I have found that pupils take writing in English seriously. However, I have also found that without an encouraging teacher, it is hard to engage pupils in writing. One could say that it is the teacher who directs the writing process. Moreover, the pupils need to be motivated and interested to write well. This includes having varied lessons and considering the pupils’ explicit needs.

### Keywords
Writing, English, second language, motivation
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Contents

1 BACKGROUND ..........................................................3
2 AIM ...........................................................................4
3 LITERATURE STUDY .................................................5

3.1 Theory on Second Language Acquisition .................5
  3.1.1 The Acquisition – Learning Hypothesis ..........5
  3.1.2 The Monitor Hypothesis .................................5
  3.1.3 Input vs. Output ...........................................6
  3.1.4 The Affective Filter Hypothesis ......................6

3.2 Factors which have Consequence for Writing ........6
  3.2.1 Motivation .......................................................7
    3.2.1.1 Instrumental motivation ..........................7
    3.2.1.2 Integrative motivation ............................8
    3.2.1.3 Resultative motivation ............................8
    3.2.1.4 Intrinsic motivation ...............................8
  3.2.2 Environment ..................................................9
  3.2.3 Attitude ..........................................................9
  3.2.4 Aptitude ..........................................................10
  3.2.5 Audience .......................................................10
    3.2.5.1 Private writing ......................................11
    3.2.5.2 Peer writing ..........................................11
    3.2.5.3 Teacher ................................................11
    3.2.5.4 Writing for a wider audience ..................11

3.3 The Process of writing ..............................................12
  3.3.1 Pre-writing Activities ......................................12
  3.3.2 Drafting and Re-drafting ................................13
  3.3.3 Editing and Revising ......................................13
    3.3.3.1 Self-response ......................................13
    3.3.3.2 Peer Response ......................................13
    3.3.3.3 Teachers’ Response ..............................13
1 Background

English is a global language and learning to speak, read, and write English has become a necessity for modern life. In Swedish schools English is a core subject, which means: it has almost taken on second-language status.

In our national curriculum *LPO 94* there is not much mentioned about writing in English; it emphasises the importance of adjusting the lessons to the pupils’ explicit needs and basic requirements. According to the goals the curriculum has set for grade five writing in English, pupils should be able to make themselves understood in writing at a very simple level and at the same time be able to communicate their thoughts and opinions in short written activities, alone or in groups (*Kursplaner 2000*).

My interest in writing began on an applied linguistics course in English. The course had many activities to inspire children to read. I wondered why there were so few activities for writing. Writing is often only used as a tool to check if the pupils have understood a text. Writing in English is not really anything Swedish pupils engage in, except answering questions, translating texts or writing summaries of stories or chapters of books. During my teaching practice I noticed that writing in English is not stressed. For English teachers in the Swedish classroom, it seems more important for the pupils to be able to read and understand an English text.

As a newly-fledged teacher I believe that one of my tasks is aptly expressed in Jane Hammond’s *Developing Children’s Writing*. She states that writing should not be considered as a “tedious obstacle course to be struggled with, writing should be an active learning experience with children participating in the planning and evaluation stages, as well as the writing” (153). I fully agree with this statement. I want my pupils to feel that writing is important and that it can be stimulating.
2 Aim

My aim with this essay is to extend my knowledge of free writing and children’s attitudes towards writing in English. I have chosen to focus my study on grade six, because by this time pupils should have attained a certain competence in both speaking and reading English. Writing in a second language would be the next skill to concentrate on.

I have had the opportunity to work with two grade sixes in two different counties, where I set a free writing task: writing a fairy tale as well as conducting a survey by means of a questionnaire. The purpose of the free writing task was to assess the pupils’ written language. The purpose of the questionnaire was to look into pupils’ attitudes and language use in writing in English in grade six. Through my study I hope to learn more about what children want to write about and what is important in the process of writing. The questions, which I attempt to investigate in this study, are:
- What factors are emphasised in literature about writing?
- What is the process of writing?
- For whom do pupils want to write?
- What would they like to write about?
- What evidence is there that good readers are better at writing than bad?
3 Literature Study

In this study I have chosen to look at some of hypotheses which deal with second language acquisition. An essential part of the study describes factors which have consequences for writing: attitude, audience, environment and motivation. In addition, the process of writing is described. I also investigate the correlation between ability in reading and writing.

3.1 Theory on Second Language Acquisition

One of the most well known and thoroughly discussed theorists of second language acquisition is Stephen Krashen. His work is usually used to describe the theory behind learning a second language. In fact his theories apply to learning a first language, a second language or any additional language. He basically thinks that language is best learned through communication. His theories are discussed by Vivian Cook, Rod Ellis, Barbara Kroll, Per Malmberg and Ulrika Thornberg etc. These theorists all cite Krashen but also disagree with him. Therefore it is important to have an overview of his different hypotheses as there are conclusions to be drawn from his theories of language acquisition.

3.1.1 The Acquisition – Learning Hypothesis

Krashen distinguishes between acquisition and learning. Acquisition is the natural, unconscious process of learning a language. This is the way children acquire their mother tongue. Most vocabulary is learned by acquisition.

