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for Master of Arts in Primary Education – Pre-School
Class and School Years 1-3
Teaching English to Young Swedes; when and why?

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Abstract:
As the English language holds the status of a Lingua Franca, being able to master it has become necessary in our globalised society. In Sweden, the English subject has been assigned a place along with Swedish and Mathematics as a core subject. However, of these three subjects, only English does not have specified knowledge requirements at the end of third grade. This has led to the start of English instruction varying around the nation. This thesis investigates the factors involved in the decision-making processes regarding the start of English instruction and what attitudes lower primary school teachers have regarding the age at which the English instruction should start. An empirical study was carried out by interviewing a few stakeholders in the context of schools and sending out questionnaires to lower primary school teachers. The results indicate that a large majority of the participants were in favour for early English instruction, as according to many of them, an early start results almost exclusively in advantages for the young children. However, the results also imply that the English subject, in some cases, might be less prioritised, due to the lack of specified knowledge requirements. Based on these results, further research on how different schools interpret these non-specified knowledge requirements is suggested.

Keywords:
Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), Young children, Young Learners (YL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Early Language Learning (ELL), primary school, L2 acquisition, Attitudes
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1. Introduction

In a globalised world, where English is the Lingua franca, children come across English in their daily lives. Politicians and parents all over the world are deciding that an early start of *Teaching English to young learners* (TEYL) will benefit them in this new global world. Parents want the best for their children and politicians are following up their needs (Enever, 2011a, p.10). The trend of TEYL is increasing, and English instruction is first introduced among children between 3 and 12 years old, so-called *young learners* (YL), earlier and earlier (Bland, 2015, p.1). The increasing trend of TEYL is evident in our neighbouring countries where both Denmark and Norway now have mandatory English instruction in the first grade (Undervisningsministeriet, 2014; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006). In Denmark, rhymes and playful activities play a crucial role for English learning, and both countries focus on oral English and communication (Undervisningsministeriet, 2014). In Finland, the English instruction usually starts in the third grade. However, the Finnish curriculum (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2014, p. 137) says that pupils can be exposed to the English language before the third grade, in the form of songs and games. In Sweden, the National Agency for Education introduced a new curriculum in 2011, which has since been upgraded a number of times (Skolverket, 2018), but from 2011, English was positioned as a core subject alongside Swedish and Mathematics with an English Syllabus from grade one. However, the syllabus for the subject of English only contains national guidelines for what the pupils should have met during English class by the end of third grade at the latest; it does not contain *knowledge requirements* until the end of sixth grade, even though the other core subjects have knowledge requirements for the end of third grade. Lundberg (2016, p. 12-13) points out that due to the lack of knowledge requirements in third grade, many schools in Sweden choose to wait with English instruction until third grade. The Education Act stipulates that the education provided in each school form and in each school-age should be equivalent, regardless of where in the country it is provided (Skolverket, 2018, p. 6; SFS 2010:800, 9 §). However, Lundberg (2016, p. 12-13) points out the fact that pupils who do not learn English until third grade lose around 80 weeks of English-education compared to pupils who start with English in first grade. The *English Language Learning in Europe* (ELLiE) studies (Enever, 2011a) studies showed that frequency and intensity of the English lessons in Sweden varies in different schools, from one 20-minute lesson up to two or three 40-minute lessons per week. The starting age for English instruction also varies between 6 and 9 years old (Enever, 2011b, p. 41).

During my University teacher education studies, I only experienced English being introduced in the third grade, regardless which school I was in contact with. It was even difficult at some point to find a school in my current hometown where English was regularly scheduled during the first, second or even third grade. English is a language that surrounds children in their daily lives (Skolverket, 2018, p. 34) and the ELLiE studies (Enever, 2011b, p. 41) showed that the outside school exposure to the English language, also called *Extramural English* is substantial. According to Lundberg (2016, p. 30) it must be rather unsatisfying growing up in a global world, with a global language that you yourself do not master. She also argues that knowing some basic English can also overcome language barriers that occur on the schoolyard or in the
residential area (Lundberg, 2016, p. 30). With this in mind, the question is: why do so many Swedish schools choose to introduce children to English as late as in third grade?

1.1. Aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to gain knowledge about what factors are involved in the decision-making processes regarding the start of English instruction and what attitudes the decision makers and lower primary school teachers have regarding at the age at which the English instruction should start. The following research questions are posed:

- What factors are involved in the decision-making processes regarding the start of English instruction?
- What attitudes do teachers at the lower primary level have regarding the age at which English instruction should be introduced?

2. Background

In following section, a few crucial terms and concepts will briefly be presented and explained, followed by a brief overview of the English language in a global perspective and the increase of TEYL worldwide. Further, there is a section containing a few aspects from the Swedish National Curriculum that can be connected to the previous research section in this thesis. Lastly, there is a brief presentation of what the Compulsory school ordinance says regarding the number of hours English as a school subject is given to primary school.

2.1. Definition of terms and concepts

2.1.1. Extramural English (EE)

Young children encounter English on a daily basis. *Extramural English* refers to the English that the children are exposed to in other contexts than during English instruction. Lundberg (2015, p. 30-31) states that it is important that teachers take advantage of the English that the young children already know and bring this into the classroom. Teachers should also use young children’s curiosity and interests. Children already know many English words from songs, computer games or other trendy words from webpages, social media, YouTube and influencers. These should be, according to Lundberg (2015, p. 30-31), brought in and integrated with the standard English words that often are used in the English classrooms, such as food, family, animals and weather.

2.1.2. Second Language Acquisition (L2 acquisition)

Second Language (L2) sometimes refers to any additional language to one’s native language (L1). But often it is used to refer to the language which is used in a wider context, for example, learning English after moving to United States or United Kingdom. Foreign Language (FL), on
the other hand, is that language that is being learned in a classroom or in similar contexts, and where the input in the natural environment is limited (Ellis, 2015, p. 2-3). It is common to distinguish between L2 and FL, however, *L2 acquisition* has come to be an umbrella term for both L2 and FL-learning contexts. The reason why, according to Ellis (2015, p. 3), is because we cannot know for certain whether or not the process of acquiring a second language in an L2-context is different from acquiring in an FL-context. Henceforth, the term L2 acquisition will in this thesis mainly refer to that language that is being learned in a classroom setting.

### 2.1.3. Implicit and Explicit Learning

Based on observations of children in bilingual families, who have moved to a new country during their early years and quickly learned the dominant language, many believe an early start will automatically be an advantage in L2 acquisition. However, these children are exposed to the new language daily, in a so-called *natural environment* and learning languages *in a classroom* is very different (Enever 2011a, p. 9-10; Enever, 2015, p. 16). In research on children’s language learning, *implicit learning* and *explicit learning* are central concepts and it is common to distinguish between these two. The implicit learning refers to a more unconscious learning from the natural environment. The explicit learning refers to when a language is learnt by explanation, for example, the meaning of different words or grammatical rules (Dahl, 2015a, p. 4; Ellis, 2015, p. 4).

### 2.2. English as a Global Language

During the last thirty years, politicians and parents all over the world have been stressing the benefits of TEYL. Politicians have argued for the importance of a multilingual citizenry to match a global marketplace (Enever, 2015, p. 17). Parents are also aware of this and want to ensure that their children will fit in the globalised world. The fact that during the last 20 years the majority of the current European Union countries have lowered the age at which young learners start their English instruction (Enever, 2011b, p. 24) can be seen as a sign that the English language holds the status of a global Lingua Franca (Rich, 2014, p. 2-3). This is not only the case in Europe, but the whole world. In a survey conducted in 2011 about primary English language teaching (Rixon, 2013), a large majority of the countries that participated had an official starting age for English instruction at 7 years old or below. Sweden is among those countries which have a starting age between 6-7 years (Rixon, 2013, p. 15-16). However, as mentioned earlier, this is not the case according to Lundberg (2016, p. 12-13). Additionally, it can be mentioned that some people even claim that English is a second language in Sweden, or at least should be (Hyltenstam, 2004, p. 52). Due to the fact that so many Swedes encounter English on a daily basis and its status as a Lingua Franca, it does not come as a surprise why people might think so. However, today English is not an official second language in Sweden, even though it might appear to have reached that status (Hyltenstam, 2004, p. 52).
2.3. The National Curriculum and syllabus for the subject of English

The Swedish National Agency for Education, henceforth the Agency for Education, has the function to ensure that all pupils in school have access to the same quality of education. One of many steering documents the Agency for Education provides with is the Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and school-age educare 2011 (Skolverket, 2018), henceforth the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum contains all guidelines and goals for all schools in the nation, as well as syllabuses for each school subject. These syllabuses contain the aim and core content of the subjects, as well as the knowledge requirements of learning outcomes at the end of third, sixth and ninth grade. As mentioned in the introduction, there is a syllabus for the subject of English from grade one, but there are no knowledge requirements of learning outcomes specified for the end of the third grade. Some content of the syllabus for the subject of English and the National Curriculum relevant to this thesis will be discussed in this section. To begin with, one of the aims in the syllabus for the subject of English that is written twice is that how the English instruction should help the children develop self-confidence when using the English language. It also states that the children should be given the opportunities to develop their language skills “in relating content to their own experiences” (Skolverket, 2018, p. 34). The National Curriculum states that it should promote “understanding of other people” (Skolverket, 2018, p. 5); this can be connected to Lundberg’s argument (2016, p. 30) that English instruction can help the children overcome language barriers in their everyday lives. Furthermore, the school should help the pupils to be “able to find their way around and act in a complex reality with a vast information flow, increased digitalisation and a rapid pace of change” (Skolverket, 2018, p. 7) which can be strongly connected to children’s daily experiences with EE and English as a global Lingua Franca.

