Examensarbete
15 högskolepoäng, avancerad nivå

Learner responsibility in the English classroom

Elevansvar i engelskundervisningen

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Foreword

The following paper is the culmination of four and a half years studying and is something very dear to us. Due to working very closely with each other it is difficult to say that someone has written more on any specific part than the other simply because we have been each other's worst critic. In other words the paper is a result of our joint efforts and each of us has written roughly half of each chapter. With the exception of the he first and last chapters which were written together. Main responsibility for the other three chapters is most easily shown by pointing out that Daniel has written the first halves of the chapters whilst Fredrik has written the later halves.

Before continuing to the main event, we would like to acknowledge a number of people whose help and support made this paper possible. First and foremost we would like to thank Bo Lundahl for excellent supervision and help along the way. We would also like to thank friends and family who have helped with proof reading numerous drafts and keeping us on track. Lastly we would like to direct a special thank you to the participants of our empirical study who made this paper possible.

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Abstract

This paper is the result of a case study of learner responsibility in English language teaching at an upper secondary school. With the implementation of Gy11, the new curriculum for the upper secondary school in Sweden, learner responsibility has been introduced as an obligatory goal. However, in the steering documents the concept is not clearly defined. As a result the implementation of learner responsibility is dependent on the interpretation done by the schools. The purpose of this project was to explore how some students, teachers and head teachers perceive learner responsibility in relation to teaching and learning. The empirical study consists of observations and interviews with two head teachers, two teachers and eight students. Our results show that both students and teachers are happy with the opportunities for learner responsibility provided. Furthermore, they highlight it as something important. Both the head teachers and the teachers emphasise the importance to view the implementation of learner responsibility as an on-going process which the teachers are responsible for. In addition the students express that they are more motivated in their English studies as a result of being allowed more influence over their learning process. Lastly, the head teachers highlight motivation and understanding as key factors for learner responsibility.

Key concepts: English 5, upper secondary school, learner responsibility, learner autonomy, learner training.

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1. Introduction

Learner autonomy has long been a popular term in the field of language learning and has given life to new approaches to language teaching. Harmer (2007) suggests that by promoting and helping students develop autonomy it is possible to bypass the limitations of the second language classroom and provide the students with a higher number of opportunities to learn English. The idea of learner autonomy is to encourage students to take more responsibility, create higher awareness of their language learning processes and provide them with the ability and opportunity to take control of it. The Swedish Education Act and the National Curriculum for the upper secondary school advocate that Swedish schools should implement learner responsibility as part of their overall goals (see SFS 2010:800, Skolverket 2013). This is something that is closely related to the democratic values and principles that should imbue all instances of the Swedish school system. Where the previous curriculum put learner responsibility and learner influence forward as something to strive for (Skolverket, 2006), the new one has made it obligatory.

As aspiring language teachers the idea of self-aware learners who are able and willing to take more responsibility; and by default more control of their own learning is something highly alluring. However, even with learner responsibility as a leading goal in the curriculum we have found little research on learner responsibility in upper secondary school settings. Therefore, we feel that a study on how learner responsibility is used and implemented with regard to English language teaching in an upper secondary school environment is relevant.

1.1 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this project was to explore how some students, teachers and the head teacher at an upper secondary school perceive learner responsibility with regard to student learning and how it manifests itself in the teaching process. To achieve the goal of this research project we posed the following research questions:

- How do some students perceive learner responsibility with regard to their learning of English?
- How do some teachers perceive learner responsibility with regard to students' learning of English?
- How does the head-teacher perceive learner responsibility with regard to students' learning?

By including stakeholders at three different levels at the school our ambition was to reflect the situation as accurately as possible in the form of informant triangulation. As such it is important to point out that the different opinions presented by the informants were valued equally.

2. Theoretical framework

In the introduction we briefly mentioned the connection between learner autonomy and learner responsibility, pointing out the central need of learner responsibility for learner autonomy to be achieved. In the following sections we cover concepts and previous research that relates to our field of interest, namely learner autonomy, learner responsibility and learner training.