Learning is a conscious understanding of rules of grammar, types of writing and spelling in a formal classroom situation.

Krashen emphasises acquisition as he believes it is “fostered by communicative ‘natural’ activities” (Cook 167). In contrast, Merrill Swain refutes the idea of the natural process of acquisition. She points out the importance of practice and understanding the rules of grammar in learning a second language. (Ellis 49)

3.1.2 The Monitor Hypothesis

This hypothesis shows the relationship between acquisition and learning. Fluency is achieved through an unconscious process of learning. When the rules of language are learnt explicitly, they can be applied consciously to check output. This is known as “the monitor”. Language
learners use this monitor to check and correct their language. (Malmberg 81) The pupils must think more in the writing process. They take more time to write down their thoughts therefore, allowing this monitor to function.

3.1.3 Input vs. Output

Krashen’s input hypothesis emphasises input as the language which a learner comprehends through hearing or reading it in context, which then leads to acquisition. The ideal level of input is when it is $\text{input} + 1 (i + 1)$, that “is a little more advanced than the current state of the learners’ interlanguage” (Ellis 47). Swain on the other hand considers output as the important mechanism to acquire acquisition. She claims that the pupils realise their lack of knowledge when trying out grammar to see if their constructions or vocabulary are acceptable. (Ellis 104) As Cook puts it, “one leads into the other”. She argues that “learning has more than one side to it, [as it is based] on both skills and knowledge” (167).

3.1.4 The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The last hypothesis shows the connection between the learners’ attitude, motivation and self-confidence. Our emotional state of mind helps or hinders us from learning a language. When pupils are relaxed and motivated, more material can be absorbed because they are more receptive to learning. If learners are tense and insecure acquisition is inhibited by their fear. The affective filter may thus hinder the process of language acquisition and the final result. (Thornberg 109) Krashen claims that the developments of writing ability and of second language proficiency occur in the same way: via comprehensible input with low affective filter.

3.2 Factors which have Consequences for Writing

As explained through Krashen’s hypotheses there are individual and environmental factors involved in learning to write a language. In this section different factors are presented which have consequences for writing. Attitude, environment, motivation and the expected audience are a few of the factors which one should be aware of as a teacher. The general aspects of motivation can be intertwined with attitude, self-confidence, interest and the environment. Pupils have “varied language background, socio-economic status, cultural integration and
…other factors” (Kroll et al. 76). Teachers’ should not let regard for these factors influence the child’s innate desire to succeed.

3.2.1 Motivation

Both Cook and Ellis have considered the importance of motivation in learning to write. Cook implies that the general meaning of motivation is the interest in the subject or even participation in a particular exercise (96). Ellis says that motivation involves the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make in order to learn (75). Ellis has identified four types of motivation: instrumental, integrative, resultative and intrinsinc.

3.2.1.1 Instrumental motivation

Instrumental motivation means that the learner needs the language to achieve certain goals such as passing an exam, maybe applying for a certain university, getting a better job or just learning the language as a means of communication. Ellis claim that instrumental motivation seems to be a major force in determining success. The pupils have to be motivated to learn, because it opens up educational and economic opportunities for them. They need to acquire a good knowledge of English in order to chat on the Internet, watch movies or play with their computer games, for example.

Bo Lundahl points out that probably not many children in grade six have the ambition to get a job or are thinking about getting into higher education. However, they are interested in knowing more English as it has consequences for their ability to chat on the Net and watch television.

In Södertälje International School the pupils must apply to the English section. They have to pass an interview in English and write a little composition about themselves. The pupils consider themselves an elite because they have passed this threshold and it has increased their self-confidence even before they start in grade 4. They also have higher status in the whole school.
3.2.1.2 Integrative motivation

This part involves the willingness to identify with the people whose language one is learning. Students from Sweden are interested in American and English culture. Through Anglo-American music, videos and movies Sweden is exposed to this culture. As Malmberg explains, Swedes are proud to be considered very good at English, especially when many are asked if they are “native speakers” of English. For Swedes it has become very important to be able to communicate in English when they go abroad.

3.2.1.3 Resultative motivation

In this section Ellis wants to emphasise that motivation could be a result of learning. By this he means that learners who achieve certain success in learning may want to learn more. However, there are different opinions about this, which I will not discuss in this essay.

Children may experience that the more they learn the more it motivates them to learn. While showing the pupils the importance of communication and letting them experience this in writing in English, the pupils would then be motivated to work more at the subject. In Södertälje the pupils succeed in basic communication with their English-speaking teachers. They get constant feedback and approval from teachers. In Linköping the teacher praises the pupils’ work, which increases their motivation.

3.2.1.4 Intrinsic motivation

According to Ellis this motivation “involves the arousal and maintenance of curiosity and can ebb and flow as a result of which they feel personally involved in learning activities” (75). Pupil’s writing should be based on their own interests and experience such as their family or football. This is always a good starting point. Then the pupils can be encouraged to use their imagination and write fairy tales, ghost stories and other fantasy compositions.