2.4. Compulsory school ordinance

The Swedish compulsory school is divided into three so-called “stages”: lower primary (years 1-3), upper primary (years 4-6) and lower secondary (years 7-9). The Compulsory school ordinance decides how many hours of each and every subject should be taught per stage. The three core subjects, Swedish, Mathematics and English, are given a total of 1160 hours in primary school, from grade one to three. Out of these hours, Swedish instruction is given 680 hours, Mathematics is given 420 hours, while English instruction is given 60 hours (SFS 2011:185). However, there are no guidelines for how these hours are supposed to be distributed over those years. In chapter 9 in the compulsory school ordinance (SFS 2011:185, 4 §), it says that the municipality is responsible for the distribution of the hours given each subject after receiving proposals from the school’s principal. As to independent schools, the one who is responsible for the whole school is also responsible for the distribution of given hours for each subject.
3. Previous research: the younger, the better?

The question remains as to how the age of the learner is connected to their ability to learn English. Do young L2 learners have an advantage due to their young age? This section will give an overview of some research regarding age and L2 acquisition that might have helped forming those attitudes that the aim of this thesis is to explore. First presented is some research revealing the connection between age and implicit versus explicit acquisition, followed by an overview of research investigating whether input in a classroom setting can be substantial enough. Lastly, research findings regarding overlooked advantages that young L2 learners possess, such as motivation and self-confidence, will be described.

Some research has shown that it is not age per se, but the amount of English input, that has an impact on young children’s L2 acquisition. Muñoz (2014), for example, conducted a study, where the aim was to investigate whether an early start in the L2 instruction in an explicit learning situation can provide the same long-term advantages in L2 acquisition as it does in an implicit learning situation. By studying the association of learners’ starting age, the L2 input and their L2 oral performance, she found that starting age did not have a significant impact on the learners’ oral performance. Referring to this, Muñoz (2014, p. 475-476) claims that young children are good at implicit learning and older children, on the other hand, are better at explicit learning due to their cognitive maturity. Later in the study, Muñoz (2014, p. 476) discusses that younger children will not be able to use their advantage in implicit learning, due to the lack of input in a school setting, and therefore, older learners are more suited at learning an L2 in school. It is not the first time that a study by Muñoz provides such findings. In fact, eight years earlier, Muñoz (2006) conducted a study where the results were almost identical to the ones in 2014 regarding children’s age in relationship with their ability to acquire L2 implicit and/or explicit (Muñoz, 2006, p. 33-34). Additionally, the same conclusion was made after a study conducted by Jaekel, Schurig, Florian and Ritter (2017) a few years later. This approach means that if young learners age should be to any advantage, the amount of input must be substantial enough (Ellis, 2015, p. 37-38).

Regarding whether the input in an early English Learning classroom can be substantial enough, Dahl (2015b) conducted a study where she investigated the effect of increased input in an early English Learning classroom. The study involved two groups of children whose English proficiency was tested before the start of the study, and then again after one schoolyear. During this year, the English lessons for the first group followed the Norwegian norm with a commonly used English workbook and some routine interaction in English, but with instructions in Norwegian. Additionally, the English words for weather and weekdays were discussed during morning routine. For the second group, the teachers mainly focused on input by using English for all dialogues in the classroom during English lessons and no workbook was used. The morning routine discussions were also more or less in English, leading to a total of 25 minutes more of English input for the second group compared to the first group (Dahl, 2015b, p. 131-132). According to the findings of the study, this distinction lead to the English input for the second group being substantial enough to influence on the children’s English receptive vocabulary, sentence comprehension, and sentence repetition within the course of one school
year (Dahl, 2015b, p. 139). Thus, the results indicate that there is not necessarily a lack of input in a school setting (Dahl 2015b, p. 139), opposed to what Muñoz (2014, p. 476) discussed in her study. Although the input was not as substantial as in a natural environment, it was enough for acquisition to occur (Dahl, 2015b, p. 139).

There is research that has resulted in findings in line with Muñoz (e.g. Jackel et al., 2017), and the assumption that older children are better at explicit learning is not unusual among language learning researchers (e.g. Ellis 2015; Sundqvist & Sylvén 2016). In fact, already in 2001, a Croatian study coordinated by Vilke and Vrhovac, showed that older children have an advantage when it comes to explicit knowledge in L2 acquisition. The longitudinal study, with the aim to determine consequences of an early start of L2 instruction, was conducted between 1991 and 2001 with one thousand schoolchildren participating. The experimental group, containing three generations of six to seven-year-old children, got their L2 instruction from first grade. There was also a control group that had started with their L2 in the fourth grade, according to their national curriculum. After eight years, one of the results was that the control group managed the grammar test, which required explicit knowledge, better than the experimental group. On the other hand, the results also showed that the experimental group were better than the control group in matters of vocabulary, reading, pronunciation and orthography. Another finding this study provided was that the control groups motivation decreased over the years while the experimental group kept their motivation and in some cases, it even increased (Mihaljevic Djigunović, 2015, p. 2-4).

Motivation is one of the aspects of early L2 acquisition that Enever (2015, p. 25) states is neglected. She points out that an early start in L2 can establish positive attitudes towards the L2 that will be maintained in the longer run. Similar kinds of advantages that young children have in language learning have been long known. For example, already between 1969 and 1980, a longitudinal study was made in Sweden with the purpose to investigate the advantages and disadvantages with an early start of English instruction. The study was named Engelska på lägstadiet (EPÅL), which can be translated to English in the lower primary school and over one thousand schoolchildren participated (Holmstrand, 1983). The results of the study showed no disadvantages with early English instruction; in fact, it showed that children during the primary school years (aged 7-9) have an easier time learning a new language, and the early start of English instruction had a positive impact on the children’s knowledge and L1 language development (Holmstrand, 1983, p. 92-93). Holmstrand (1983, p. 93) stresses an early start of English instruction, as early as in the first grade, because of other aspects other than just L2-learning, such as interest in language and self-confidence.

Self-confidence in language can be a crucial part of why early L2 acquisition is important. Already in 1992, Halliwell (p. 3-6) wrote about young children’s abilities in L2 acquisition that she had discovered through her years in European classrooms. One of them was children’s willingness to communicate and that they can easily make up their own words for getting across their meaning. Ten years later, Johnstone (2002, p. 12) points out that young children are less anxious about language, which is in line with what Halliwell (1992, p. 3-4) wrote about children being willing to take the risk to say a word incorrect in order to communicate. There are research
findings supporting the connection between young L2 learners and self-confidence. For example, the ELLiE studies showed that the young children that participated in the studies were motivated to learn English at first, but as they got older, they started to compare themselves to others. With time, the children became more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses which lead to some of them losing their motivation (Enever, 2011b, p. 58-59). Recently, Fenyvesi, Hansen and Cadierno (2017) conducted a study where they investigated whether there is an association between age (among other factors) and English development by comparing two groups of young Danish children’s receptive vocabulary and grammar development after one year of instruction. In one group, they started English instruction in first grade (aged 7-8), and the other in third grade (aged 9-10). The results showed that both groups made similar gains regarding the English language. However, an interesting finding regarding age was that the younger learners had less ‘classroom anxiety’ and more self-confidence regarding the English language compared to the older learners. It is expressed in both the National Curriculum and the syllabus for the subject of English that the education should help the children to develop language confidence (Skolverket, 2018, p. 7 & 34). Additionally, the Danish Ministry of Education reports that many Danish schools have experienced advantages with an early (Kindergarten and 1st grade) English instruction over the last 20-25 years; one of them is that the early English instruction provides linguistic self-confidence among the young children. One of the other advantages found is that it strengthens language production, even in the mother tongue (Undervisningsministeriet, 2014), which in line with one of Holmstrand’s findings (1983, p. 92-93) where the early start of English instruction seemed to have a positive impact on the children’s knowledge- and L1 language development.

4. Theoretical perspective: L2 Acquisition and Age

This section will present the theories that will provide the framework for the data analysis of this thesis. First the critical period hypothesis will be presented as it is based on the common belief that young children have a special advantage in learning languages. However, the exact time frame for this period is hard to determine. Secondly, cognitive maturity as a theory will be presented, due to its connection with age and implicit/explicit knowledge.

4.1. The Critical Period Hypothesis

‘The younger the better’ is a widespread belief when it comes to children learning their L2. Through observing children learning their L2 in their new natural environment, many make the assumption that children are more open and less inhibited and that they learn fast. Some researchers define the early period in young children’s lives as the ‘critical period’ (CP) (Singleton, 2005, p. 269). The critical period hypothesis (CPH) can briefly be explained as a window in children’s lives when they can easily acquire a language. The CPH in an L2 context is a debated topic, and there seem to be different ideas on of how to define the hypothesis (e.g. Kinsella & Singleton, 2014, p. 441). One definition for CPH is “the younger learners are when they begin to learn an L2, the more successful will they be” (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016 p. 97), while another is the “period during which a language must be acquired and after which complete
acquisition is no longer possible” (Kinsella & Singleton 2014, p. 441). How long the CP actually lasts is still debated (Ellis, 2015, p. 31). In a review on CPH-research, Singleton (2005) put together a list of different proposals; the ages varied from ‘shortly after birth’ until 16 years old (Singleton, 2005, p. 273). There is research that shows an early start in L2 acquisition has a positive impact on the children’s language proficiency. To mention one, Abrahamsson (2012) conducted a study where he investigated whether the age when the acquisition started among Spanish-speaking learners of Swedish had an impact on language acquisition or not. Regarding phonological and grammatical skills in Swedish, the majority of the early beginners (who had begun with their acquisition sometime between 1-6 years of age) showed nativelike results (Abrahamsson, 2012, p. 209-210). However, it is important to note that Abrahamsson’s study was not conducted in a classroom situation.