2.1 Learner autonomy

"Learner autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes" (Bergen, quoted in Dam, 1998, p. 1.)

In an institutional context, the aim is for learners to develop their abilities to plan, as well as carry out and evaluate their language learning with the purpose to develop an understanding about the learning process and responsibility (Rebenius, 2007). When a learner uses autonomous abilities, the learning could be defined as self-directed (Eriksson 1993). However; since it is not an innate ability, developing autonomy is a process that requires time and effort from both teachers and learners. Eriksson (1993) claims that increased learner freedom needs increased responsibility, which requires training: "the development of leaner autonomy is a long, hard and often painful process for the teachers and learners alike" (Dam, 1998, p. 75). As such, Dam (1998) highlights the importance of trust and respect between students and teachers in order for learner autonomy to be possible.

Learner autonomy was introduced in language teaching in the 1980s through the European Council and the cultural organ CDCC (Conseil de la coopération culturelle), with the aim that teaching should focus on the learners' needs and their conditions to create motivation for effective learning (Tholin, 1992). Since 1974, there has been research

regarding learner autonomy at C.R.A.P.E.L (Centre de Recherches et d´Applications Pédagogiques en Langues) in France where Henri Holec has played a central role. Holec claims that autonomy is the opposite of individualisation where the latter term is defined as teachers' construction of working plans based on students' needs (Tholin, 1992). Consequently, the learners become dependent of the teacher rather than taking responsibility for their own learning.

Two significant persons in the Nordic context are Leni Dam and Irma Huttunen. In the mid–1970s, Dam discovered the benefits of giving learners a share of responsibility for planning and conducting classroom activities, resulting in better learning since the students were more actively involved (Dam 1998). In addition, Huttunen highlighted the importance of collective work in schools connected to learner autonomy, since autonomy is not simply about working alone. As such, a common ambition in Finland regarding learner autonomy is to restructure the school and implement the concept in all subjects (Tholin, 1992). Furthermore, Tholin (1992) mentions Rigmor Eriksson as a central person for introducing the concept of learner autonomy and self-directed learning in Sweden. According to Eriksson (1993), students need training in planning, reflecting and evaluating their work. Otherwise there is a risk that the teacher cannot control the classroom situation, since some students may not be ready for the amount of responsibility and freedom given to them. In the 1980s, Eriksson was involved in the GEM (Grouping of pupils in English and Mathematics) project which showed that English lessons were quite teacher-centred and did not allow individualization or learner-centred ways of working (Eriksson, 1993):

> In *GEM – engelska* we claimed that communicative language teaching combined with a certain degree of self-directed learning would be a new and promising approach to individualization (Eriksson, 1993, p. 1).

2.2 Learner responsibility

According to Rebenius (1998), learner responsibility can be defined as the ability "to plan, accomplish and evaluate work" (p. 30. our translation). Thus the learner should take

responsibility for the complete learning process that includes setting up goals as well as choosing working methods and materials.

In 2011 the Swedish school inspectorate conducted a quality evaluation of English language teaching at a compulsory level in which it was concluded that, in most cases, the students were given limited opportunities to take responsibility for their own language learning (Skolinspektionen, 2011). Rather than including the students and taking their input into consideration most classes were based around the teacher's planning with little individual freedom. A possible result of this teacher-centred approach to language teaching can be seen in a study conducted by Terry Lamb (2011) with a group of second language learners in the UK. Lamb (2011) explores the relationship between learner identity, autonomy and motivation and concludes that the students' motivation and willingness to take responsibility for their language learning decreased with increased teacher control. The students expressed discontent and wanted more control over choices concerning their learning process. This highlights the connection between motivation and learner responsibility. Since the students did not see the point of the exercises they were not motivated to do them. By involving students in the decision-making process in order to provide them with a greater understanding of the goals and reasons behind different tasks students are more likely to take greater responsibility for their learning. However, Lamb (2011) points out that not all learners are ready to take responsibility for their learning and highlights the importance of creating a nurturing classroom environment where students are allowed to grow "through the use of appropriate forms of learning training" (p. 79).

