

Pupils' ability to adapt their language while interacting in English as a foreign language

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Introduction

Learning a new language is not easy. There are very many different parts of the language that need to be learnt and some of them may not be there in your mother tongue. Swedish pupils learning English as a foreign language do not have to learn a new alphabet, but they have to learn a slightly new word order in some sentence types, they have to learn that new constituents of the sentence agree compared to concordance rules for Swedish and they obviously have to learn a vocabulary that they are not familiar with. Many of these objects of learning have been tried in learning studies (e.g. Holmqvist & Lindgren 2011, Lo 2012, Lo & Ko 2002, Mok et al 2002). Grammar and vocabulary learning is not all there is to learning a new language though. You have to be able to express yourself; in writing as well as orally.

Expressing yourself orally and communicating is described in the Swedish curriculum (Skolverket, 2011) as important. “Through teaching, pupils should be given the opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills. These skills involve understanding spoken and written English, being able to formulate one’s thinking and interact with others in the spoken and written language, and the ability to adapt use of language to different situations, purposes and recipients.” (Ibid p.32). Interestingly enough it is stressed by Skolverket [The Swedish National Agency for Education] that this should be learnt through teaching. You may wonder how it should be learnt if not through teaching, but there have been influential ideas that said (or says) that language is not something that can be learnt, it must be acquired. At least the really important and true language learning that causes fluency. These are the main ideas formulated by Krashen (1985) in his Input Hypothesis. In this influential hypothesis language learning is separated in terms of intake, processing and production and the important part for Krashen became the intake since it was the only part that could be influenced. The material offered for intake should always be at a level slightly above the learner's recent level and if so it would more or less automatically render a language acquisition. The knowledge promoted from language learning (the processing) could only be used as a monitor to adjust the production. These are grammatical structures and other unnatural systems that are explicitly taught.

The above ideas (Krashen's) were criticised by theories about automatic and controlled processing and focused and peripheral attention to formal parts of the language (McLaughlin, 1987). In this way it is possible to argue for studying of processes and the difference in between what is focused and what is peripheral. When the National Agency for Education in Sweden states what they did in the quote in the previous paragraph you can see that the idea that language can, and must be taught is an idea that is relevant in today's Swedish curriculum. In a study from 2009, Sundqvist (2009) describes the parts of foreign language learning that takes place outside of the

walls of the school building, extramural English. The parts of English that is learnt there is predominantly vocabulary. Sundqvist does not say anything explicitly about what is not learnt extramurally, but following from logic it ought to be parts of the learning that do not seem to be influenced by extramural activities (social media, films, travelling abroad etc). The ability to express oneself orally would then be something that is learnt in school to a larger extent, since it does not seem to be affected by extramural activities to such extent as vocabulary. Put together this all means that language can be taught, and should be actively taught in school since there are parts of language learning that cannot be done outside school. A second argument is that the extramural language learning relies on being social, having interests and being in conditions that not every pupil is. School is for all.

Aim and Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to study what is crucial for pupils' development of oral English as a foreign language regarding sociolinguistic competence. A second, underlying, purpose is to see in what way or ways the results of one learning study can guide the planning of a following with the same indirect object of learning.

As can be seen in the following description of the learning study approach, what is studied in a learning study is referred to as an object of learning. This object of learning is realised in three different ways, the intended, the enacted and the lived. According to Marton & Booth (1997) there is also a differentiation in between a direct object of learning and an indirect object of learning where the former is what is actually taught in the classroom and the later the quality that the pupils should develop through the teaching. In this paper results from two learning studies will be presented and discussed. Both learning studies have had an indirect object of learning which is the ability to adapt language use while orally interacting in English as a foreign language. The adaptation is supposed to be according to interlocutor and situation. The direct objects of learning have been slightly different though, and what this paper wants to discuss is the possibilities of having the same indirect objects of learning, but adjust the direct object of learning to better suit the age of the pupils and the different situation the new school offers. The first learning study was done in lower secondary school (school year 8) and the second in the upper secondary school (school year 10).

Learning Study

Learning study is an approach to planning, performing, assessing and evaluating teaching that takes its basic structure from the Japanese lesson study approach (Pang & Lo, 2011). In this approach

(lesson study) a group of teachers plan, carry out and evaluate a restricted amount of content from the curriculum with the assumption that when done collectively it will enhance the possibilities of being beneficiary for both pupils and fellow teacher colleagues. What the learning study approach adds to this is a theoretical framework for learning, the variation theory (Marton & Booth, 1997). The use of the variation theory helps in explaining why the aspects of a certain content, the so-called intended object of learning, has to be varied in order for the pupils to learn it. This means that the learning study is a lesson study with a systematised theory of when, why and how learning takes place.