4.2. Cognitive SLA

As mentioned earlier, there is research (Jaekel et al., 2017; Muñoz, 2006, 2014) suggesting that age does not automatically give advantage in language learning, unless the amount of input is substantial enough as young children are better at implicit learning. Therefore, in a school context the slightly older children would have an advantage because of their cognitive maturity. A cognitive view on L2 acquisition focuses on the mental processes during the acquisition and it has two paradigms: connectionism and symbolism. The first mentioned, connectionism, means that we make associations from L2 input in our environment. For example, we learn simple grammar from stored memories that we gradually “untangle” when the associations of the connections are strong enough (Ellis, 2015, p. 171-172). The second one, symbolism, is based on so-called information-processing models of language learning. These models say that we pick up features in our environment; we process them, store them in our memory and eventually we use them in output (Ellis, 2015, p. 171-172). As explained earlier, implicit acquisition is input from a natural environment, while explicit acquisition is learned through language rules and such. When speaking of implicit and explicit knowledge the main difference is what the learner is aware of and not. Explicit knowledge means that the learner is aware of their knowledge, while implicit knowledge means that the learner is unaware of their knowledge but still can show it. To explain implicit knowledge Ellis (2015, p. 173) gives the example of tying shoelaces; we know how to do it, but explaining how to do it might be difficult. One of the most influential information-processing models in L2 acquisition is the adaptive control of thought (ACT). This model distinguishes between procedural and declarative knowledge which simply can be described as implicit and explicit knowledge. When we speak our L2, we use the rules from our declarative/explicit knowledge. This process is, however, slower and more troublesome than if we would speak through procedural/implicit knowledge as we do with our native language (Anderson, 1980, p. 224). However, it is not impossible for L2 learners to speak their L2 without awareness (Anderson, 1980; Ellis, 2015, p. 174), which can be seen in the previous research section where researchers (e.g. Ellis 2015; Muñoz 2014; Sundqvist & Sylvén 2016) suggests that it is easier for young children to acquire language implicitly.
5. Method and material

In following section, the methods and materials that were used for the collecting of data for this thesis, will be presented. First, the chosen methods, namely interviews and questionnaires will be given a brief presentation, including their advantages and limitations. After that, the selection of participants will receive a presentation. This section also includes the steps involved in choosing the participants. Thereafter, the implementation of the data collection will be explained with a more detailed explanation of the instruments as well as how the collection of data was carried out. The two sections after that are about reliability and validity and how these two paradigms were considered during the collection of data. Lastly, a section about some consideration regarding ethical aspects will be presented.

5.1. Chosen methods

The research questions in this thesis concerns factors involved in the decision-making, and attitudes regarding English in lower primary school, which requires qualitative data, so-called non-numerical data, as the aim is not to describe something, rather to find out why some decisions are made and what the people involved think about them. A qualitative method is suitable in data collection when one is looking for explanations of a phenomenon (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.355), such as expectations and attitudes among the informants and interviewees (Larsen, 2009, p. 24). The decision to use interviews was made, due to the many advantages with the interview as an instrument for collection of data: it is flexible by nature as it offers spontaneity and space for the interviewee to provide answers with more depth (Cohen et al., 2007, p.349). Interviews also minimize the risk of losing crucial information as the interviewer can ask supplementary questions, which in the end gives the interviewer a more holistic perspective of the phenomenon he or she is doing research on. The interview as method also offers the interviewee the opportunity to speak more freely, giving the interviewer more detailed answers which in the end, leads to a higher validity (Larsen, 2009, p.27). Unfortunately, there are also limitations with interviews; one of them is the so-called interview effect where the interviewee chooses to give dishonest answers due to the belief that the interviewer wants to hear a certain answer, or due to the fear of appearing in a certain way in the interviewer’s eyes (Larsen, 2009, p.27). After consideration, the decision to conduct a questionnaire as a complement to the interviews was made, as to get in touch with decision makers could require a large amount of time e-mailing back and forth just to reach the right people. Questionnaires can provide both qualitative information such as attitudes (McKay, 2006, p. 35; Ordell, 2007, p. 85), and more importantly, with a questionnaire, you can reach a large amount of people in a short amount of time (Ordell, 2007, p. 85; Stukát, 2011, p. 47). Using two or more different types of data collecting is often called triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 141). The use of triangulation often contributes with benefits as the different methods can make up for the limitations of other methods and it can help one study a phenomenon through different angles (Stukát, 2011, p. 42). Combining two methods also strengthens the researcher’s confidence in the findings, if the outcomes from two different methods harmonise with each other (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 141).
5.2. Selection of participants

This following section will contain two subheadings, one describes how the respondents for the questionnaire were chosen and the second one describes how the interviewees were chosen. In total, 63 informants, including 59 questionnaire respondents and 4 interviewees, were involved with the collecting of data to this thesis. However, only 38 of the questionnaire responses can be used in the study, as 21 of respondents did not give their consent. Therefore, 38 questionnaires and four interviews were included in this thesis.

5.2.1. Questionnaire respondents

The criteria regarding the teachers for the questionnaire was only that they needed to be active first to third grade teachers. Whether they were teaching English currently was not important as the aim was to find out whether they were involved with the decision making of when the English instruction should start in their class, and their attitudes regarding English in lower primary school. To get a sample of participants from all over the country, the questionnaire was sent out in a “members only” Facebook-group for lower primary school teachers.

5.2.2. Interviewees

As for the interviewee, the criteria for selecting participants were slightly different. At first, two teachers that I have been in contact with during my whole time at the university were contacted and asked whether they knew who decides about the start of English instruction as the aim was to interview those individuals. Both of them answered that they would be suited for an interview as they were involved with the decision making regarding the start of English. This could be called a “sample of convenience” meaning the use of participants that are easy to get access to, without making a conscious choice (McKay, 2006, p. 37; Ordell, 2007, p. 86). As the answers from the internet questionnaire started to drop in, it became clear that most teachers answered that the municipality oversaw the start of English instruction. Thus, it seemed important to interview someone from a higher position; therefore, one principal and one superintendent of schools were also interviewed. As the two first interviewees were located geographically between the south and middle of Sweden, the decision was made to reach out to interviewees from the middle to the north of Sweden.

5.3. Implementation

5.3.1. Pilots

To assure quality of the chosen instruments regarding understandable questions and instructions, two pilot studies were carried out. This is something Cohen et al. (2007, p.341) propose as one can by piloting assure the validity of the questions, especially regarding questionnaires. According to McKay (2006, p. 41), the value of a questionnaire increases by choosing pilot participants who are similar to the “real” participants, and the larger group of
participants, the more pilot participants there should be. However, for this thesis, the two instruments only had one pilot each. One fellow pre-service teacher piloted the questionnaire, while another piloted the interview. The questionnaire pilot resulted in minor revisions in the questionnaire, while the pilot for the interviews showed the lack of open-ended questions. By adding “how” and “why” to each question, that problem was easily solved. Another finding that was made during the interview pilot was the lack of interviewing-experience, which led to a helpful discussion about interview techniques.

5.3.2. Questionnaires

Using an online tool for questionnaires, KwikSurveys, the questions were formulated using both close-ended and open-ended questions, the latter allowing the respondent to write their own answers for further explanation (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 355; McKay, 2006, p. 37). Larsen (2009, p. 48) recommends a combination of open- and closed-ended questions as they offset each other’s disadvantages. The questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was posted in a Facebook-group for lower primary school teachers with a brief explanation of what it was about and a wish for only active first-to-third grade teachers to participate. The questionnaire was up for five working days, Monday to Friday, and then it was taken down.

5.3.3. Interviews

For the interviews, the interview guide approach (McKay, 2006, p.52) was used. This means that the interview questions could be formulated slightly different, but as the interview sheet (see Appendix 4) had the function of a checklist, it could be made sure that each topic was covered during the interview. The interviews were conducted within one week of time, the same week as the questionnaire was up in the Facebook-group mentioned previously. Three out of four interviews were carried out by phone as the interviewees live and work in different parts of Sweden. Three of the interviews were recorded, and for one of them, the answers were written down. Three of the interviews went as planned; however, one of the interviews (Interviewee 4) did not turn out as planned, due to a bad phone connection and stressful circumstances, which lead to the interview being shorter than the other ones. It is important to point out that the data that is analysed and presented in this thesis covers all questions, except one, that Interviewee 4 was asked. The question Interviewee 4 did not receive, was whether they read research on English didactics (see Appendix 4).