In her study Dovemark (2007) explored a number of different aspects that affect the school at the compulsory level, one of these being responsibility. Dovemark (2007) mentions that one of the positive outcomes of learner responsibility is an increased sense of participation for the learners, as well as possibilities for them to show their efforts. On the other hand, learners may feel that responsibility for succeeding or not is only in their hands, since the meaning of responsibility is not always obvious to them (Dovemark, 2007). Expectations about the ability to take responsibility sometimes resulted in feelings of guilt among the learners, when the goals set by the school were not achieved. One of the learners, interviewed by Dovemark, expressed that every student in her class was given equal opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and those who didn't

accomplish their work only had themselves to blame. From this student's perspective, decreased teacher control provided herself and her classmates with a big opportunity to show their accomplishments, since it required learner responsibility. On the other hand, another student claimed that this free method of working did not suit everyone in the class (Dovemark, 2007). As such, it connects to the dilemma of whether the students are able to take responsibility for their own learning, as opposed to being held responsible by their teachers.

Another previous study on learner responsibility was conducted by Åsa Söderström (2006) with the purpose to explore learners' and teachers' view on learner responsibility at a compulsory level in a Nordic context. Söderström's findings show that the majority of teachers and students agree that the view of responsibility for learning is built on a traditional view; where students are being held responsible in relation to the rules and assignments set by the teachers. As such, learners feel that they take responsibility for their own learning mainly by doing what is expected of them. However, if the goal is to achieve increased learner responsibility, then schools need to increase the sense of freedom, motivation and participation among the learners (Söderström, 2006).

David Little (1995) also highlights the need to make a distinction between two different dimensions of learner autonomy: pedagogical and communicative autonomy. In other words, there is a need to make a distinction between language learning and language use and how they relate to learner responsibility. In the Swedish curriculum what learner responsibility entails is very vaguely described which has resulted in learner responsibility often boiling down to choosing material and coming to class in time (Tholin, 2001). Éva Illés (2013) directs similar criticism to the idea of learner autonomy, highlighting the need for a change to the main notion of language learning to focus not only on the process of language learning but also on language use. Illés (2013) argues for a change from the current focus on the learning process to also include a focus on language use to better prepare learners for communication in an international setting with English as a Lingua Franca. Furthermore she points out that there is a need for someone with pedagogic competence to select suitable materials to accommodate different groups of learners. Rather than focusing on transferring power to the students, the teacher needs to choose and devise tasks that function to challenge students in order to activate their own sense of problem-

solving, thus creating knowledge and an ability to make use of their language in order to solve a problem (Illés, 2013).

2.3 Learner training

Little (1995) suggests that "the basis of learner autonomy is that the learner accepts responsibility for his or her learning"(p. 175). In other words to achieve learner autonomy the learner must be willing to accept that responsibility. However, Little (1995) also points out that it is unlikely that learners will or have the ability to take full responsibility for their learning - unless the teacher provides them with appropriate help in the form of tools and opportunities to practice it. This puts an emphasis on the need to have a dialogue between the teacher and the learners. It also ties back to the nurturing classroom environment mentioned by Lamb. According to Rebenius (2007), one of the paradoxes with learner autonomy is the claim that learner autonomy cannot be transferred from teacher to student, while on the other hand, learners need to be taught how to be autonomous. In other words, autonomy requires learner training, where the aim is for the learner to develop an ability to learn. Thus, the primary purpose of learner training is for the learner to improve the ability to manage and take responsibility for the learning process. In order to achieve this, the education needs to be organised in a way that allows for learner training to happen (Rebenius, 2007). Nunan (1999) suggests that learner autonomy can be developed in nine steps:

Step 1: Make instruction goals clear to learners

Step 2: Allow learners to create their own goals

Step 3: Encourage learners to use their second language outside the classroom

Step 4: Raise awareness of learning processes

Step 5: Help learners identify their own preferred styles and strategies

Step 6: Encourage learner choice

Step 7: Allow learners to generate their own tasks

Step 8: Encourage learners to become teachers

Step 9: Encourage learners to become researchers

(pp. 17– 23)

The nine steps represent the gradual development towards learner autonomy starting with involving the learner in the selection of content and helping them develop an awareness of how language is learnt. Steps eight and nine represent the ideal to strive towards with learners able to make the language learning process their own, creating a sense of achievement and an ability to make use of the language to grow further (Nunan, 1999).

A prominent figure in working with learner autonomy in a Swedish context is Jörgen Tholin who has suggested a model somewhat similar to Nunan's steps. Tholin (1992) describes his model as a continuous loop of four different phases: planning, carrying out, accounting for and evaluating their work. In these steps the students are allowed to plan their work and carry out their predetermined plan as well as account for their work process and finally evaluate their work. Tholin highlights the importance for learners to document their progress. This is done partly in the form of evaluation sheets and planning forms but more importantly through a diary. The diary functions as a portfolio. It contains not only the students' reflections of their language learning but also continuous documentation of their work, providing them with an opportunity to see their development. It is important to point out that Tholin's model is directed towards compulsory school students. However, it can easily be adapted and used at a higher level as shown by Rebenius (1998) in her work with learner autonomy in adult education. Rebenius (1998) makes use of the same model with the addition of a contract in which the student groups agree to a number of rules they decide on.

Tholin mentions that his model is somewhat inspired by Dam's model *the flower* (see figure 6.). The purpose of Dam's model is to act as a helpful planning model for learner training. The flower consists of different petals that unify and influence each other, even though they are separate units of the planning area. Dam suggests starting by filling in the aims and work through the other petals from there. However, depending on the lesson activity the flower can be entered from any point that is most suitable (Dam, 1998). The main advantage of using the flower model is that it functions as a planning checklist (Dam, 1998). In addition, it also highlights factors, made by negotiations between teacher and students as well as between the students themselves in the classroom (Tholin, 1992). The teacher and learners have different roles, yet there is a need for negotiation between the two in order for a learning situation to be successful. The teacher should provide learners with

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information regarding the learning process as well as stimulating it by introducing the elements required. On the other hand, learners should be willing to be active as participants as well as taking personal responsibility for their learning process. Furthermore, the aims, objectives and evaluation are to be negotiated by learners and teachers alike. As such, Dam's model highlights the importance of learner responsibility and the fact that it is an ability that requires training as well as support from an adviser. In addition, it also highlights important factors such as choice of material and how the activities are carried out.