All these points of motivation depend on the teacher’s ability to make the children feel confident in what they are doing. But one should be aware of the differences and that motivation can change from one moment to another depending on the context or task. (Ellis 75) When the children lack motivation, it causes problems. In literature about learning teachers are encouraged to motivate their pupils through stimulating materials and content. The pupils’ own choice may be a great help in motivating the pupils. By encouraging the production of writing, we can take advantage of these different aspects of motivation.
3.2.2 Environment

The classroom, teacher, parents and friends all have an impact on the child’s environment. The learning situation relies on positive attitudes from these role-models as they have considerable consequences for pupils desire to write. What are the different aspects of providing a secure environment for children to write in? Are the pupils self-confident in their environment? Do they feel secure? Is there a quiet atmosphere?

In the literature about writing the teacher is recommended to give writing a central role in the classroom and encourage the pupils to experiment and test different writing tasks, for example poetry, dialogues, reviews etc. In this way, they will increase their self-confidence before the next task. Reading their own work aloud to a small peer group or the whole class will give the pupils a feeling of accomplishment. The class atmosphere must be friendly and relaxed so the child does not worry if he makes a mistake.

The teacher’s role is to create “an environment in which children are guided to make discoveries about the conventions of the writing system, but most of all ensuring that children come to recognise the needs of their audience, and enables development to take place” (Hammond 110). The teacher decides whether all pupils should have their work displayed or read aloud or whether only volunteers need to do these or whether only ‘the best work that week’ is to be given the honour.

The teacher must be aware of the social milieu in which the students are placed. Robert Gardner believes that a pupil’s attitude towards a subject is based on their parents. (Cook 168) Society also sets a special value on English, one should be able to write, speak and read English well.

3.2.3 Attitude

Children’s attitude towards writing has a great impact on their learning. Teachers should especially consider discussing attitudes. Negative attitudes towards a certain task or even the subject can be difficult to work with. Then it may be impossible for a pupil who likes the subject to admit that he does. Even parents’ attitudes towards a subject may have great impact. As Hammond puts it “parents have an important role to play in their children’s writing skills in their first language as well as English. Hopefully parent’s involvement in the children’s writing may create a positive attitude towards writing in general” (80).
3.2.4 Aptitude

Aptitude is the natural ability to understand. People are born with a certain talent, and a few are naturally good at writing. But the teacher should not rely on talent alone, all pupils’ texts can develop with practice.

Gardner has devised a model for success in learning. According to Gardner “motivation consists of two chief factors: attitudes to the learning situation, i.e. to the teacher and the course, and the complex matter of…social values, rules etc” (Cook 168). Aptitude or talent can be combined with motivation to lead to success.

3.2.5 Audience

The teacher is often the sole audience of children’s writing. All literature on learning emphasises that the teacher should try to make the children’s written work important. Teachers need to demonstrate that writing can be a ‘pleasurable activity’. Both Maj Björk and Hammond say that the teacher can help children to understand the purpose of writing, the form of writing and show how writing works, with all its re-drafting. The pupils can brainstorm with the teacher who writes a short text for example on the board or on an overhead projector. The teacher can then introduce new concepts and techniques. The teacher can make suitable corrections in front of the class and listen to the children’s opinions about what should be changed in the text (content, spelling, punctuation etc.). The teacher must take their responses seriously. In this way, the teacher shows that a text is something one can show and talk about.

Writing has to be accessible to give it the status it needs to encourage and create positive attitudes. Displaying children’s writing can be done in several ways: on the wall or bulletin board, collected together into folders and making it part of the classroom library to be borrowed and read by other children. (Hammond 39) Thus children should be given the opportunity to write for a wider audience and encourage the children to write for others, since the teacher does not have to be the only audience of most writing in school.

Peter Elbow and Hammond discuss the attributes of an audience and the importance of having an audience. They have categorised four kinds of audience: self, peer, teacher and a wider known audience.
3.2.5.1 Private writing

Private writing is not intended for anyone except for the writer himself. Keeping a diary is the sort of writing where the writer can sort out his ideas and develop fluency. Private writing demands the pupil’s full involvement, as the pupil does not need to focus on what the teacher wants. It is secure as it is only for the writer himself. Some teachers work with diaries for a short period of time, every day or once a week.

3.2.5.2 Peer writing

Pupils tend to write differently to their friends and act in another way when reading it to their peers. Peers tend to relate to problems better and help out without trying to improve the written task as the teacher often does. Their feedback is often more easily obtained. By writing to friends, the writer experiences the act of communicating something to someone who is interested.

3.2.5.3 Teacher

Teachers are often the only audience for children’s writing. The teacher can be perceived either as a trusted or examining teacher. Teachers tend to assess pupils’ written work and this evaluation may have consequences for their motivation to do written tasks.

3.2.5.4 Writing for a wider audience

Children need to experience writing for a wider audience as they have to consider what effect their writing may have and what the response may be. Such audiences can be found by writing to penpals in other schools or countries, writing projects, letters to newspapers or requesting information from organisations or authorities. Writing for an audience, being able to display them in public in the classroom or corridors stresses the importance of writing.