5.4. Method of analysis

To analyse in qualitative research is to organise the data and try to find patterns or themes in the collected data (Fejes and Thornberg, 2012, p. 35). For this thesis, the data from the interviews has been distinguished from the data from the questionnaires, in order to create an easier overview. Only a few quantitative questions from the questionnaires from page 1 (see Appendix 2), who provided background about the respondents and numerical information, have been included in the analysis for this thesis. Putting the most focus on the qualitative data, the open-ended questions from page 2 (see Appendix 2), matches the aim of this thesis. There are a few steps suggested by Kvale cited in Fejes and Thornberg (2012, p. 37) that have been
followed during the organising of both the interviews and the questionnaires. The first step was to concentrate the data and reformulate with fewer words. The second step was to categorise the data after themes, and the third step was to organise the data to make a coherent story of the data content. Starting with the interviews, they were transcribed and translated to standard English. After that, the answers were colour coordinated, to achieve a so-called cross-case analysis, which means that the responses get organised after themes and topics (McKay, 2006, p. 57). This approach of analysing is appropriate to use when the aim is to highlight opinions such as advantages and disadvantages (McKay, 2006, p. 57). Therefore, a cross-case analysis approach was used to analyse the collected data, both from interviews and questionnaires. Compared to the number of interviewees, the number of questionnaire respondents is rather high, which meant that the questionnaire responses where sorted further in a few steps. Due to the larger number of answers from the questionnaire, not all answers can be shown in the results section. However, the presented examples in the results are representative for the collected data. The section regarding questionnaires under results is divided into two, distinguishing the teachers who responded Yes, I make that decision and No, but I am involved in making that decision from the ones who answered No, someone else is in charge of that. All references to names and genders have been left out of this thesis, instead, the third person singular gender-neutral pronoun they is used for all respondents and interviewees.

5.5. Reliability

Reliability refers to the quality of the instrument used in the data collection, and how reliable it actually is (Stukát, 2011, p. 133). One way to assure high reliability in a study is to measure what is meant be measured twice (Stukát, 2011, p. 134), or in the case for this thesis, collect data twice. If the outcomes are similar, there is a high reliability. Unfortunately, for this thesis the interviewees were only interviewed once, just as the questionnaire respondents only responded to the questionnaires once. However, as described in the chosen method-section, using two methods, a triangulation, can achieve a similar assurance of reliability if the two different methods result in similar or corresponding outcomes (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 141). It needs to be added that even if both groups of participants would take part in the study once more, one cannot know if they would choose to answer in the same way as they did the first time. One should also keep in mind that if the study was made with different participants, the outcome could look different than it does in this thesis.

Overall, qualitative methods are not optimal for gathering data to make generalisations about a specific phenomenon (Larsen, 2009, p. 27). However, the aim of this thesis is not to make generalisations, rather to gather and analyse different points of view regarding age of English instruction. The reliability of a study can also depend on its dependability. According to McKay (2006, p.14), to achieve high dependability, researchers need to provide extensive details regarding the process of collecting data, such as respondents in the study and the implementation of the study. Additionally, the collected data should be organised and presented in such a way that others can review it (McKay, 2006, p. 14). Therefore, the goal is to make the method and material section, as well as the results section in this thesis as comprehensive as possible.
5.6. Validity

The validity of a study refers to that what is meant to be measured actually is measured (Stukát, 2011, p. 133). Stukát (2011, 134) writes that the validity is elusive but yet crucial for a study, and one needs to ask themselves whether they are investigating what they want to investigate. One should keep in mind that a study never can reach full validity. However, the validity in a quantitative research can always be improved by the honesty and depth of the collected data (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 133-134). As earlier described in the chosen methods section, interviewees that can speak freely provides more depth in the answers, which leads to a higher validity (Cohen et al., 2007, p.349; Larsen, 2009, p.27). As the analysis of the questionnaire responses mainly focused on the open-ended, qualitative questions, the same depth can be applied on their answers as well. However, regarding both interviewees and questionnaire respondents, one can never know how honest the participants have been (Stukát, 2011, p. 135).

5.7. Ethical aspects

According to the Swedish research council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017, p. 10), how participants in a study are being treated, is an important part of the ethical aspects that should be considered when collecting data. The participants should be as protected as possible from damages or violation that the study eventual could cause (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017, p. 12). The aim of the study, research questions, as well as chosen methods for data collection should be well presented (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017, p. 25). The participants in this study were informed about the aim of this study and how the data collection was going to be made, so they could make their own conscious choice whether to participate or not, avoiding causing them any harm. This information was given both in writing and orally for the interviewees as they first received a consent letter with detailed information (see Appendix 3), as well as a shorter repetition of the information before the start of the interviews. For the questionnaire respondents, the first page of the questionnaire gave all the needed information (see Appendix 1). To get confirmation of consent from the questionnaire respondents, they received the information that by sending in the questionnaire, they give their consent. In addition to the information regarding aim and data collecting method, the information that participating in the study was completely voluntary and they could choose to stop their participation at any time or choose to not answer some of the questions, was given to the participants. The participants were also informed that they were going to be completely anonymous in the thesis. Thus, no names of participants of municipalities or schools, or genders are mentioned in this thesis. By securing that these two aspects were acknowledged by the participants, as well as following them up, it could be secured that the participants were protected from any damage according to the individual protection claim (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017, p.13) as well as achieve anonymization (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017, p. 40) of the questionnaire respondents and confidentiality (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017, p. 40) for the interviewees. Other ethical aspects that have been considered is that the collected data needs to be critically discussed, as well as possible sources of error needs to be acknowledged and discussed (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017, p. 25). These aspects are considered in the methods discussion section.
6. Results

The results section will be divided in two sections: one for the interviews, and one for the questionnaires. In this section and further on, the gender-neutral pronoun “they” will be used for all of the informants.

6.1. Interviewees

The individuals interviewed were two lower primary school teachers, one principal and one superintendent of schools. They all worked at different schools and different municipalities.

Table 1 below shows information about each of the interviewees and also which grade the English instruction starts in each interviewee's school or municipality.

Table 1: Background information about interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee 1</th>
<th>Interviewee 2</th>
<th>Interviewee 3</th>
<th>Interviewee 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role</strong></td>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of experience</strong></td>
<td>Has worked as a 1-3 grade teacher for 20 years.</td>
<td>Has worked as a teacher for 6 years</td>
<td>Has worked as a 7-9 grade teacher for 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are you a licenced teacher?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are you qualified to teach English?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When English instruction begins at your school or municipality?</strong></td>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>Grade 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen from the interviewee answers that the age for beginning English instruction varies from grade 1 to 3.

6.1.1. Factors involved in the decision-making and implementation processes

In the school for Teacher 1 English instruction starts in first grade, as this is what the
municipality recommends. Teacher 1 is a member of a group of teachers who are in charge of deciding what the English instruction should comprise in two sister schools in the municipality in order to make the education equivalent. This group of teachers also decide their own “knowledge requirements” as the Agency for Education does not provide any. The process is a little different at the school where Teacher 2 works. Teacher 2 makes the decision of when the English instruction starts in their own class, as there is no regulation regarding the matter from either principal or municipality. English instruction starts in third grade in this Teacher 2’s class and the same goes for the rest of the school. In the school where Interviewee 3, the principal, works, they start with English instruction in first grade and it is the principal who gives a proposal for this to the school board (municipality). There is a discussion together with the school health team and the classroom teachers before the decision is made. In the municipality where Interviewee 4, the Superintendent of schools, henceforth Superintendent, works, they start with English instruction in the second grade. Together with 12 other principals in the municipality, the Superintendent decides when the English instruction should start. In the end, it is the Superintendent who makes that decision on delegation.

By analysing the answers from the four different interviewees, five different factors were identified as being related to the decisions about when English instruction is introduced:

- Timetabling issues
- Lack of knowledge requirements in the syllabus for the subject of English
- Tradition in the different schools
- Belief in an early start as children are more motivated
- Belief that young children are less ‘language anxious’

Starting with the first factor, timetabling, the Superintendent says that timetabling is the biggest reason to why they choose to start with English instruction in second grade in their municipality. The Superintendent explains that: “the timetable controls, and as the school law has changed, the timetable becomes more and more controlled by the government”. For the Superintendent, it is more a question of calculation: “18 hours of education hours per week, how to distribute those in a good way”.

The factor of a lack of knowledge requirements was shown as the Superintendent was asked the question if they believed English instruction would start earlier if there were knowledge requirements for the English subject at the end of third grade. The Superintendent then answered: “Yes, probably, if there was more distinct control from the National Curriculum. Like a national test or something similar. The more the education is regulated, the more hours it would receive”. However, it might be that some schools start earlier than what is required, the Superintendent adds. When asked the same question, Teacher 2 answered: “I believe so, absolutely. Because then I would have thought: now we need to do it [start English instruction]”.

The third factor, tradition in the school, was identified through the answers from Teacher 2. When asked the question why at that grade? Teacher 2 answered: “Honestly, I have never
thought about it. Everyone else at this school starts in the third grade, and I have always assumed that they follow some rules regarding hours and so”. Teacher 2 continues to explain that there is no policy in the school, but more of an unquestioned tradition that they start with English instruction in third grade in the school. Teacher 2 adds that teachers in the school have now realised that English instruction should have started earlier as they do not use all the hours given to the subject of English. Additionally, Teacher 2 says that many of the children in the class were quite proficient in English already in first grade and believes that many of them find joy in the language. Therefore, Teacher 2 says that now in retrospect, they would definitely have started with English instruction in first grade.

The fourth factor, concerning the belief that motivation for learning is higher with an early start was identified through the Principal’s answers. The Principal often mentioned during the interview that the children are curious and receptive in the first grade. For children at that age (first grade), the school is always exciting, there are many positive feelings around it. The Principal continues by explaining that they believes that generally, motivation among school children decreases as they get older. Therefore, by starting with the English early, they take advantage of that curiosity and motivation that children have from start.