Using learning study as a way of improving schools and using it as a research method for developing the teaching practice is founded in two main ideas in the approach (Pang & Lo, 2011). Firstly the fact that there is a strong focus on the object of learning and secondly the fact that the variation theory is applied throughout the process. Together with the basic structure for a lesson study (Morris & Hiebert, 2011) the learning study approach may become successful both as a means of improving schools and as a research method. This basic structure tells that first an area of teaching is decided upon and in that area a certain content, the object of learning, crystallises either through interviews with pupils or through experience among the teachers. After a pre-test has been carried out a lesson, or a series of lessons, is planned to teach this element and when the lesson is done a post-test tells whether the teaching was fruitful or not. This post-test is complemented with an analysis of the action in the class room, done by the teachers in the group. The learning study is always done in a group of teachers sharing the same subject and the same age. Based on the result from analysis, a second lesson is planned and performed in another class in the same year. Again with pre- and post-tests and analysis afterward. The change in between the two lessons should, with reference to the variation theory, make the object of learning appear in a different way. Please note that the method of teaching, e.g. group work, individual work, pen and paper or watching a film is not relevant. It is the way the aspects of the object of learning are varied that matters. The cycle is done a third time before the findings are presented in a report and thereby communicated to other teachers; at the same school as well as at other schools.

The assumptions in learning study as a way of improving work at school are mentioned above. It focuses on learning and it is based upon a theory of learning. There are, however, other ideas as well. It forces teachers to put their minds together and jointly plan and evaluate their teaching. Even though it may cause some tension to bring in expertise from the outside (Adamson & Walker, 2010) it is fruitful for teachers to work together. As mentioned before, learning study is based upon a theory of learning and that means that the teaching stands a better chance of actually promoting learning or at least explaining why learning took or did not take place.

The assumptions in learning study as a means of improving research methods for developing the teaching practice is that it takes a small part of a complex world and examines it closely. To fully understand the very intricate world of learning you should look at a very limited part of it. Morris & Hiebert (2011) argue that this is the way to scientifically improve the knowledge building and the theoretical framework that surrounds it. The very most limited part ought to be one single object of learning and that is exactly what is studied in the learning study. Learning study is also a straightforward approach of applying the variation theory and its framework to hands-on research in the classroom. Since the variation theory is founded in phenomenography it hence puts this into the classroom.

Variation Theory

One of the core terms in a phenomenographic and variation theory study is the notion of conception and the way this term is related to the non-dualist stance that was explained in the previous chapter. According to Marton & Pong (2005), a conception has a referential aspect and a structural aspect. The referential aspect is what a conception could mean when all subjects observing it are put together, and the structural aspect is the combination of discerned and focused features that one informer observes. In nature, these aspects are intertwined. In the variation theory, the structural aspects and their internal relationships are studied. This means that the differences when it comes to critical features between them are studied to separate one from the other. This then relates to the notion of first-order perspectives (referential) and second-order perspectives (structural). To grasp these aspects in an utterance in a phenomenographic interview, you understand referential aspects by interpreting what a person is saying and the structural aspects can be found by looking for linguistic markers such as singular-plural. The referential and structural aspects are intertwined, but only discernible when a specific object is in focus. It cannot be seen when people are speaking about learning in general or in abstract notions. These conceptions that can be identified in a study are put together in and form categories of description (Marton, 1981) which are the major outcomes of a phenomenographic research. One example of a specific conception in a specific phenomenographic study might help in explaining this. For instance conception 1 in the phenomenographic pilot study in the economics example in Lo et al. (2004) meant that the student understood a suggested tax to be fully borne by the buyers and the tax would be related to the demand side of the market. This is the referential aspect of that conception. The structural aspect would be that the interviewed student would focus on the demand conditions of the market and variations among the utterances could be such as the quality of the goods.

The notion of variation in a phenomenographic study relates to the aim of describing the

variation among the total amount of (or at least the total amount of relevant) ways of being aware of a specific object (Marton & Booth, 1997). The phenomenographer is interested in putting these conceptions into different categories of description. The second face of variation (Pang, 2003), which arrived later, is the variation within an aspect that is needed to be experienced in order for this particular aspect to appear for the observer. This means a shift from phenomenography being a methodological concern (“how can different ways of experiencing be described”) to a theoretical concern relating to learning (“why are things experienced differently and how can this difference be described”).