Figure 6   "The Flower"
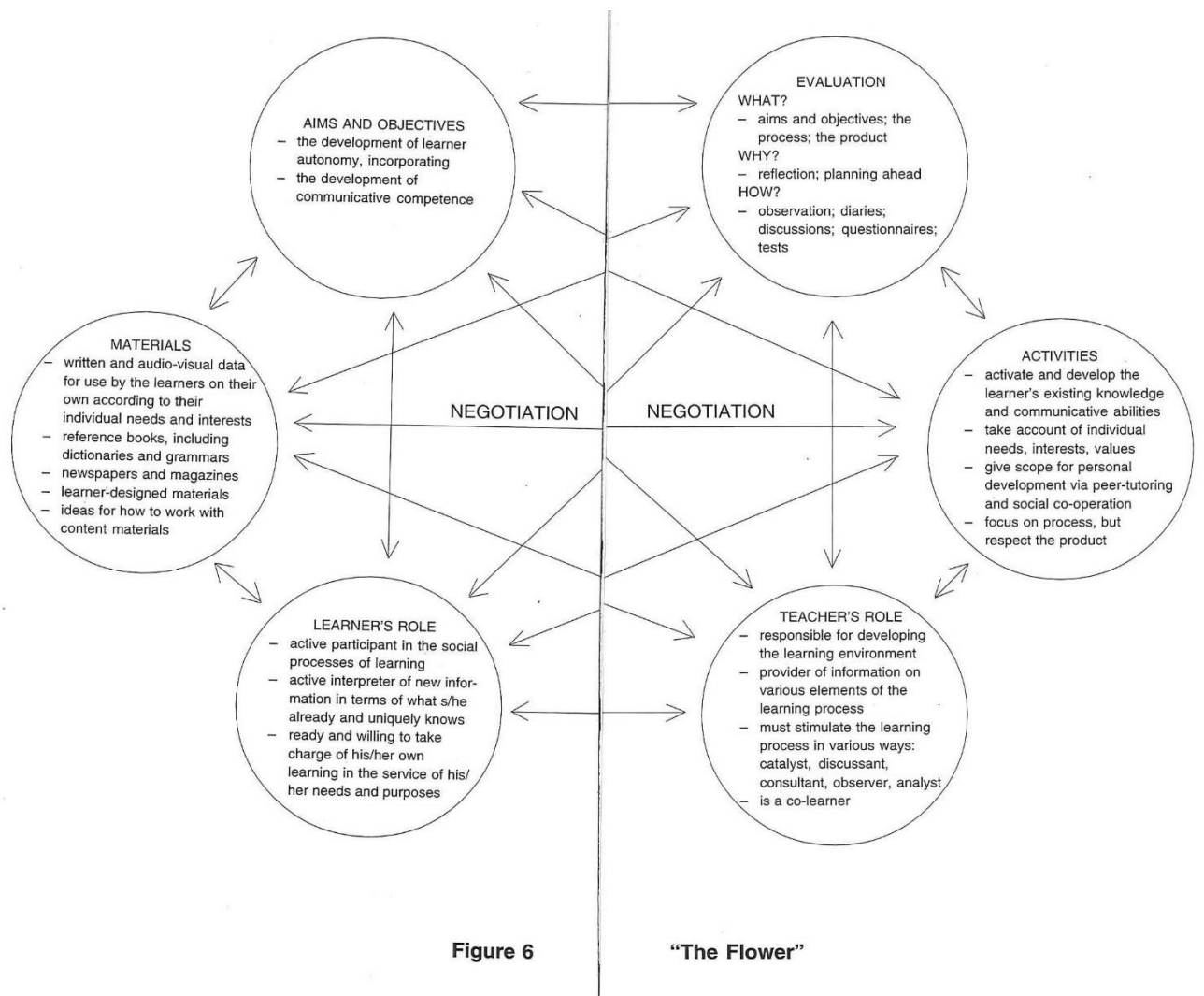
(Dam 1998, pp. 46–47)

However, as mentioned in the beginning of this section, one of the most common objections against learner autonomy, as pointed out by Rebenius (2007), is the pedagogic paradox: how learner independence and responsibility can be encouraged in education when schools or education authorities are imposing it on the students? In other words, it is a conflict regarding whether the learners are being responsible or are being held responsible (Bacon, 1993, as cited in Söderström, 2006). By putting an emphasis on learner training and allowing for learner responsibility to gradually grow this issue can be bypassed; and instead place an emphasis on the learning process, the goal being learners that are able to take responsibility and continue to learn when school is over.

3. Research methodology

The aim of our research project is to explore how students, teachers and the head-teacher perceive the use of learner responsibility with regard to English language teaching at an upper secondary school in Scania. Since we wanted to focus on valid data we concluded that a descriptive case study with a qualitative approach was the most suitable. The qualitative approach allowed us to focus on the participants' individual perceptions, concerning the phenomenon of study (Heigham & Croker, 2009). The overall aim of the qualitative approach is to explore and understand human behaviour in certain social settings. As such, the focus is on the participants and how they interact and respond to a phenomenon within their natural setting.