Last but not least, the fifth factor concerns the belief that young children have less language anxiety. This factor was identified through Teacher 1’s answers. It needs to be acknowledged that Teacher 1 is not the person who decides when the English instruction should start, but as when asked if they would do something differently if they were in charge of when the English instruction should start in their class, Teacher 1 answered: “I would not have waited with the English, I would have introduced it like now: starting in first grade”. Teacher 1 states that as the children still are in first grade, they are more outspoken and dare more at that time. Teacher 1 also says they want to help the children dare to speak English during lower primary school. “In first grade, it [English] is not that serious, we sing and learn new words. English in first, second and third grade is joyful”. Teacher 1 says that using singing and playing during English instruction in lower primary school makes the children comfortable with the language.

6.1.2. Perceived benefits of an early start

By analysing the answers of the interviewees to the question whether there are benefits or advantages of an early start for English instruction, three benefits were identified in the answers.

- The belief that it is fun, exciting and interesting for the young children
- The belief that the earlier English is taught, the better it is for the children
- The belief that children who start learning early are more comfortable and confident in using English

Starting with the first perceived benefit, Teacher 2 mentions more than once that they believes that one benefit of early English instruction is that it is exciting for the children, and that it is a subject that brings a great deal of joy. In addition, starting early wakes an interest in the language and “the earlier you start, the more you learn”. The Superintendent’s answer indicated
a similar belief as they said that: “it is good starting a bit earlier, because it strengthens [the English]”. The Principal’s answer also focused on the fact that an early start with English instruction being beneficial for the children’s language development and said that the children benefit from acquainting themselves with English early as they get to learn the construction of a language and learn words parallel with each other. However, Teacher 1 said it probably does not matter when the English instruction starts regarding how much English the children learn, but still mentioned that the children learn languages implicit while they are very young. Teacher 1 adds that with an early start the children get used to speaking English and therefore can feel comfortable and more confident using the language: “maybe it is an advantage to start early, so when they start fourth grade they start to learn [English] grammar, at least they can and dare to speak [English]”.

6.1.3. Beliefs about challenges with an early start

By analysing the answers on the question whether there are challenges or disadvantages of an early start of English instruction, three factors were identified in the interviewee’s answers.

- Could be a challenge for children with another L1 than Swedish
- Can be a matter of time – English should not the taught at the expense of time for other subjects.

Regarding any possible challenges with an early start, the Principal says that the special education teachers in their school have brought up the fact that some children with another L1 than Swedish struggle with learning English, but other than that, the Principal could not see other challenges. Teacher 2 also had the children with another L1 than Swedish in mind, saying: “the challenge is with all the children who are newcomers [to Sweden], and who needs to learn Swedish. If we then mix in English […] That is what could be the challenge”. Teacher 2 says that even though it could be a challenge for second language learners, the more languages you know, the better. Teacher 2 adds the English subject is important, but in first grade it might be more important to learn how to read and decode. Therefore, the subject of English should not be taught at the expense of other subjects, such as Swedish. Teacher 2 suggests that even though time is an issue: “one can make it [English instruction] work in a good way. One should not cut down on other subjects. You make it work in a good way”. The Superintendent also mentions time as an issue regarding early English instruction and in the end, it is a matter of balance between the subjects and the given hours: “if we started with English in first grade, then we would have to take away something else from first grade”. Regarding this topic, Teacher 1 says that they do not think that starting the English instruction early challenges the pupils’ learning of Swedish as they do not work with English in the same way; they do not work with grammar, vocabulary homework or such.

6.1.4. Knowledge of research on teaching English

Additionally, all the interviewees except the Superintendent where asked whether they read research about English didactics and all three answered that they did not. However, they all had
different explanations for why. The Principal said that the special education teachers had that responsibility, and they all discuss current research during allocation of hours or school health team meetings. Teacher 1 said that they do not read research on a regular basis, however, a few years ago they had some supplementary training in English didactics where they read research. Teacher 1 adds: “I use methods that I know work in the English classroom, and of course everything needs to have a scientific foundation. What I do, I do according to the National Curriculum and in consultation with other experienced teachers”. Furthermore, Teacher 1 says that they get new input through teacher students visiting the school. Teacher 2 answered that they might start reading research in the future, adding: “since there are no knowledge requirements, it [reading relevant research] might unconsciously become less prioritised”. Teacher 2 also says that in their school, the teachers get in-service training and read a great deal of research, but never about English didactics.

6.2. Questionnaires

This questionnaire section is divided into two parts: one focusing on the teachers who are involved with the decision making of when the English instruction should start, and one with the rest of the teachers. The focus will be on questions such as “when” and “why”, but there will be a slight difference in what is shown in the results in the two different sections, as the respondents in the two sections have different roles regarding the decision of when the English instruction starts.

Table 2 below shows background information about the 38 questionnaire respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age distribution:</th>
<th>Under 25</th>
<th>25-30</th>
<th>31-39</th>
<th>40-49</th>
<th>50+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of teaching experience:</th>
<th>&lt; 5 years</th>
<th>5-9 years</th>
<th>10-20 years</th>
<th>21-29 years</th>
<th>30 + years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you a licensed teacher?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you qualified to teach English?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 below shows how these 38 questionnaires respondents answered on the question whether they are the ones deciding when the English instruction should start in their class.

Table 3: Are you the one who decides when the English instruction starts in your class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, I make that decision</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No, but I am involved in making that decision</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, someone else is in charge of that</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, it should be acknowledged that one of those 25 teachers who answered No, someone else is in charge of that actually later on explained that they choose to start the English instruction earlier than what is suggested in their municipality.

6.2.1. Responses from teachers who are in charge or involved when the English should start

This section will focus on those thirteen teachers that stated that they were in charge of deciding when the start of the English instruction should take place, or, were involved in the making of the decision of when the English instruction should start in their class. All of the 13 teachers say that they are qualified teachers, and 12 of these teachers mentioned above, also state that they are qualified to teach English. As seen in Table 4 below, the majority choose to start English in the two earliest years in school (F-class is the year children attend between kindergarten and first class). Only one of them chose to start in second grade.

Table 4: When does the English instruction start in your class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F-class</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to the question why they choose that particular grade to start English instruction could be divided into three different recurring beliefs: 1) the younger, the better in the end. 2) interest among the young children. 3) the impact of Extramural English.

One answer to the question why they choose to introduce English at that grade was “the children get to encounter the English language earlier, which I think is a factor for succeeding in mastering knowledge in a language”. Another teacher wrote that they had experienced that starting the English instruction early lead to the children developing good knowledge in English later on in the school years. Another teacher wrote: “to start early [with English] means that the children can progress farther”.

The second belief concerned the perceived higher level of interest among young children. One participant wrote that they chose to start with English in F-class instead of first grade: as the children use English through playing in F-class, they become more prepared as the “real
English” starts in first grade. One of the answers was that “children in F-class are eager to learn English, as long as it is done in a playful way”. Another similar answer from another teacher was “we take advantage of the interest that children have when they start school, the usage of English becomes more natural when you play and sing in English”. One of the teachers wrote that they have experiences that there is an interest among the children, and another one answered that one of the benefits with an early start, is that the children “dare more”. This connects to one of the beliefs from the interviewees that younger learners are less anxious.

The third belief about the impact of Extramural English can be seen in answers such as “children encounter English daily, and it is important to take advantage of it”. Another teacher answered that it becomes more natural to use English in school as the children already know a great deal of English due to TV and computer games. The same teacher also comments that it is important to know English in today’s society and the school needs to “jump on that bandwagon”. None of these teachers mentioned any disadvantages with an early start.

6.2.2. Responses from teacher who do not make the decision

This section will focus on the other 25 teachers who wrote that someone else is in charge of when the English instruction should start. These 25 teachers received the question If it is not you who decide when the English instruction should start, then who decides? Table 5 shows their answers.

**Table 5: if it is not you who decides when the English instruction should start, then who decides?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The municipality</th>
<th>The principal</th>
<th>The superintendent of schools</th>
<th>The timetable</th>
<th>The Agency for Education</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 5, more than half of the participants state that the municipality decides when English instruction starts in the schools.

Tables 6 and 7 show how the 25 teachers answered on the questions concerning when the English instruction starts in their school or class, and when the English instruction should start according to them.

**Table 6: When does the English instruction start in your class?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F-class</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7: According to you, when should the English instruction start?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F-class</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A manual comparison of individual answers shows that of these 25 teachers, one of them would choose to start with the English instruction later than it already does, however, they did not explain why. Nine teachers said they would choose to start the English instruction earlier than what it does and 15 of those teachers would choose the same grade as the English instruction already starts which was all, but one, in first grade.

Regarding the perceived benefits of an early start, those teachers who said they believe that English instruction should start earlier than in does, gave answers as to why. Although the answers from these 9 teachers varied somewhat, the most common answer was related to the fact that children encounter Extramural English daily. One of the teachers, who starts with the English instruction in third grade answered that they think third grade is a bit too late as the children already know the English they are supposed to teach in third grade, which leads to the English instruction not being stimulating enough. Another teacher answered that children already encounter English as they start first grade. Therefore, English should be used as early as in F-class. Another teacher’s argument for an early start is that it is important to help the children to understand the Extramural English that they meet daily through TV-shows, computer games and internet. The same teacher adds that English is a world language, and for the future, it is important to be able to communicate and understand it, and the earlier the English instruction start, the better prerequisites the children get.