The variation theory takes the second notion of variation to explain and argue for why learning takes place and what constitutes a better learning. Firstly though it must be stated what variation means in this context. The variation meant is the varying ways in which the critical features of a certain learning or capability to master a certain skill is made possible to discern for the learner (Marton et al. 2004). This variation appears in forms of patterns of variation. The first is contrast, which means that to be able to understand what something is you must be able to compare to what it is not. For instance to grasp what a verb is you must contrast it to nouns and adjectives. What you would do then is to contrast verbs within a dimension of variation that would be word classes. The second pattern is generalisation and this means that to fully understand what a verb is you need to see different kinds of verbs e.g. transitive/intransitive, auxiliaries and main verbs, and so on. You would then focus on the quality of the verbs and make sure that irrelevant features such as which letters make them up are put aside. The third pattern is separation in which you would make sure that only one aspect of the feature is varying while the others are constant. To continue with our verbs we would vary only different actions to make sure that the action feature of the semantic notion of verbs is focused. It is argued that this pattern of variation helps children to be prepared for other situations that they have never been exposed to (Ibid.) and that would in this case mean that an “action term” is always understood as a verb. Finally, a pattern of fusion must be introduced to the pupils to make them able to handle several critical features at the same time. To recognize a verb you would actually have to take many notions into consideration simultaneously. You would need to see the meaning of the word, the conjugation pattern and its syntactic function among other things. It is argued though that seeing these critical features as separate, but functioning together is more powerful when it comes to learning what a verb is then only seeing a verb as one global phenomena.

Now that variation has been, to some extent, explained as to how it is understood in a phenomenographic and variation theorist context it needs to be stated what it is not. You would think that teachers vary their teaching naturally and if you would ask a teacher I think that the most

common understanding of the term “varying teaching” would be varying outer settings i.e. individual vs. group work, reading vs. watching a film or having the children to find information on their own vs. providing them with ready-made texts. This is not the variation meant in a phenomenography and variation theory context. It is the aspects of the object of learning that should vary. They may do when you vary the outer settings (when you group children they are actually rather likely to) but it is still not the same variation (Marton et al., 2004).

Learning is explained by Marton & Booth (1997) as being the ability of being aware of the world in a new way. Awareness is then explained as being focally conscious of some critical features of an object while the other features of it make out the background. The study object of a variation theory study is narrowed down to an object of learning. This object of learning is then realised in different ways in the classroom and these are separated into three (Marton et al., 2004). The intended object of learning is what a teacher intends her or his pupils to learn. This space of learning, which is similar to the possible learning that a teacher opens up to in forms of the variation that is made possible to discern for the pupils, is seen from the teacher's point of view. What is seen from the researcher's point of view would then be the enacted object of learning and this is, according to Marton et al. (2004) what matters when it comes to what is possible to learn in school. Other parts of the school world such as curriculum and teachers' intentions are mediated through the enacted object of learning since that is what actually happens in the classroom. As we all know as teachers, everything made possible to learn is not understood and made sense of by the pupils and what they carry with them when the lesson ends and beyond in life is called the lived object of learning. By seeing the relation in these terms it is possible to understand learning in terms of what is made possible to learn and what is then actually learnt from the point of teaching. That is, not in the terms of cause and effect, but in the terms of learning. This is analogical to the non-dualistic stance explained previously. Learning should be understood from a second-hand perspective view of the learners and not from a first-hand perspective of the teachers. It also makes it possible to go beyond the statement ”I do not know/cannot understand what is wrong with them. I have taught them the different word classes for three weeks now. They should know them.”

Results

The results for this paper come from two learning studies and they will be presented chronologically as the results from the first study guided the planning of the second. Since one of the aims of this paper is to describe in what way or ways the results from the first study guided the planning of the second, all lessons will not be described in detail. The planning for the intended learning in one of the lessons together with a description of the enacted learning in the same lesson

will be presented for each study. The results in terms of how many pupils that improved their ability to adapt language will be presented in charts.

Learning Study 1

In the first suggested lesson plan of the first learning study the direct object of learning, what is actually taught, is formulaic sequences. According to Marton & Booth (1997) an object of learning has two aspects and can thereby be separated into a direct and an indirect object. The indirect object of learning, what the pupils should be able to do with their new knowledge, in the learning studies will be the same in all, namely the ability to adapt language to suit interlocutor and situation while interacting in English as a foreign language.

The teacher in the first lesson has 10 years experience of teaching English at lower secondary school. He is a qualified teacher and teaches Swedish as well as English. The group of pupils are ordinarily taught English by this teacher. There are 10 pupils in the first lesson. They have one lesson every week in this smaller group where the other half of the class has an ICT-lesson. There are six boys and four girls and they are divided into two pairs and two triples for the interaction exercises in the lesson. The constitution of the pairs and triples was made by the teacher in order for the pupils to end up together with somebody they feel comfortable with, but at the same time to create a mixture of pupils prone on interacting and pupils who previously have been rather quiet. The lesson is fifty minutes long.

Intended Learning

In the first part of the first lesson in the learning study the object of learning is introduced as being the ability of adapting one's language to the interlocutor. The pupils will be taught the kind of communication strategies dubbed help-seeking strategies (Nakatani, 2010) and thereby formulaic sequences like “Excuse me, where is...” and “Do you know where..., please” are introduced to the pupils.