   Qualitative research is usually exploratory, where the aim is to discover ideas or produce new theories rather than drawing generalized conclusions or trying to predict future happenings (Heigham & Croker, 2009). In order to make the social setting visible and understandable there is a need to collect multiple amounts of data. Holliday suggests that "As the data is collected it begins to indicate a picture of what is going on" (2010, p. 99). However, since qualitative research mainly is focused on human activity and expressions there is a need for subjective judgement when describing, analysing and interpreting the collected data, since everything is not observable (Hatch, 2002). Researchers also bring past life experiences with them when performing research sessions, which may influence the perception and understanding of the research setting. Consequently, it is essential to be aware of how one's own identity may colour what is being perceived. Furthermore, the issue can be dealt with using triangulation, which allows the researcher to obtain various perspectives by using different methods for gathering data such as interviews and observations (Heigham & Croker, 2009).

3.1 Data collection

As the main method of data collection we conducted interviews with some teachers, the head teacher and some students currently teaching, or studying, at the school in question. This corresponds to the purpose of our project and functions to provide us with important insight into people's perceptions (Heigham & Croker, 2009). The interviews were semi-structured and followed an interview guide with predetermined questions meant to function as a help throughout the interviews. Hatch (2002) refers to the semi-structured approach as an interview form that is planned but at the same time allows for an amount of flexibility that allows the interview to evolve depending on the answers given. The interviews with the teachers and the head teachers were conducted individually and in pairs respectively while on the other hand, the student interviews were conducted in groups. Wray & Bloomer (2012) point out that one of the benefits of this approach is that group interviews can become more in-depth with individuals bouncing ideas amongst each other. However, they also point out that you run the risk that one individual influences the group in a certain direction or inhibits the others from speaking their mind. Another benefit with this format is that it functions to decrease the pressure on the individual students.

For the purpose of collecting complementary data in addition to the interviews, a series of observations were performed during English lesson activities in classroom environments. Hatch (2002) points out that the goal of observation is to "understand the culture, setting, or social phenomenon being studied from the perspectives of the participants" (p. 72). With this in mind, our overall aim was to gain a better understanding of the classroom environment with focus on learner responsibility. According to Hatch (2002), one of the advantages of direct observations is that they allow the researcher to gain a better contextual understanding, as well as providing the opportunity to notice things that may be taken for granted by the participants and therefore may not be highlighted during an interview. With the purpose to retain focus as well as to avoid the risk of having an impact on the setting, we decided to take on the role of complete observers with no involvement level in the lesson activities, thus the observations were of a non-participant nature (Heigham & Croker, 2009).

Hatch (2002) raises the issue of intrusiveness during observations and the weight of how complete observers decrease the risk of having an impact on the social setting if the goal is to capture natural occurring activities. According to Bell (2010), solo observers risk the possibility of bias and misinterpretation during observation since the material is filtered by personal interpretations. However, since both of us were present during the observations the risk is decreased. While performing our observations we decided to document our data collection through field notes, using an observation schedule as our foundation with the purpose to keep focus on specific happenings regarding learner responsibility during the observations. Hatch (2002) claims that it is impossible for observers to capture everything that happens, regardless of the situation, thus it becomes essential for the researcher not to worry about capturing everything that is going on in the setting, but instead focusing on recording what was at the heart of the study.

3.2 Sampling

Sampling is an essential part when deciding on informants for any study and when interviews are the main method of data gathering the selection of participants becomes more important (Hatch, 2002). For the purpose of this project we decided on the use of criterion based samples i.e. teachers of English at the particular school and students who study English at an upper secondary level (Hatch, 2002). Due to the limited time frame we decided to interview two teachers and a total of eight students, in addition to the head teacher. The two teachers involved were selected from a group of volunteers that responded positively to our request. The eight students were selected among volunteers from the teachers' two classes based on the premise that they are currently studying English 5. Furthermore, the head teacher was selected due to her position as the leading figure of the school in question, however, at the time of the interview we also included one of her closest colleagues on her request. This resulted in a group interview. The selection of students from the two different groups was made at random since they fulfilled the criteria. It is important to point out that one of us has previously been in contact with some teachers and students at

the school. In the name of trustworthiness these teachers and students were therefore disregarded in the sampling process.