Children should see their potential audience as a means of encouragement, not something to be feared. The teacher can employ all types of audience so long as it is beneficial to the children’s writing.

However, children may be put off writing because:

* they feel they have nothing to say;
* they feel they do not write well and become discouraged by their final product;
* they do not write regularly enough to view the task as a natural progression from talking;
* they get tired of doing the same old task over and over again;
* everything of interest which happens in school leads to ‘Now we’re going to write about it’;
* after all their efforts nobody takes any notice of what they have done anyway;
* to keep children interested in an activity, it must have some meaning for them.

(Hammond 153-154)

To make writing an exercise which is not “a tedious obstacle to be struggled with”, writing should be an active learning experience with the children participating in the planning and evaluation stages, as well as the writing itself. Ann Raimes concludes that the main attitude towards writing is that it is boring, hard to find the right words and time consuming. (Candlin et al. 258)

3.3 The Process of Writing

Gunilla Molloy describes the writing process: “To write is a way of thinking. While we write, we see thoughts take form. While we think, we create language.” (10) (my own translation) Children’s writing is discussed in the literature as a process. One usually tends to concentrate on the product, i.e. what pupils produce. But how do they do it? How can we help them? What ways are there of helping them with the complex process of writing? The process of writing has been thoroughly described in pre-writing activities, making a first draft, re-drafting, editing and revising until the final draft is produced. It should be seen as an evolving process, not simply beginning and ending with one draft. Feed-back is necessary.

3.3.1 Pre-writing Activities

James R Squire describes the importance of pre-writing stimuli. He categorises it as a period of planning and organising ideas. (Candlin et al. 234) In this phase the teacher’s role is to stimulate the pupils with ideas and pre-writing tasks, such as reading, matching pictures, gap-filling activities etc. “Ideas for writing can come from all around us: recalling past events to share with others, stories which we imagine, instructions for doing something we know about and others might not, persuasive pieces aimed at getting something done, information we want to keep or share, and so on” (Hammond 7). The teacher must help the pupils to initiate their own ideas for writing, for example by initiating a discussion or organising small
discussion groups. The pupils need to know that they can spend time on thinking about the content and looking up information in resource books.

3.3.2 Drafting and Re-drafting

At this stage the writing takes place. The text can be seen as a continuum. The teacher can encourage multiple drafts, but this is not always required. As Hammond explains, it all “depends on the purpose of writing – what it is for, who it is for and what it is about. Some writing comes out right first time and will just fall apart if it is treated as a draft” (9-10). The teacher should not emphasise spelling or neatness in handwriting in the first draft.

3.3.3 Editing and Revising

Ronald V. White implies that “once a draft has been produced, it can be evaluated as a way of developing or improving it. It can be done by the writer, or better still, by other readers” (7). Usually it is the teacher, but as already mentioned the peer group is an important resource for evaluating and giving feed-back for example on spelling, adding, deleting, modifying, rearranging ideas, vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar. This response or feed-back can be placed in three different kinds of response: self-response, peer response and teachers’ response.

3.3.3.1 Self-response

By reading one’s own work aloud, the pupil can do his own evaluation and correct his own mistakes, before submitting it to anyone else.

3.3.3.2 Peer Response

This kind of response often tends to be more of an appreciative nature. However, students may value their friends’ opinions more than the teacher’s response.

3.3.3.3 Teachers’ Response

There are many points of view about how a teacher should review pupils work. Many teachers tend to focus too much on surface features as spelling and words. Illona Leki’s research
suggests that written response has little impact on students’ writing. However, second language research reveals another side: that many students want to have every error marked and have their work approved through a written response by their teacher. Other authorities emphasise positive and supportive comments without indication of errors have a positive influence on the students. (Kroll et al. 61).

3.3.4 Marking children’s work

David Wray points out that the purpose of marking children’s writing should be, firstly, to be a sensitive audience for what they have to say, and, secondly, to help them to improve it. This has several implications:

* always comment on the message children have tried to communicate before other aspects.
* be positive about the good points in their writing, and about things they could improve.
* give them the opportunity to improve the writing if it is at all possible.
* do not give the impression that marking is a punitive exercise, but stress the positive aspects.
* if it is at all possible, mark children’s writing alongside the children. There is far more chance then, that the marking will have an effect.
* try to avoid using a red pen for marking. This tends to be associated with punishment.
* avoid making children ‘do their corrections’. There are other ways of dealing with spelling.
* if you feel you have to ‘correct’ children’s writing, ensure that this is limited to what actually benefits the children. (93)

Helping children to mature and become confident writers does not only mean that we should praise them all the time. The teacher also needs to find strategies, which acknowledge the competence of the learner, but at the same time offer ways of extending the pupils’ experience and intentions.

Writing strategies should be used as a tool in their studies and the pupils should get used to writing from an early age to express their thoughts, knowledge, feelings and experience in their written work. All writing should be done with care, not only the content and linguistic matter, but also thinking about the way they have done it. It should be neatly done.