What the pupils should see is that depending on the interlocutor's age and background, they need to adapt and change their language. At this point it will probably be obvious for (at least some of) the pupils that this is something that they do themselves when they speak Swedish (or another mother tongue). They do not speak in the same way to their parents as they do to their friends and not in the same way to people they know as to strangers.

When the above mentioned phrases (the help-seeking strategies) are introduced to the pupils they will be asked to take turns to ask for the way to various places such as the bathroom in a department store, a candy shop in town and also to ask for specific items in the supermarket. In the first round

person A will be explaining this to an interlocutor, person B, that is the one who is in front of her or him, which should be somebody at approximately the same level of English and the same age. Person B will be instructed to not know the answer to the request from person A and therefore person A must ask another (a third around the table) person, person C, who is supposed to be acting as an older person and somebody that is unknown. The person speaking, person A, will then have to adapt her or his language to suit the new setting and person. Person C will also be instructed to know the way.

The space of variation that will be opened up for the pupils, in order for them to discern the critical aspects of the learning object, is one of variation according to interlocutor. Since the language structure of the request is similar, the pattern of variation is one of separation. There is only one feature of the critical aspect varied, and that is the features of the interlocutor. The critical aspect as such has already been contrasted when it has been exemplified for the pupils that you vary according to age and background and that you speak differently to different persons.

Another option (than having the pupils to pretend being different speakers at different times) would be to bring in younger kids to the classroom. This would make the lesson more real, but on the other hand there is a slight risk that the fact that new people in the classroom would become a disturbing factor when it comes to the pupils doing what they are supposed to be doing.

In the second part of the lesson, the pupils will be paired instead of being in groups of three. First the pupils will be introduced to some new communication strategies, paraphrasing and approximation (Nakatani, 2010) and two new formulaic sequences which will be “What I mean is...” and “looks like...”. This time the pupils are told to explain how to get to specific geographic places in the village where the school is situated such as the beach, the church and the supermarket. Person A asks and person B answers. Person A will be instructed to not understand initially in order for person B to have to paraphrase what s/he just said. What this part of the lesson will then add is a notion of adapting language to also be the ability to come around linguistic difficulties (Skolverket, 2011).

The pattern of variation in the second part of the lesson is also a separation. The interlocutor is this time the same and then kept in the background in the variation and the language structure is varied in order to make the interlocutor better understand what the content of the information is.

Enacted Learning

When the pupils have taken their seats and become familiar with the slightly strange and odd situation with a camera at the back and recorders at their tables, they are introduced to an exercise where they are supposed to ask for different items and also to ask for the way to various places.

They take turns to be 14-year-olds and grown-ups (according to the notes on the desks that are passed around). The pupils seem to understand what they are supposed to do and after a short while they do not show any apparent signs of being disturbed by the recording devices. The pairs (that actually lack one person to be able to vary their utterances according to interlocutor) are asked to skip one of the 14-year-olds, and then be one grown-up and one 14-year-old. In a later part of the lesson the missing part is taken by the teacher. The below picture shows the pupils as they are interacting. Unfortunately the slide in the presentation has not been captured on the film. Here it is

slide 1

Take a seat

- You are at a department store
- Person 1 (a 15-year-old girl or boy) asks person 2 (his or her friend) where the nearest bathroom is. Person 2 does not know so person 1 must ask person 3 (someone older who works there) instead. This person knows.



After the initial exercise where all pupils have acted in the three different roles the teacher explains the notion of varying your language like this:

Teacher: One of, eh, one of the things that you should be able to do in English according to...well according to the course plan and to the grading criteria

Pupil 1 interrupts: speak English on the lessons

Teacher: it is to speak English at the lessons, but it doesn't really say in the course plan that "all pupils should speak English". It's something that we teachers have invented. Because, but here is

something that it really says. You should be able to speak in one way to one person and in another way to another person. It is called...it is called to vary your language. And if you think about it...when you speak to a friend in Swedish, you do not speak in the same way when you speak to, like, your grand mother at Sunday dinner. Or do you [pupil 1]? What's the difference in Swedish?

Pupil 1: *Svär väl inte så.* (Do not swear that much).

Teacher: Perhaps you do not swear that much.

Pupil 1: *Säger inte "fuck off"* (Do not say "fuck off")

Teacher: You do not say those words, no. If a friend asks you [pupil 2] what you have done at school today and if, eh, if your aunt – do you know what aunt means? [pupil 2 shakes her head to show that she does not] your mother's sister. If your aunt asks the same thing: What have you done in school today? Would you answer in the same way?

Pupil 2: *Nej* (no).

Teacher: Probably not. And this is what it means to vary your language. You speak differently to different persons, and also in different situations.

The teacher here introduces different ways of asking for different items and the way and tells the pupils that they should vary according to person and situation. Even though the slide shows various items and places to ask for, the teacher consistently uses "pencil" as an example.