3.3 Presentation of the interviewees

The following short presentations are meant to give a basic idea of who the interviewees are and their previous experiences. In order to ensure the interviewees' anonymity their names have been replaced. We start with presenting the two head teachers before continuing with the teachers, lastly we introduce the two student groups.

The head teacher, *Daisy*, has been working as the head teacher at the school for ten years and has previously held a similar position in another municipality. She pointed out that she has worked as a leader at all the different levels in the Swedish educational system and that she first started out as a compulsory teacher. Daisy's colleague, *Donald*, has worked at the school for six years, three as a teacher and three as a principal. He has previously had a number of different occupations but this is his first employment after graduating as a teacher.

The two teachers involved are both teachers of Swedish and English at two different programmes at the school, both with a vocational focus. *Elvira* has been a teacher for nearly 30 years and has been teaching at school for nine years and counting. During her time at the school she has taught at two different programmes, including the one she is at currently, both vocational. She pointed out that she has never worked as a teacher below the upper secondary level. *Minnie* has been working as a teacher for 13 years, eight of which she has been teaching at the same school as Elvira. Before that she worked as a compulsory school teacher of Swedish and English. She expressed that she wanted a new challenge and decided to return to school and graduate as an upper secondary school teacher. In addition to her position as a teacher of English and Swedish she also works as the team leader for the team of teachers involved in her programme. Similar to Elvira she has also worked at different programmes at the school.

Since the students were interviewed in groups we have chosen not to probe any further into their backgrounds, but rather focus on their present roles as students. Therefore we

have chosen to present the groups rather than the students individually. Both groups consisted of four students from the respective teacher's first grade classes. It is important to point out that at the time of our investigation the students had only been at the school for four weeks. However, we do not see this as a problem since this means that they are able to make comparisons with their previous school experiences still fresh. Furthermore, this is also a question of practicality, since the students only study English during the first year if they do not choose English 6 as an extra subject.

3.4 The school environment

Our case study is located at a public upper secondary school in Scania. The school offers four different national programmes, two of which are vocational. In addition to the national programmes the school also offers adult education (Komvux) in a wide range of subjects as well as a number of full vocational training programmes. They also give courses in Swedish as a second language (SFI) and have special units to accommodate for individuals with special needs, both at the upper secondary and adult education level. The school also provides student housing during school days to students that do not live nearby at an additional fee as to offer an alternative to travel back and forth. A quality report conducted at the school in 2012 shows that at the time the student body consisted of about 500 students at the upper secondary level. The teaching staff is divided up into ten different teams that function individually on a day-to-day basis. It is important to note that due to the nature of the programmes the school premises are placed in different areas in and outside of town with a main building functioning as a central hub with administrative personnel.

3.5 Procedures

Our observations were conducted during two separate sessions, one English lesson for each class. The participants were informed of who we were when we first entered the classroom and told that we were only there to see how they worked. As mentioned earlier, we opted to

function as non-participant observers therefore we took no active part in the teaching but rather acted as flies on the wall. The purpose of the observations was first and foremost to describe the physical setting but also to get insight into the actual teaching in the classroom. With this in mind we focused our observation around the following aspects: material, method, interaction and classroom environment.