3.3.5 Basic writing skills

Writing is regarded as a basic skill and “learning to write in English, whether it is one’s first language, or a second or third, continues to be a major undertaking throughout the world”
James R. Squire lists the basic implements for writing: decoding skills, the application of grammatical understanding, the principles of punctuation and capitalisation, in short, the forms of English usage. The teacher must provide exercises with appropriate instructions and intensive practice, to ensure proficiency. (Candlin et al. 233) Grammar exercises and answers to questions control that the learning process has taken place.

3.4 Reading – Writing Connections

Reading is an important source of inspiration for writing. The relationship between reading and writing can be referred to as a kind of transfer of common structural components. There are strategies applicable to both reading and writing. Reading can be effective in improving writing, but only when it focuses on common elements such as sentence and paragraph analysis, story schemata, and summaries. (Kroll et al. 90) Reading and writing can be co-ordinated into parts of an overall project.

Joan Carson Eisterhold maintains that reading serves as an appropriate input for the acquisition of writing skills because it is generally assumed that reading passages will somehow function as primary models from which writing skills can be learned, or at least inferred. She refers to Krashen’s Affective filter hypothesis as it has consequence for reading and writing. His theories of writing competence derive from large amounts of self-motivated reading for interest and/or pleasure. (Kroll et al. 89) Krashen’s research has shown a correlation between children’s reading ability and their ability to write. He claims that there is clear evidence that good writers read more than bad, and children in classes where they read a lot in their free time and in school show a better linguistic capacity than the pupils who read less.

Stotsky’s survey investigated the relationship between reading and writing and found the following:

- There are correlations between reading achievement and writing ability. Better writers tend to be better readers.
- There are correlations between writing quality and reading experience as reported through questionnaires. Better writers read more than poorer writers.
- There seem to be correlations between reading ability and measures of syntactic complexity in writing. Better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poor readers. (Kroll et al. 88)
Though even poor readers can improve their writing with practice, Stotsky’s research indicates that pupils who read a lot are better writers than those who do not read in their free time or in school.

### 4 Planning and Implementation

This section describes the planning and implementation of this study. As a supplement to the free writing task, I chose to devise a questionnaire for the two classes, which I used, for my study.

### 5 Introduction to the Written Task and Questionnaire

I began my study during my teaching practice in a grade six in Linköping. We worked with fairy tales as a theme in English and it was integrated with Swedish. I had discussed the written tasks in English and a questionnaire together with my supervisor. The major writing task was to retell or write their own fairy tale in English. There were also pre-writing tasks, as well as advanced and easier follow-up tasks. The same writing tasks and questionnaire were given to a grade six in Södertälje.

#### 5.1 Subjects

**Linköping**

As I have already mentioned, this is the class where I did my final practical training as a student teacher. This school is a regular primary and middle school grades 1-6 in a very varied catchment area. The class consists of 27 pupils. Twenty-two pupils are Swedish; five pupils have another cultural background. The children generally have well-educated parents, who want the best for their children. They have considerable support from home.

They are taught English three times a week and a few Swedish pupils have extra English instead of choosing a second foreign language. This is a very calm class, who work very hard and they are interested in learning more. They have extra books in English to suit their individual ability, as required by the national curriculum *LPO 94*. The teacher reads a lot in class and they had heard many fairy tales, so they were well acquainted with the subject. All the pupils participated in the writing task and questionnaire.
Södertälje

Through my mother, I came into contact with an international school in Södertälje. It is a middle school grades 4-9. The school is set in a rather tough catchment area. The school management wanted to upgrade its status with an international school. To be admitted to this special section of the school, the pupils have to apply for a place. Active co-operation with the parents is encouraged. The class consists of 21 pupils of varied ethnic backgrounds, only five of whom have Swedish as their first language.

The pupils are all taught in English, apart from the subject Swedish. The classroom climate is a favourable one. The children are enthusiastic, but they are also rather talkative. These children are very sure of themselves. They know they are good at English. The children also read authentic English literature such as stories and novels, but have not read fairy tales in class. However, the pupils are familiar with fairy tales, anyway. In this class one pupil did not write a fairy tale because she was absent. However, the whole class answered the questionnaire.

5.2 Procedures for both Linköping and Södertälje

Through suggestions from literature, notes from seminars and suggestions from my supervisor, I constructed a lesson plan, which would inspire the pupils to write their own story.

I began to show a short segment of *Ever After*, a reproduction of Grimm’s *Cinderella*. The beginning of this movie really makes the audience want to know more. The aim of showing this sequence was to show that one could begin a story in so many ways. There is no right or wrong. The pupils got to guess what fairy tale it was. To refresh their memories even more, they received a piece of paper with sentences arranged in the wrong order. (Appendix 1) To accompany this they received a word list (Appendix 2) to help them. I concluded the lesson by reading the story.

The next lesson the pupils were set to work in pairs and write as many fairy tale words as possible in three minutes. I said that spelling was not important; I would help them out later. I wanted them just to write as much as they were capable of. I then asked them to write their words on the board to the children’s delight. They loved writing on the board and comparing all the different words with each other’s. Many words were the same but everyone had found something new. All these words were corrected while the pupils began to write their own
stories. Naturally, I had gone through the main parts of a fairy tale: beginning – middle – end. As the pupils were well acquainted with the structure of fairy tales there were no real difficulties in writing a story. To assist the weaker pupils, there were pictures in sequence to illustrate different fairy tales, for example *Cinderella, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Snow White and Hansel and Gretel* (Appendix 3) in case they felt unsure of themselves and did not know what to write about.