Slide 2

Ways of asking for things or the way

- The pencil/shop/bathroom/cinema, please?
- Where is the/May I borrow a pencil/shop/bathroom/cinema, please?
- Excuse me, do you know where the shop/bathroom/cinema is, please? May I borrow a pencil, please?

The pupils are introduced to new situations and asked to take part in and act out the following:

Vary according to situation and person

- Ask for the time
- Try to loan a book from a class mate
- Try to find batteries in a shop
- All the time: person 1 asks, person 2 is the same age as person 1 and knows her/him and person 3 is an older stranger or a teacher

An example of a conversation is this:

Pupil 3: Where is the batteries?

Pupil 4: No, I don't know where the batteries are, but maybe you could ask her.

Pupil 3: Do you know where the batteries are?

Pupil 5: Over there.

This conversation is rather typical for the pupils at this lesson. The pupils ask for things and directions and answer in short sentences. They sometimes help each other with words and expressions in English that they do not master. The focus is very much to speak linguistically correct and also to vary according to interlocutor. It can be heard that the pupils sometimes correct each other when somebody forgets the interlocutor.

Lived Learning

The result from the pre- and post-tests show that none of the pupils varied his or her language in the pre-test and that 9 out of 10 did so at the post-test. In the delayed post-test that was carried out six weeks later on a similar lesson (again half class lesson and the same time of the day), 5 pupils out of 10 changed their language according to interlocutor and situation. The delayed post-test was similar to the pre-test used before lesson 1.

Analysis of Learning Study 1

The results from Learning Study 1 is summoned in the following chart.

Chart 1

n=29	Number of pupils	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed post-test
Lesson 1	10	0	9	5

Lesson 2	9	2	6	8
Lesson 3	10	1	10	10 (av 10)

The result that, to some extent, stands out a bit is the result of the post-test from lesson 2. This can be explained with changes in the enacted object of learning. Whereas the teachers in lessons 1 and 3 were rather detailed and explicit about the three different ways of asking for a pencil and especially about the fact that there were different formality levels involved, teacher two was not. She mentioned the different ways and the fact that they should be used in different occasions, but not that they were ordered. This meant that the pupils were not, to such extent as in lessons 1 and 3, given the opportunity to separate the formality level from the information. You could, as a pupil, interpret the instruction to be that you should vary according to who you were supposed to act, and not to whom you spoke to.

The results from the delayed post-tests after the lessons indicate that the pupils in lessons 2 and 3 remembered better to vary their language than the pupils in lesson 1. The change that was made from lesson 1 to lessons 2 and 3 were the introduction to the roles. The pupils in lesson 2 were however instructed to act according to the person they were supposed to be playing and not specifically to vary according to the interlocutor. This meant that they varied according to role and not to the person they were conversing. One possible reason for the better result (or actually as good as the pupils in lesson 3) on the delayed post-test can be that they in this test did not have to vary according to situation in the same way as they did during the lesson (which was connected to the post-test). The situation in the delayed post-test was stable, only the interlocutor changed whereas in the lesson there was an exercise part where the interlocutors changed and also the situations in which the conversations were supposed to take place, that is the pupils had to not only pretend that they were interacting with different persons, but also in different places (in school and in a shop) for different conversations. Since teacher 3 offered her pupils a change to discern the critical aspect of varying according to situation as well as the critical aspect of varying according to interlocutor, the pupils were better at the variation. As one pupil in lesson 2 says, as an answer to why you should be polite: "Because the person doesn't know who I am and I want to make a good impression." This could be understood as the pupil thinking s/he should vary because of the way she wants to be considered, rather than because of whom s/he is addressing. There is a further analysis that can be made and that is simply that the critical aspect of identifying with character/person you were supposed to act as was more important than the aspect of knowing the correct vocabulary and the formality order. Finally it could be suspected that the teacher of lesson 2 has mentioned or commented on the lesson at one or many occasions during the six weeks that passed between the

post-test and the delayed post-test.

Learning study 2

This learning study was conducted during the first part of the spring term of 2013. The school is a Swedish upper secondary school and the study programs offered here are typically theoretical ones such as the Natural Science Program (in Swedish *Naturvetenskapsprogrammet*) and the Social Science Program (*Samhällsvetenskapsprogrammet*). There is also an Aesthetic Program (*Estetprogrammet*) where arts such as dance and acting are focused. The school building is old and the hallways and rooms are spacious which combined gives this school a historic air in the sense of many generations of students having acquired an education here.

The upper secondary school in Sweden is theoretically optional, but almost all pupils continue with it after the nine years of obligatory school. There are several study programs on offer, some theoretical like the ones at this school and some others more practical, but they all have a certain amount of subjects and courses that everybody must take. English is one of the obligatory subjects. The courses are related to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) and are levelled 5-7. This means that the students are supposed to have reached a level of English as a foreign language equivalent to level 4 in elementary and lower secondary school (school years 1-9).