Those teachers who would start the English instruction in the same grade as the English instruction already start which was all, but one, in the first grade then gave answers on why. From these answers, four different themes could be found: first, some of the answers indicated that due to Extramural English, the children often already know some English and have a broad English vocabulary as they start the first grade, often due to online games. One of the answers was that since the children already know so much English from start, the English education can be a little more advanced than it is. The same teacher also wrote that children often are curious about English. Interest and curiosity among the young children is the second theme that was found through answers such as “the children are curious and interested”, “the children have a big interest in the English language” and “the children love to learn English”. Young children are not only interested in learning English, they are particularly open for learning a new language, according to many of the teachers which is the third discovered theme from answers such as “children are susceptible for learning English at an early stage, they have it easy to learn through listening, songs, nursery rhymes and video clips” another answer was that young children have an “ability to learn”. The last visible theme among the answers were that young children are not afraid of saying something wrong, and they dare to speak, and one example for this theme is the answer: “the children dare to make mistakes, they attempt and try out new things […] they dare to explore the language in another way than if they would be older and more aware of themselves”
7. Discussion

This section will discuss the methods that were chosen for this thesis as well as the results. First, the following methods discussion is a reflection over triangulation as a method and its strengths as well as the individual methods weaknesses that might have caused limitations to this thesis. Further, the implementation will be discussed and a few possible improvements will be mentioned. The second part of this discussion section will be a discussion over the results and the main findings. The discussions under the first subheading will be based on the results from the interviews. As for the second subheading, it will be based on the interviews and questionnaire responses from teachers who are in charge or involved when the English should start. The last subheading will be based on the questionnaire responses from those teachers who are not involved with the decision making for when the English instruction starts.

7.1. Methods discussion

Qualitative data can come in handy when one is looking for identifying attitudes (Larsen, 2009, p. 24) and explanations of a phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2007, p.141). As the aim of this thesis is to gain knowledge about what factors are involved in the decision-making processes regarding the start of English instruction and what attitudes the decision makers and lower primary school teachers have regarding the age at which the English instruction should start, the method was well suited to that aim, and it did indeed work out as the results clearly show what factors are considered when making the decision of when English instruction begins, as well as attitudes that both decision makers and lower primary school have regarding English in lower primary school.

The triangulation method with both questionnaires and interviews was used and provided this thesis with different perspectives and outweighed the disadvantages of individual methods (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 141; Stukát, 2011, p. 42). In this case, one limitation with the interview as method is the interview effect, that could have led to the interviewees choosing to answer less than honest (Larsen, 2009, p.27), which is the opposite case for the questionnaire, as the respondents are anonymous. By using cross-case analysis (McKay, 2006, p. 57) to find patterns in the answers, it was discovered that many of the answers from the interviewees were corresponded by the answers from the questionnaire respondents, giving the thesis results a sort of confirmation. This is something Cohen et al. (2007, p. 141) writes about as well: if the answers from the different methods harmonise, one can see it as a recipe for reliability in the answers.

One of the interviews was not conducted in the same way as the others as the circumstances were different; as the interview was impromptu due to a troublesome time getting interviewees that had time. This led to a shorter interview, where the interviewee did not receive all questions from the interview-sheet. However, during the interview a prioritisation was made and the most crucial information was received from the interviewee. This was possible due to interviews.
flexible and spontaneous nature (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 349), which was one of the reasons why interviews were chosen for this thesis.

However, the same flexibility cannot be applied on questionnaires, as the discovery was made that many of the questions were rather “unnecessary”, as the information that was used for this thesis was based on the open-ended questions that appeared on page 2 out of 4. The use of too many questions, both open-ended and closed-ended, was due to not knowing whether how detailed information the respondents would give. Instead of taking a risk and receive only a little information, the questionnaires were filled with a large amount of questions. Later on, it appeared that the respondents were willing to give detailed answers on the open-ended questions, but it was however too late to change the questionnaires. There is a chance, that some respondents would have given more detailed answers to those questions if they had not appeared on page 2 out of 4. Therefore, fewer questions could have provided more detailed answers. To avoid this problem there should have been a more extended piloting session with not only one person to pilot the questionnaire, but perhaps 3-4 people. If this would have been done, it would also have given the questionnaire a greater value, as McKay (2006, p. 41) formulates it.

The last thing to discuss in this section is that the questionnaire respondents gave similar answers; most of them started the English instruction at first grade or earlier, or wanted to start the English instruction at first grade or earlier. As this research is rather small, one should not make generalisations in the first place, and qualitative methods are not optimal for gathering data when one wants to make generalisations about a specific phenomenon (Larsen, 2009, p. 27). However, it came to mind that the similarity of the answers might have had something to do with that only those who are interested in English, or have a strong opinion on early English instruction chose to participate. Therefore, these results might not reflect the attitudes of the majority of teachers in Sweden.

7.2. Results discussion

7.2.1. Factors involved in the decision-making processes regarding the start of English instruction

When looking at the interviews, 3 out of 4 interviewees said that the municipality in the end decides over when the English is introduced, this is however, under the heavy influence of the principal who in their turn also consults with teachers and other relevant stakeholders in the context of schools, which follows what the compulsory school ordinance (SFS 2011:185, 4 §), says: the municipality decides over the timetable disposition, after receiving proposals from the principal/s. This means that even though the municipality decides over when the English instruction should start, teachers and principals have a say in this decision. However, there are circumstances when the municipality is not in charge of the start of English instruction, as Teacher 2’s answers showed. The outcome of a municipality not giving any instructions of when the English instruction should start, was almost predicted by Lundberg (2016, p. 12-13), when she pointed out that due to the lack of knowledge requirements at the end of third grade,
many schools in Sweden choose to wait with English instruction until third grade. What can be added to Lundberg’s prediction, is that not only due to lack of knowledge requirements schools wait until third grade with the English instruction, but also due to lack of guidance from the municipality. Lundberg (2016, p. 12-13) also points out the fact that pupils who do not learn English until third grade lose out on valuable English instruction, which was also an outcome in Teacher 2’s situation as they realised they did not cover enough English hours.

The biggest factor on the decision of when the English instruction begins seemed in the Superintendent’s case, is the timetable that is provided by the Agency for Education. As the Superintendent said “18 hours of education hours per week, how to distribute those in a good way”, it seems like that in this case, it could be a question of balancing the hours. When asked whether knowledge requirements in the end of third grade for the English subject would make any difference, the Superintendent answered in that case, the English instruction would probably start in first grade. The same answer was given by Teacher 2, which can give a sense that, for some, the combination of the timetable and the lack of knowledge requirements can be an obstacle for an earlier English instruction. We can contrast this with the situation today, where the Swedish and Mathematics subjects both have knowledge requirements for the end of third grade, and they are given about 11, respective 7 times more hours than the English subject (SFS 2011:185). Thus, it does not come as a surprise that the English subject might be less prioritized by some. This was confirmed by Teacher 2, when asked whether they read research on English didactics, they answered that during the in-service trainings at the school, the English subject was never brought to the table. The reason for this, Teacher 2 said, that it might be the lack of knowledge requirements and English might unconsciously become less prioritized, just because of that. Perhaps, that is also the reason why there is an unreflective tradition to start the English instruction at third grade in the school where Teacher 2 works. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the lack of knowledge requirements seems not only to cause the English subject is to be less prioritised by some, but also that it is a challenge knowing where the children’s English language knowledge should be at the end of third grade. This was shown by the fact that in the area where Teacher 1 works, there is a group of teachers making their own knowledge requirements to avoid a too inequivalent English education in the area.

Other factors that were involved with the decision-making processes, expressed by both the interviewees and the questionnaire respondents, were attitudinal and reflected both perceived benefits and challenges of an early start. Therefore, these answers, and the answers on the question regarding whether there are any benefits and/or challenges with an early start, will be integrated in the headline below to avoid repetition.

7.2.2. Attitudes those in charge or involved with the decision making have regarding the start of English instruction

During both interviews and questionnaires, the respondents expressed reasons for both why they choose to start English at the grade they do, as well as if there are any perceived benefits or challenges with an early start. This section will start focusing on potential advantages or benefits of an early start, which according to both some of the interviewees and the
questionnaire respondents can come under the category *the younger, the better*. The respondents indicated that young children are suited for English instruction out of three themes: 1) they are interested and motivated, 2) they dare more and have less language anxiety, and 3) simply the earlier, the better.

The belief that young children are interested and motivated when it comes to learning the English language was identified through answers such as “children that attend the earliest grades are eager to learn English”. One of the teachers responding to the questionnaire motivated their choice of an early start of English by stating that the school “takes advantage of the interest that children have when they start school. This answer is quite similar to the Principal’s argument for an early start: as they have experienced that children generally are motivated and curious in school from the start, but lose their motivation as they become older, introducing English early will take advantage of that motivation and curiosity. As the Croatian study showed how a group of children who started their English instruction earlier, compared another group of children who started their English instruction later, kept their motivation through the years and for some the motivation even increased (Mihaljevic Djigunović, 2015, p. 2-4), an early start in order to keep the motivation among the children, might be a solution.

Can an early start affect children’s motivation due to young children’s lack of ‘language anxiety’? According to the ELLiE studies (Enever, 2011b), one of the factors making the children lose their motivation was indeed that the children lost their self-confidence in the English language as they got older. This theme was echoed by Teacher 1’s answer that “children dare more” and “young children are more outspoken than older children”, as well as one of the questionnaire respondents stated that the young children “dare more”. This opinion, or experience, corresponds with both Halliwell (1992) and Johnstone’s idea of that younger children are likely to have less language anxiety, as well as Fenyvesi, Hansen and Cadierno’s (2017) study, that showed how the younger children had less anxiety in the classroom and therefore had a better relationship with the English language. A good relationship to the English language is what Teacher 1 expressed is the most important aspect with an early start. The same teacher said that the children actually might not learn more English, just because they start early, but it is good that they can and dare to speak English as they start fourth grade and start to learn grammar. This may indicate a Cognitive SLA perspective, or at least agrees with Muñoz’ (2006, 2014) studies that showed that an early start might not lead to that the children learn more, and that learning grammar and such is suited to older children, due to their cognitive maturity.