I played down the importance of the spelling. I wanted the pupils to write without restrictions. However, there were some minor restrictions, as they had to write a fairy tale beginning: *Once upon a time*… and ending …*and they lived happily ever after*. Extra activities for those who finished quickly were: stories at different levels of difficulty (easy – hard) (Appendix 4). A follow-up writing activity was describing their favourite story character.

Although I followed the same basic procedure in both schools, I did not have the same materials in Södertälje as I did in Linköping. For example I did not use stories of different levels nor did I give them help from pictures. Furthermore, the group in Linköping had the opportunity to integrate their English and Swedish classes, as well as seeing the whole *Cinderella* movie.

### 5.3 Results of the Written Task

As I mentioned earlier, the pre-writing activities are of great importance to stimulate and motivate the pupils to write. I used many different activities, as I hoped to inspire all the pupils to write. Their written work was, of course, of varying quality, but they had done their best, even those who have problems writing and reading in both languages. It is important to mention that those pupils who read a lot in their free time produced compositions with more difficult words and sentence structure than those who do not like to read.

The teacher in Linköping had never asked her pupils to write a story in English before. She was pleased that they did so well. The pupils wrote imaginative stories using the vocabulary they had prepared.

The teacher in Södertälje had high expectations of her pupils. As the pupils write in English all the time, she thought they should do well. The fairy tales were of course varied in quality, but these stories were a lot better than the Linköping class. Their imagination, vocabulary and grammar were of a higher standard. One could tell they had been working in English.
When I assessed these stories I looked at imagination, level of English and layout. I grouped the stories into three different levels: very good, good and fair. Many of these children surpassed themselves in how much they could write in English. It is important to mention that in the ‘fair’ category there are children who have dyslexia, DAMP or general reading or writing problems. In a sense these children achieved a higher measure of success than the high achiever, who is used to getting excellent results.

5.3.1 Examples of imagination

A boy in Linköping wrote about a dragon that fell in love with a princess, and how he becomes a prince.

In Södertälje a boy wrote a story about a hedgehog and his adventures in a gingerbread house and a ‘story hole’. From the ‘story hole’ it is possible for fairy tale characters to climb in and out of the world of fantasy. He deliberately mixed up the conventions from several fairy tales to make his own original and funny story.

5.3.2 Level of English

Many of the pupils in Södertälje wrote complicated sentence constructions. A girl wrote:

“ If you give me your soul I am going to give you a son.”

The queen went to the king and asked him what he thought about it.

“ Don’t do it, he said. The witch is lying.”

The pupils in Linköping generally wrote in a simpler but adequate manner. However, even here there were exceptions:

“ The king offered his best friend a job at the castle. But that job wasn’t a good job, because he didn’t get any pay.”

5.3.3 Examples of Lay-out

I have compiled a table to show what the pupils included in their written work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Linköping</th>
<th>Södertälje</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>85,1 %</td>
<td>90 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraphing</td>
<td>14,8 %</td>
<td>55 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dialogue     29.6 %    35 %
None of the above     14.8 %    10 %

Some of these children qualified for all these categories; others qualified for none. In Linköping a majority wrote a title, but not many used paragraphs or dialogue. In Södertälje almost all the children put a title. Half the class used paragraphs and a few used dialogues. The teacher in Södertälje thought they would do better, as she has told them over and over again about paragraphing and the importance of a title.

5.4 Questionnaire

After working with fairy tales, I let the children write their own stories. My questionnaire on attitudes (Appendix 5) was distributed at the end of the week so the pupils had their writing fresh in their minds. All the children in both classes participated.

At first, I explained why they were doing the questionnaire and that I was going to use it and the written task in my essay. The questionnaire was written in English because the subject was English. Therefore I gave careful instructions both in English and in Swedish as to how they should carry out the task. I told them to put a ring around the answer that they thought most suitable, but in questions 9, 14 and 15 it was important to fill in as many boxes as they felt were correct. In question 10 they could write their own answer. While they were filling in the questionnaire, I went around and helped the pupils who needed extra help.

5.4.1 Results and Discussion of the Questionnaire

To give a comprehensive view of the answers to each question, I have composed a graph to accompany the answers. I have also discussed the questions to make it easier to follow my intentions and reasoning. At the beginning, the questions are about general attitudes towards English as a subject and then go on to ask questions about writing in English.

In the two first questions I asked if they were a boy or a girl and where they came from. In Linköping there are 27 pupils, 15 are boys and 12 are girls. In Södertälje the number of pupils is 21, with 8 boys and a majority of 13 girls.
The answers to this question show how good the children from Södertälje think they are, and it confirms my observations in class. They know they are good at English. The pupils in Linköping are a little more modest. Another observation is that the children who are really good at English, think they are only *good* or *quite good*. Through my observations in class and the children writing their names on their questionnaires, I could tell who had answered what.