The lessons that make up this learning study are all in English 5, which means that the students are doing their first year at this school (and are some months into the second term of that year, Sweden having the school year divided into an autumn and a spring term).

The object of learning in a learning study can be divided into a direct and an indirect one. The former refers to what is actually taught during the lessons and the latter refers to what the students are supposed to be able to do with their new knowledge. During the introductory discussions of this learning study, the object of learning was decided to be “to better understand the relation in between interlocutor and situation in communication” and thereby usage of phrases in conversations on familiar topics. It was decided that three different areas should be focused and these were the presumptuous critical aspects of the object of learning. The first (1) would be phrases to invite others to the discussion such as “How about you?” or “What do you think?”. The second (2) kind of phrase is one that links to what a previous speaker has said such as “I don't agree with you” or “I would also say that”. The third (3) focused group of phrases is to introduce your opinion (with another expression than “I think”) such as “In my opinion” or “According to me”. The direct object of learning was then the use and ranging of these phrases, as it was decided that the students did not actually need to get them taught as such. The phrases were supposed to be ones they knew, but did

not know how to diversify. The indirect object of learning, what the students were supposed to be able to do with the ranging or diversified phrases, was to obtain a conversation that was qualitative and effective in the sense of everybody getting their voices heard and also in the sense of being constituted of a varied language.

A learning study is guided by a theory of learning. In this study it is the variation theory which states that in order for something to be learned, the critical aspects of it must be discernible for the learner. The aspects of an object of learning are the different parts of it and the critical ones are the ones that have to be discerned in order for the object to appear as it is supposed to appear. For this particular object of learning several aspects can be suggested, such as turn taking, body language, subject vocabulary (e.g. knowing football terms in a football conversation), a certain grammar and many others. It was suggested though that the students may not have discerned the critical aspects of being able to use a range of phrases for inviting people to the conversation, relating to previous opinions stated and being able to use a ranged set of words and phrases to express opinion. These critical aspects were detected in a screening that was made among the students prior to the lesson. The students were asked about important parts of a conversation and these three aspects were mentioned, but experience from the participating teachers tell that the students do not use them.

In order for the critical aspects to appear and be discernible for the learners, spaces of variations should be created where dimensions of variation are elaborated. According to Marton & Booth (1997) and Lo (2012) there are three different patterns of variation that can be used in order for a critical aspect to appear for the learner. These are (1) contrast, where a feature of the critical aspect is contrasted with something else which should make it possible to detect what something is through contrasting it with what it is not. The second pattern is (2) generalisation where several examples of a certain critical aspect is presented with the intention of making it possible for the learner to inductively realise what constitutes the critical aspect. Finally there is (3) fusion where several features of the critical aspects vary at the same time. According to Lo (2012) and Marton & Booth (1997) a pattern of fusion should first be presented, followed by contrasts and/or generalisations and then finally back to fusion in a teaching sequence of an object of learning.

The students in the first lesson (out of four) in learning study 2 are from a Natural Science Program class, year one. There are 7 boys and 17 girls altogether then 24 students. For the research lesson they are grouped in groups of four and this is done in order of convenience where the students sitting next to each other simply form a group. The recordings are all done on student computers, the students all have personal computers provided by the school. They use these computers at all suitable occasions during the school day, not only for English. The teacher in the lesson is a qualified teacher with 20 years of experience. She also teaches Swedish.

Intended Learning

During the discussion that preceded the first lesson, it was decided that the students should be offered a chance of discerning the critical aspects, as described above, through the use of role plays and listening to recorded conversations. The role plays should be acted out among the students in groups of four and in them they are going to be asked, through cards, to perform certain roles. These roles are such as “You are not supposed to speak unless spoken to”, “You are only supposed to use the verb “think” to express your opinion”, “You are not allowed to ask anybody else for her or his opinion” and “You are supposed to not stop talking once you get the chance to start”. This is supposed to lead to a rather bad conversation which should then be contrasted with a good model offered to the students through the use of a recording from a course book where native speakers perform a very well organised conversation.

After the listening the phrases and words that have been heard will be written on the whiteboard in order for everybody to take part of them. These lists of words are then beneficial for the students when they are performing their second role plays. During these role plays different cards are used. Written on these cards are phrases that should help the students inviting others, relating to previous opinions and using ranging verbs to express their own opinion.