On the contrast to this, the rest of the interviewees and many of teachers responding to the questionnaires point out the earlier the children get their English instruction, the better. Answers such as early English leads to “good knowledge” and that early English allows the children to “progress farther”, can indicate a, conscious or unconscious, belief in the critical period hypothesis (CPH), that learning a new language at an early age simply leads to a better outcome (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016 p. 97). Whether there are connections between the idea of *the younger, the better* and a Cognitive SLA perspective, can depend on how one sees it. One interpretation is that school English is suited for older children due to their cognitive maturity,
as research has shown (e.g. Muñoz, 2006, 2014). Another way of seeing it is that the earlier the start, the more exposed the children are to the English language that leads to more opportunities for implicit acquisition, which the Cognitive SLA perspective on language learning rests upon (Ellis, 2015, p. 171-172). On this topic, the Principal said that an early start of English instruction is beneficial for the children’s language development, as through acquainting themselves with English early, they get to learn the construction of the language and learn new words. This way of seeing an early start as beneficial indicates a Cognitive SLA perspective, as it would mean that children learn the construction of the language through input that they store in their memories, and eventually use in output (Ellis, 2015, p. 171-172).

Another common view on why an early start can be good is that young children encounter Extramural English at an early age and this can be used in school. Some of the teachers expressed that children already know some English when they start school, and teachers should take advantage of that, echoing Lundberg’s (2015, p. 30-31) words. As the English language holds the status of Lingua Franca (Rich, 2014) it is today important to know English, and therefore, the school must “jump on that bandwagon” as one of the teacher expressed it. This answer does not only correspond with the trend of lowering the age for English instruction around the globe, it can also be connected to an important point: that the school should help children orientate in a more complex world, with a “vast information flow, increased digitalisation and a rapid pace of change” (Skolverket, 2018, p. 7). Learning English at an early stage, and letting children bring the English that they meet outside of school into the classroom might help them on the way.

Regarding the beliefs of possible challenges of an early start, surprisingly, none of the questionnaire respondents mentioned an eventual challenge or disadvantage with an early start. However, one challenge with early English instruction mentioned during the interviews was lack of time, meaning that an early start could be on the expense at another subject. The Superintendent said that if they would choose to place the English instruction in first grade in their municipality, then they would also need to take away something else from the first grade. This concern was showed by Teacher 2 who said that in first grade, there should be a focus on Swedish in first place. Teacher 2 adds, that teaching English at the expense of other subjects can be avoided if the English instruction is conducted in a “good way”. Teacher 1’s answer might be considered a “good way” as they answer that English in first grade is “not that serious”; they sing and play and do not teach grammar or give the children vocabulary homework. Out of a Cognitive SLA perspective, this answer could be a good way, as the singing and playing can mean input through which the children can learn the language (Ellis, 2015). Additionally, one could consider why English would be at the expense of another subjects, as it actually is a core subject. One could think the other way around and consider whether other subjects are on the expense of the English subject.

An additional challenge that was brought up, was the fact that learning English might be troublesome for the children who do not have Swedish as their L1 and are still learning Swedish. Some of the research presented in this thesis shows that, adding another language, in this case introducing English at an early stage, actually strengthens the children’s language development
in both their L1 and English (Holmstrand, 1983; Undervisningsministeriet, 2014). However, the research was not carried out on children who already had another L1 than the majority language. Therefore, this will not be discussed, as the background and previous research presented in this thesis does not cover these topics.

7.2.3. Attitudes teachers at the lower primary level have regarding the age at which English instruction should be introduced

Out of the teachers who do not have a say in when the English instruction should start in their class, 20 out of 24 would like a start in either F-class or in first grade. These results clearly indicate that the teachers prefer early English instruction. At this point in the discussion, it does not come as a surprise that all teachers in favour for an early English start answered almost identically as the rest of the participants regarding why an early start is a good idea. All four themes that could be found in the teachers’ answers have been brought up in this discussion: Extramural English, interest among the children, young children are not afraid of saying something wrong, and young children are open for learning a new language. The latter mentioned theme strongly indicates a CPH-view of language learning, that young children simply learn languages better (e.g. Kinsella & Singleton, 2014, p. 441), as among these teachers, many of them believe in the idea that young children have the ability to learn a new language. Some of the answers on the same theme points out a slightly different direction, by stating that children easily learn English through songs, nursery rhymes and such, which indicates towards a Cognitive SLA view of learning language through input in the environment, or so-called implicit acquisition (Ellis, 2015).

8. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to gain knowledge about what factors are involved in the decision-making processes regarding the start of English instruction. The findings showed a variation of different factors that were considered and/or involved in the decision-making regarding the start of English instruction. From timetabling issues to taking advantage of the children’s interest and motivation for learning English, as well as an early start to give the children opportunity to develop self-confidence in using the language. It also seemed that the lack of knowledge requirements caused the English subject to be less prioritised in some of the cases. Therefore, another problem has been identified: who should actually decide when the English instruction should start? Until now, the municipality officially decides. It has been shown through the results of this thesis that in some cases teachers themselves decides over this matter, which also showed a variation in when the English instruction start in schools around the nation. As the results from this thesis have also shown that two of the interviewees that have decided to start the English instruction later than first grade both claimed that they would place the English instruction earlier if there were any knowledge requirements. Therefore, a possible solution for making the English education more equivalent would be if the Agency for Education could provide knowledge requirements for learning outcomes at the end of third grade. As for the attitudes that the decision-makers and lower primary school teachers have regarding the age at
which the English instruction should start. The majority of the research participants expressed a positive view of an early start, as according to them, it seemed to entail almost exclusively advantages for the children, namely that an early start is beneficial as it leads to a better language development among the children, and an early start benefits the children’s motivation and self-confidence. Another reason for why teachers were in favour of an early start was the Extramural English, as the children already are acquainted with the English language, as well as helping them understand it. As for the potential challenges with an early start of English instruction, it seemed that there was a fear of teaching English at the expense of other subjects. However, the results did not show any direct negative attitudes regarding an early start of English instruction. Instead, the results indicate that many teachers would be satisfied to start the English instruction as early as possible, due to all the advantages the children seem to receive. An early start might not always mean a further development in the children’s English language skills (e.g. Muñoz, 2006, 2004; Jaekel et al., 2017). But in many cases, it could mean an increase in their motivation and self-esteem in using the language (e.g. Fenyvesi, Hansen and Cadierno, 2017) which is something the participants in this thesis also have stated. As the Agency for Education stresses in the syllabus for the subject of English (Skolverket, 2018, p. 34) that the education should help the children to orientate in a complex world with a rapid pace of change (Skolverket, 2018, p. 7), this could be done by helping them understand the English language that they encounter on a daily basis, as one teacher expressed it. Additionally, as one teacher wrote that it is time that the schools jump on the bandwagon regarding early English, it is perhaps not only the schools who should do so, but also the Agency for Education.

8.1. Further research

The question remains, where should a child’s English language knowledge be at the end of third grade? This is shown to be a problem. Because there are no specified knowledge requirements, teachers have to make their own knowledge requirements. Therefore, research on how different schools behave when there are no specified knowledge requirements of learning outcomes would be of value. Even in those cases where the schools or municipality decide for an early start of English instruction, an early start does not necessarily mean equal quality of education.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1. Information page in questionnaire

Enkätundersökning om engelskundervisningens start i lågstadiet.

Syftet med studien är att få en ökad insikt i när engelskundervisningen startar under lågstadiet och vem som bestämmer när det ska ske. Dessutom vill jag gärna ta reda på attityder hos de som bestämmer om engelskundervisningen såväl som hos lågstadielärare. Även om du inte börjat undervisa engelska i din klass än, kan ditt medverkande bidra till undersökningen!

Enkät- och intervjufrågorna utgår ifrån ovan beskrivet syfte. Enkäten tar mellan 10 och 20 att besvara. Du kommer att vara helt anonym och får närmast helst välja att avsluta ditt deltagande i enkätundersökningen eller välja att inte svara på vissa frågor.

Undersökningen kommer att presenteras i form av en uppsats vid Högskolan Dalarna samt publiceras online i DIVA, en databas där forskningspublikationer och studentuppsatser samlas.
Om du önskar ta del av det färdiga examensarbetet kan du kontakta mig via e-post så skickar jag gärna en kopia när examensarbetet är godkänt.

Genom att delta i undersökningen och besvara denna enkät godkänner du ditt deltagande.

Tack på förhand!

Ytterligare upplysningar lämnas av nedanstående ansvariga:

Student: Lisa Cataldo
  e-mail: h15lisca@du.se

Handledare: Christine Cox Eriksson
  e-mail: cce@du.se
Appendix 2. Questionnaire

Enkätundersökning om engelskundervisningens start i lågstadiet.