If one is good at a subject, it is more likely to be fun. The pupils in Södertälje enjoy their subject, which is good, as it is their main subject. The group in Linköping who think English is *not fun at all* or *quite fun* are those who have difficulties with English. The children who according to my previous question and observations thought they were only *good* or *quite good* thought that English was *fun* or *lots of fun*. 
Once again the class in Södertälje show their belief in themselves. Many Linköping pupils underestimate their writing abilities, as many did very well on their written task. Note that question 7 shows how much more the children in Södertälje write than the pupils in Linköping. As mentioned before, writing is a skill that has to be worked on to obtain a certain proficiency.

The result shows that the importance of writing is clearly understood in both classes. Writing is a really important subject in Swedish in the Linköping class and this has probably compounded its importance in English. The class has two note books for writing in Swedish. In one book the children have free writing which the teacher does not really correct that much. In the other book, the tasks are set by the teacher and in this book she corrects everything. In Södertälje pupils take writing in English for granted; they write in English every day.
Some of the pupils in Södertälje think they have too much writing to do in school, which is not surprising as they study most subjects through the medium of English. The children in Linköping have not really started to write that much in English, which is why they do not really think they have too much to write in English.

This is a follow-up question to number 7. In this question there are more pupils who are negative to writing in English than in the previous question.

9 What do you write in English at school?

This is a multiple-choice answer where the pupils could select as many boxes they felt suited them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Linköping</th>
<th>Södertälje</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stories and poems</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogues</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the pupils have written stories and the children in Södertälje have started to write essays. The Linköping class have, as mentioned, an extra book in English. In the higher level books they are required to answer questions, take notes and write summaries.

In the question of other writing not many pupils (8) answered. Their answers were of similar character. They answered: “answering questions”, “extra book in English”, “cartoons” and “on the board”.

10 What would you like to write in English if you were allowed to choose?

In this question the pupils could choose one subject or more that they would like to write about. The answers were very similar in both classes. There were no given choices to their answers and comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Linköping</th>
<th>Södertälje</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football players</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhymes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the answer *Do not know*, four pupils in Södertälje wrote that they would write anything as long as it was fun. These answers show that the pupils are aware of the wide variety of forms of writing topics there are in writing.

I have chosen only to give a few examples of the answers that were most frequently given. Stories were a popular answer both in Linköping and Södertälje. Two typical answers were “Funny and fake stories”, “Stories of course”. The sports fanatics in Linköping wanted to write about football players. To finish off this section one boy in Södertälje wrote; “I think it is fun when we can choose what ever we want to write”.
The importance of an audience is stressed in all literature about writing. It is encouraging that many pupils are so confident that anybody can read what they have written. In Södertälje the teacher often displays the pupils’ written work on a bulletin board in the classroom for everyone to read. The pupils often read their projects, essays or stories aloud to the whole class. In Linköping the pupils are more self-conscious; several want only the teacher to read their work. They do not have the same routine of presenting their work as a follow-up activity as the Södertälje class does.

Through my questionnaire I wanted the pupils to become aware of their immediate physical surroundings and make them notice how much they need peace and quiet. The importance of having peace and quiet is almost a rule in all classes. The Linköping class is not really aware of how quiet it is in their classroom. Their teacher is very strict with keeping the noise down in the class. As mentioned before, the class in Södertälje is rather talkative, which is probably why many think it is very important to have peace and quiet.
This question shows that almost everyone writes something in English in their free time. The following question shows what they usually write. Lundahl says that in pupils’ free time they learn a lot and they probably improve their English and learn new words and expressions. This input most probably gives the pupils support in their school English (73). The following question indicates what the pupils write in their free time.

14 What do you write in your free time?

This is a multiple-choice answer, where the pupils can select more than one answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Linköping</th>
<th>Södertälje</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use computer games</td>
<td>70,3 %</td>
<td>66,6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters or e-mail</td>
<td>48,1 %</td>
<td>38 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chat on the Internet</td>
<td>48,1 %</td>
<td>33,3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A diary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28,5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other writing:</td>
<td>18,5 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing in their free time is basically for computer games and chatting on the Internet and writing e-mails. Boys tend to use computer games and chatting on the Net to a larger extent than girls do. Lundahl claims that the teacher should make use of the pupil’s interest and incorporate it into the regular teaching (73). I initially suspected that the same children chatted on the Internet and used e-mail. However, contrary to my expectations the children could be grouped into two categories: those who chat on the Internet and used computer games and those who wrote letters or e-mails and used computer games.

Other writing was only mentioned a couple of times. Examples include: notebooks, homework, listening to English music and writing down the lyrics, doing crosswords, writing stories.
15 What do you expect your teacher to do with your work?

This question also has multiple-choice answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Linköping</th>
<th>Södertälje</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct spelling</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make suggestions for improvement</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give personal comments</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anything else?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both teachers correct spelling. The children want to spell correctly. They ask how to spell difficult words or look the words up in dictionaries. As the literature study implies, children do want their work corrected especially their spelling. The teacher in Linköping does not write personal comments, whereas the teacher in Södertälje occasionally does.