The material that is used, apart from the computers that are recording each conversation, are picture cards (one per group in A4 size) that illustrate the conversation subjects. In the first conversation there is a picture card that shows different pictures relating to the theme of travel and the students are supposed to talk about their preferred way of travelling. On your own, charter trip, backpacking, city holiday, in the sun by the beach etc. In the second conversation the topic is music and the pictures illustrate different ways of appreciating music. Performed live, listened to on record or through the Internet and the pupils are supposed to discuss preferred ways of listening to new music

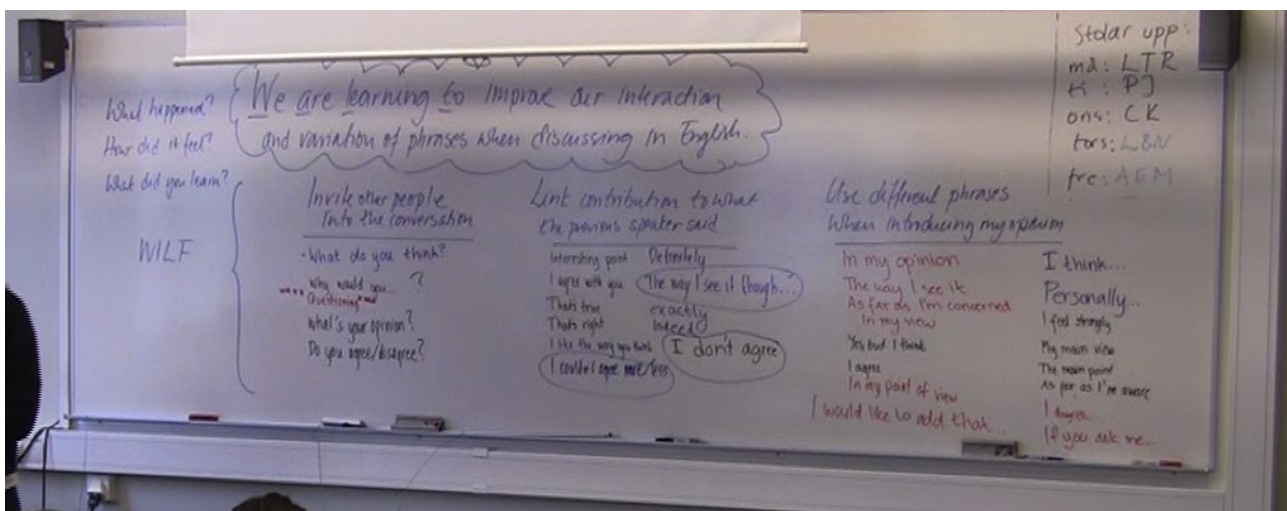
The intended patterns of variation that this lesson should include would then be first a fusion where all critical aspects and the features of them are contrasted simultaneously in the first role play. This would be followed of generalisations when the students are listening to the recording and another generalisation when the suggested words and phrases are written on the white board. Finally a pattern of fusion will again be created when the second role play is performed and acted out.

Enacted Learning

The lesson starts out as planned. The students do the first role play and they get to experience the

sense of not inviting or being invited into a conversation. They also get to experience the sense of somebody not referring to other people's opinions in a conversation and what a conversation turns out like if somebody is not using more than one word for expressing her or his opinion (apart from “think”). Watching the recorded lesson you can see and hear that the students find the situation strange and entertaining. They are laughing and giggling at the (sometimes) exaggerated roles taken on by fellow students. After the first role play the students are asked about their experiences and some of them express opinions like “You need to both listen and talk” and “It got boring[to not be invited into the conversation]”.

The next step in the lesson is that the students are asked to prepare to write down (either with pen and paper or using computers) words and phrases for the three focussed areas whilst listening to the previously described example of a good conversation. After having listened to the conversation and compared their individual suggestions, the students are asked to write the phrases on the white board. They are also asked to come up with ideas for phrases that could be used, but that were not actually used in the conversation that was heard.



The next step was to do a second role play and this time the students were asked, on cards, to relate to what other people had said, to invite others and to use a range of phrases to express their opinion. When the students were asked afterwards, they expressed feelings of a better conversation. “Everybody was involved”.

When the list of phrases appeared on the white board the object of learning changed during the lesson. One of the founding ideas in variation theory, and thereby a learning study informed by variation theory, is that a strong focus should be kept on the object of learning. In this case the object of learning is usage of phrases and it is tacitly suggested that the students already know the phrases as such, they just need to learn that they should be used. When the phrases appear on the

board, and when the students are asked to write as many as possible, the object of learning turns into learning of (new and more) phrases. The changing of the object of learning is also magnified by the fact that the patterns of variation do not really emerge, due to the reason that no clear contrast is made in between the first role play and the good example and the fact that no factor is clearly invariant.

Lived Learning

The results from the pre- and post-test will be presented on a group level here. It was not possible for the teachers who listened to the recordings afterwards to detect exactly which pupil said what so they have only been able to say whether there has been used phrases in the group for inviting, for relating to others and more than “I think” to express opinion. In lesson one there were five groups of pupils that could be listened to since the recording from one of the groups became distorted and altogether 10 instances of phrase usage in the pre-test. In the post-test there were also 10 instances of phrase usage, not the same though. These numbers do not relate to the exact amount of occurrences, only that there has been at least one of the phrase type in question. So for instance in the pre-test of group 3 at least one of the pupils in that group at least once invited somebody else to the discussion and somebody at least once related to what somebody else had said but nobody used any other phrase than “I think” to express opinion.