**Page 1**

1. Hur gammal är du?
2. Hur länge har du arbetat som lärare?
   - Mindre än 5 år/ 5–9 år/ 10–15 år/ 16–20 år/ 21–30 år/ mer än 30 år
3. Har du lärarlegitimation? Ja/ nej
   - Om ja, i vilka ämnen? _____
4. Är du behörig att undervisa i engelska? Ja/ nej
5. Om ja, i vilka årskurser? (du kan välja fler alternativ) Åk 1-3/ Åk 4-6/ Åk 7-9/ Annat: _____
7. Om du är klasslärare, undervisar du dina egna elever i engelska? Ja/ nej

**Page 2**


9. Är det du som bestämmer när engelskundervisningen ska börja i din klass?
   - A: Ja, det är jag som bestämmer
   - B: Nej, men jag är involverad i bestämmandet
   - C: Nej, det är någon annan
Om du svarade A eller B svarar du på frågorna 10, 11 och 12, men hoppar över 13, 14 och 15. Sedan fortsätter du som vanligt från fråga 16.

Om du svarade C, hoppa över frågorna 10, 11 och 12 och börja svara från fråga 13.

10. Varför börjar engelskundervisningen i just den årskurs som du/ni bestämt att den ska göra på din skola/i din klass? Förklara gärna: ____

11. Finns det bidragande faktorer till beslutet?
   (T.ex. Forskning / egen erfarenheter / timplan / intresse / känner mig osäker på engelskan, något lokal policybeslut)

   Förklara gärna: ____

12. Om engelskundervisningen startar senare än åk 1, tror du att du valt annorlunda om det hade funnits kunskapskrav i ämnet engelska för åk 3?
   Ja/ Osäker/ Nej
   Vill du utveckla? ____

13. Om det inte är du som bestämmer, iså fall vem?
   Försteläraren/ Rektorn/ Kommunen/ Skolchefen/ Annan: ____

14. När tycker du att engelskundervisningen borde börja i skolan?
   F-klass/ åk 1/ åk 2/ åk 3/ Annat: ____

15. Finns det bidragande faktorer till att du tycker så?
   (T.ex. Forskning / egen erfarenheter / timplan / intresse / känner mig osäker på engelskan)

   Förklara gärna: ____

16. Anser du att det finns fördelar respektive nackdelar med tidig start av engelskundervisningen under lågstadiet? Förklara gärna: ____

Page 3

Om du inte undervisar i engelska just nu kan du hoppa över fråga 17, 18 och 19

17. Beskriv gärna lite hur din engelskundervisning går till: ____

18. Vid vilka tillfällen exponeras eleverna för engelska i kassrummet? (du kan välja flera alternativ)
A. Under engelskundervisningen,
B. Små inslag under dagen, s.k. "språkduschar,
C. Under morgonsamlingen,
D. Under eftermiddagssamlingen

Annat: ____

19. Hur mycket tid i veckan ägnar du dig åt engelska i klassrummet?
   mindre än 20 min/ 20 - 40 minuter/ 40 - 60 minuter/ 60 - 80 minuter/ 80 – 100
   minuter/ 100 - 120 minuter/ mer än 120 minuter

20. Tycker du om att undervisa i engelska?
   Ja/ Varken ja eller nej/ Nej
   Förklara gärna, varför/varför inte: ____

21. Om du fick önska, hur skulle du helst vilja arbeta med engelskundervisningen?
   Förklara gärna: ____

Här nedan följer ett par påståenden. Klicka i hur du förhåller dig till dessa påståenden.
Vill du inte svara alls hoppar du helt enkelt över frågan. Kom ihåg att inga svar är rätt
eller fel, svara som just du tycker och känner!

0= Stämmer inte alls
1= Stämmer ganska dåligt
2= Stämmer inte så bra
2= Stämmer litegrann
3= Stämmer ganska bra
4= Stämmer helt och hållet

22. Tidig start av engelskundervisning påverkar elevernas språkliga utveckling.
   0/ 1/ 2/ 3/ 4/ 5

23. Tidig start av engelskundervisning påverkar elevernas motivation.
   0/ 1/ 2/ 3/ 4/ 5

24. Ju tidigare engelskundervisningen börjar, desto mer engelska lär eleverna
   sig.
   0/ 1/ 2/ 3/ 4/ 5

25. Det spelar ingen roll när engelskundervisningen börjar under lågstadiet, eleverna lär
   sig lika mycket ändå.
   0/ 1/ 2/ 3/ 4/ 5
   0/1/2/3/4/5

27. Tidig engelskundervisning försvårar för inlärningen av andra ämnen.
   0/1/2/3/4/5

28. Övriga tankar/åsikter angående engelskundervisning under lägstadiet: ____

Tusen tack för din medverkan! /Lisa

Appendix 3. Consent letter for interviewees

Information om deltagande i undersökning av engelskundervisningens start under lägstadiet.

Du tillfrågas härmed om deltagande i denna undersökning.

Undersökningen är en del av mitt examensarbete under den sista terminen på grundlärarprogrammet med inriktning årskurs F-3 vid Högskolan Dalarna. Jag, Lisa Cataldo, har valt att skriva mitt examensarbete om engelskundervisning under lägstadiet. Syftet med studien är att få en ökad insikt i när engelskundervisningen startar under lägstadiet och vem som bestämmer när det ska ske. Dessutom vill jag gärna ta reda på attityder hos de som bestämmer om engelskan.

För att samla information till studien kommer bland annat muntliga intervjuer att hållas med ett mindre antal lärare/rektorer som är ansvariga för att bestämma när engelskundervisningen ska börja under lägstadiet.


Ditt deltagande i undersökningen är helt frivilligt. Du kan när som helst avbryta ditt deltagande utan närmare motivering.

Jag är tillgänglig att delta i en muntlig intervju  Ja ☐ Nej ☐

Signatur: _______________________

Ort, datum: _______________________

HÖGSKOLAN DALARNA

Information om deltagande i undersökning av engelskundervisningens start under lägstadiet.

Du tillfrågas härmed om deltagande i denna undersökning.

Undersökningen är en del av mitt examensarbete under den sista terminen på grundlärarprogrammet med inriktning årskurs F-3 vid Högskolan Dalarna. Jag, Lisa Cataldo, har valt att skriva mitt examensarbete om engelskundervisning under lägstadiet. Syftet med studien är att få en ökad insikt i när engelskundervisningen startar under lägstadiet och vem som bestämmer när det ska ske. Dessutom vill jag gärna ta reda på attityder hos de som bestämmer om engelskan.

För att samla information till studien kommer bland annat muntliga intervjuer att hållas med ett mindre antal lärare/rektorer som är ansvariga för att bestämma när engelskundervisningen ska börja under lägstadiet.


Ditt deltagande i undersökningen är helt frivilligt. Du kan när som helst avbryta ditt deltagande utan närmare motivering.

Jag är tillgänglig att delta i en muntlig intervju  Ja ☐ Nej ☐

Signatur: _______________________

Ort, datum: _______________________

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Appendix 4. Interview questions

1. Hur gammal är du?

2. Vilken är din yrkesroll?

   Lärare: Hur länge har du arbetat som lärare?
   I vilken årskurs undervisar du just nu?
   Har du lärarlegitimation?
   År du behörig att undervisa i engelska?
   Undervisar du dina egna elever i engelska?

   Rektor/annat: Har du arbetat som lärare innan? Hur länge iså fall?
   I vilka årskurser undervisade du?
   Har du lärarlegitimation?
   År du behörig i att undervisa i engelska?

3. När startar engelskundervisningen på din skola?

4. Är det vederbörande som bestämmer?

5. Varför börjar engelskundervisningen i just den årskursen?

6. Finns det bidragande faktorer till beslutet?
   (till exempel: forskning, timplan, brist på kunskap hos lärare, lärare obekväma med att tala engelska)

   - Vid svar som brist på kunskap, timplan, etc.: om du fick önska, när skulle engelskan introduceras under lågstadiet och varför?

   - Om engelskan börjar senare än åk 1: tror du att det sett annorlunda ut om engelskan haft kunskapskrav redan i åk 3?

7. Finns det något lokalt policybeslut om engelskundervisningens start?
8. Attityder:

a. Anser du att det finns en årskurs som lämpar sig bäst för start av engelskundervisning?
   - Om ja, vilken och varför?
   - Vill du tillägga något? Finns det fler anledningar?

b. Anser du att det finns fördelar respektive nackdelar med en tidig start av engelskundervisningen under lågstadiet?
   - Vilka? Förklara gärna.

c. Spelar det någon roll när engelskundervisningen börjar under lågstadiet när det gäller elevers språkliga utveckling?
   - Vad spelar i så fall roll? Varför spelar det ingen roll? Förklara gärna.

d. Spelar det någon roll när engelskundervisningen börjar under lågstadiet när det gäller elevers motivation?
   - På vilket sätt? Varför tror du inte så?

e. Tror du att en tidig engelskundervisning på något sätt är till elevers fördel?
   - Vilken? Varför? Varför inte?

Några ”snabba” påståenden för att förtydliga attityden kring frågor 7 a-e.

Jag kommer att säga ett par olika påståenden, så får du säga vad du tycker om dem.

- Ju tidigare engelskundervisningen börjar, desto mer engelska lär eleverna sig.

- Det spelar ingen roll när engelskundervisningen börjar under lågstadiet, eleverna lär sig lika mycket ändå.

- Ju äldre eleverna är, desto mognare är de för att lära sig engelska.

- Tidig engelskundervisning försvarar för inlärningen av andra ämnen.

9. Hur disponerar man timmar (timplan)?

   - År engelskundervisningen schemalagd från början?
   - Ingår t.ex. språkduschar i timplanen/schema?

10. Brukar du läsa forskning om engelskdidaktik?

   - Hur upplever forskningens tillgänglighet?
- Upplever du själv att du skulle behöva mer kunskap?

11. Övriga tankar kring engelskan i lågstadiet?