The personal comments indicate that talking to the teacher gives a better understanding of their written work and the corrections. They also want the teacher to “write the marks”. A pupil in Södertälje says that the teacher “tells us what is wrong so we can learn”. A boy in Linköping wants his teacher to give him “harder work and tell me if I am wrong”.

The results of this questionnaire on attitudes show that the pupils have an overall positive attitude towards writing in English and that they take it seriously. They want their written work to be corrected, so that their language can develop.

6 Discussion

As I stated in my background English has become a global language and Sweden has adopted the language to the extent that it has become the primary second language in school. Indeed, all children learn English. Thus I was suprised to find that our national curriculum *LPO 94*, did not emphasise writing in English more. Therefore it is not suprising that writing is not stressed in school.

Candlin states that writing is regarded as a basic skill, but it is a major undertaking, which often causes ‘writer’s cramp’ all over the world, if it is in one’s first or second language (xiii). Writing is only one aspect of the long process of language learning. Listening, understanding, speaking, reading and writing are parallel activities which are necessary for the acquisition of a language. Teachers may over-dramatise the importance and difficulty in writing and therefore their pupils become daunted by writing. Elbow believes that writing tasks should be set at least three times a week to de-dramatise writing. We do so with reading, so why can we not do the same with writing?

The aim of this essay was to extend my knowledge of the process of writing and the factors which have a consequence for writing. In my literature study I began to look primarily
at Krashen’s hypotheses about language acquisition, which have been widely discussed in the literature. Almost all theorists have supported or contradicted his hypotheses. In my view, some of his hypotheses are not that durable; the hard and fast distinction between acquisition and learning for example. Indeed, I believe that learning grammar and rules for spelling are of great consequence in simplifying one’s understanding of how a language is constructed.

Cook states that input and output are dependent on each other. I agree that in order to create the necessary conditions for learning one needs input at a comprehensible level. However, in order to give proof of their knowledge, output is needed. Furthermore, Swain claims that language output plays an important role in language acquisition. Writing is one medium of output.

Eisterhold writes that reading is seen to be “the appropriate input for acquisition of writing skills, because it is generally assumed that reading passages will somehow function as primary models from which writing skills can be learned, or at least inferred” (Kroll et al. 88). To take this a little further the question is whether good readers are better at writing than bad? The literature section of this essay (§ 3.4) indicates that this would be the case. Through the results of the writing task and observations in class, I noticed that the pupils who read a lot tended to be better writers than those who did not read that much in their free time or at school. Without making any empirically quantifiable study, I noticed other things as well. Some pupils who spoke well wrote badly, as they often lacked the ability to concentrate. The quieter pupils who wrote well also liked silent reading. They used writing as an important means of expression, as they did not often take the opportunity to speak their opinion in class. This whole aspect of the relationship between speaking, reading and writing abilities leaves a wide area for future research.

Out of all of the language acquisition theories I found that the Affective Filter Hypothesis offered the best theoretical basis for my study, since the factors of: attitude, audience, environment and motivation are emphasised. In my study and experience, the teacher provides a stable milieu by understanding the pupils’ needs and by adopting a variety of approaches to written tasks. The pupils are encouraged to exercise their ability to listen, speak and read. In working with these basic skills we create variety in which pupils can practise these skills and better their chances to write well.

As for the purposes of this research project the whole process of writing (as outlined in the literature section) was necessarily incomplete. The children participated in pre-writing activities and the writing of the first draft of their fairy tales, which they handed in. I chose to evaluate only the first draft in order to capture the children’s genuine level of writing.
Because of the limited scope of this research project, the children did not evaluate their work in peer-groups. Neither editing nor final presentations were part of the project. Nevertheless, this important aspect of peer evaluation could be a topic for future research.

In studying the process of writing I became aware of my own faults. I realised that response, whether it is self-response or teacher response, is very important, as it helps the writer to develop and see the mistakes he has made. As I see it, pupils need and deserve a response to their writing. That is why peer-editing should be integrated into the writing process. Teachers do not always find the time to correct everything. The results of my questionnaire show that many pupils really want their work corrected and receive their teachers’ written response.

I evaluated their fairy tales according to my own criteria: imagination, level of English and lay-out (§ 5.3.1-5.3.3). I did not plan to hand the fairy tales back. However, the teachers have requested to get them back and are planning follow-up revision and class presentations. The free writing task was a great success in the sense that everyone wrote a story. The pupils also seemed to enjoy the whole theme of fairy tales. The teachers were also pleased with their stories.

The questionnaire showed that pupils in both classes have a positive attitude towards writing in English and to the English language in general. Another interesting finding in the questionnaire was the whole list of subjects the two classes had thought of. In future I will make a point of finding out what the pupils want to write about and use those subjects throughout the year. This would demonstrate that their opinions are important.

To end this discussion, I think one should consider Hammond’s words that “Writing is a special kind of communication. It is special because the message is made permanent, unlike speech, which vanishes into thin air unless it is tape recorded [or video recorded].” (18)
Works Cited


Skolverket *Kursplaner, Betygskriterier 2000*.