Result lesson 1

chart 2

n=5	Inviting		Relating		Opinion variation	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Group 1	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N
Group 2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Group 3	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Group 4	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Group 5	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y

The results from all lessons are summoned in the following chart. The results are again on a group level, so the amounts referred to are amounts of groups where there e.g. were phrases for invitations used in the pre-tests, phrases for relating used in the post-tests and so on.

Results from all lessons

Chart 3

n=19	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed Post-test
Inviting	8	17	17
Relating	9	14	19
Opinion variation	7	12	18

Analysis of Learning Study 2

The results on the post tests are rather similar in terms of how many groups (compared to possible amount of groups) that invited, related and varied phrases for opinion. The most striking improvement is the usage of phrases for invitations. The national tests in English as a foreign language was performed 6-8 weeks after the lessons for all the pupils and the oral part of this test, which is a discussion in groups, was used as a delayed post-test and here all groups invited, related and varied phrases for opinion with the exception of one group from lesson 2 (which did not have any instance of invitation) and two groups from lesson 3.2 (one that did not invite and one that did not vary phrases for opinion). Altogether this shows that the learning from the research lessons seem to stay.

During the last meeting in the research group the teachers agreed that the pupils that benefitted the most from the research lessons were the ones that were not very fluent and thereby not had the highest grades. The very best pupils (in terms of previous grades) actually performed worse (in the national tests) on the aspects that were focused on during the research lessons since they tended to ignore the rest of the group and just speak out without considering the interlocutors.

Discussion

Sociolinguistic competence

In the first learning study, it seemed that the crucial part for the development of an ability to adapt language was to be aware of the recipient. In order to be able to adapt your language you must know for whom you are adapting it. It may seem obvious, but it can be seen that the pupils in lesson 3 are better at the post-test than the pupils from lesson 2. The change that was made from lesson 2 to 3 meant that a further stress was put on the recipient and taken away from the (role of the) speaker.

In the second learning study the main result when it comes to sociolinguistic competence is the fact that in order to know what it means to have a varied language you must also experience what it means to not have a varied language. Just like the pupils in Ling & Marton (2012) needed to

experience the gracefulness of the movements by professional actors in Cantonese opera in contrast to a not as graceful performance by themselves, the pupils in learning study 2 needed to contrast a well varied conversation with one that was not varied.

Transfer of Object of Learning

It has been described previously how an object of learning can be divided into an intended, an enacted and a lived one. In the following part of the text it will be discussed to what extent the object of learning was possible to transfer from the first to the second learning study.

Intended Object of Learning

In the first study it can be seen that the planning to a large extent lies on what should be done in the classroom in terms of exercises that the pupils should be doing. The focus is primarily on doing role plays and changing roles. The expected space of variation is created within the group of pupils. In the second study it is rather obvious that the experience of not creating a dynamic as possible space of variation has led to new ideas on how to create alternative patterns of variation. Instead of keeping the space of variation within the pupil group it is now extended when recordings are used. The pupils are supposed to get a better chance to contrast when they can contrast their own performance with somebody else's instead of contrasting with their own performance done in another persona.

Enacted Object of Learning

What happened in the classroom in the first study is rather close to what was planned. The difference is perhaps that the focus for the pupils were placed on performing (role plays) rather than learning to adapt language. This can be seen in the situations where the pupils are helping each other with difficult words and phrases. The helping is very much on a pronunciation and vocabulary basis, not on an adaptation basis. In the second learning study there is a slightly clearer difference in between the intended and the enacted lesson. It has been described how the object of learning changed but this time it is not because of what the pupils do (as in learning study 1), but because of what the teacher does. Again focus shifted, but this time from the intended learning of how to adapt language to learning of more and new phrases to use when adapting.

Lived Object of Learning

The results from the two learning studies are not really comparable. The reason for this is mainly that the analysis is done on a group level in study two. It is interesting to note the diverse results

from the delayed post-tests in the two studies. In the first study, the pupils seemed to have forgotten parts of what they learned in the lesson, at least in lesson 1. In the second study there were more instances of phrase usage in the delayed post-tests regardless of phrase type or lesson.

Concluding Discussion

It seems to be possible to use the experience and results of one learning study when planning for the next one. The use of recordings where the discussion is performed by other people than the pupils themselves is a direct example of this. It can also be seen how this part of the lesson helps in lifting the space of variation to a level that was not possible to reach in the first study.

In both studies the object of learning changed during the lessons. This is probably the most important experience that needs to be learnt (by the research group) from both studies. Keeping a tight focus on the object of learning is necessary and crucial. One possible explanation for the shift is that the teacher groups in both studies did not agree totally on what was actually the object of learning. It could have been stated even more clearly.

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