Before conducting the interviews the individuals selected were provided with a sheet of paper presenting the study but also describing research ethics and ensuring the participants' anonymity (see attachment 1–3). The student interviews were conducted in a separate room in order to make the students feel more comfortable but also to keep the interviews from disturbing their lesson further. Additionally, during the interviews the participants were offered a light snack to lighten any possible tension. The interviews were recorded in order to allow us to focus fully on the interview and allow for analysis at a later time without missing anything. The interviews themselves followed a predetermined set of questions in the form off an interview guide (see attachment 4–6) that functioned to lead the conversation forward. For the teacher interviews we included a number of background questions meant to create a rapport and to warm-up the interviewees. Given that we conducted group interviews we decided not to make use of straightforward background questions. Instead we made use of a more conversational approach.

The interview guide is divided up into three different dimensions: what is learner responsibility, basis for responsibility and responsibility in practice. These categories were chosen due to the nature of the questions in order to simplify the analytical process and organize the data collected. The first category includes questions on the interviewees' perception of the area. As such, the aim of the questions was to provide us with an insight into how different stakeholders understand the concept of learner responsibility. The questions in the next category aimed to explore what conditions the school and teachers offer to provide the students with possibilities for learner responsibility. Finally, the last category concerns questions related to how the interviewees perceive learner responsibility is used in the school context with the focus on English. Once all the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and stored for further analysis.

3.6 Research ethics

With ethical considerations in mind, the school where we perform our field research, as well as all participants involved are guaranteed confidentiality, and they are therefore not presented in an identifiable form (Bell, 2010). Furthermore, since our interview questions are not of any ethically sensitive nature, and all the interviewees are over the age of 15, any parents' consent was not required before we conducted the interviews (Vetenskapsrådet 1990).

When selecting the interviewees ethical considerations regarding participant consent were considered. As such, the participants were selected on a voluntary basis. In addition, all participants were informed about their rights to withdraw their participation at any time if requested (Vetenskapsrådet, 1990).

4. Results and analysis

In the following chapter we present the results from our empirical study starting with the observations, before continuing on with the data gathered from the interviews. We will also relate our results to previous research and highlight differences and similarities.

4.1 Results of the observation

Our first observations session was done with Elvira's class. The lesson we observed was part of a three-hour long morning session with a break in the middle, and we arrived shortly before the break to scout out the classroom. The classroom in question is spacious and well lit with benches placed in groups. The students also have personal lockers for their things inside the classroom. An interesting detail is that it is in direct connection to the workshop which results in a study environment similar to their future work places. The connection between education and the work place is further strengthened by a set of work place rules. Before going into detail on the actual lesson there is a need to highlight the programme's specific approach to teaching. Rather than having allotted time slots for all subjects the students are given the opportunity to choose from a range of different subjects depending on what they have to do. This is done at the start of the day by making use of a planning sheet that the students themselves fill in (see attachment 7).

When the lesson started after the break the students started working without the teacher telling them what to do. Half of the students were working with their work book whilst the others were working with assignments outside the book in question. All in all six students were working with English during our observation. The rest of the class had math with another teacher in the workshop area. However, some of the students decided to change the subject they were working with after half of the lesson had passed.

Throughout the lesson Elvira adopted an active teacher role where she went around in the classroom and asked the students about what they were working with and if they needed

any help. She also encouraged students to find solutions and strategies to bypass difficulties. In order to help the students do this they were given access to resources such as dictionaries and computers. The interaction with the students was conducted in English to the extent that it was possible.

Our second session was during one of Minnie's English classes. Similar to our first session we arrived briefly before the lesson started in order to become acquainted with the environment. At that time some of the students had already arrived to the classroom. The students were seated at tables in rows turned towards the whiteboard and the classroom gave a strict impression. Similar to Elvira's classroom the students had lockers with their school books and various items inside the classroom. The team of teachers Minnie belongs to has a more traditional teaching approach with the different subjects allotted separate time slots.

When the lesson started the teacher took attendance and we briefly introduced ourselves to the class, which was made up of eleven students. The lesson then proceeded with the introduction of a new assignment. This was done orally in addition to a hand-out. The students were asked to read an introduction text aloud in the order they were seated. Then they were given time to have a discussion amongst themselves, focused on their personal opinion on subject, in this case books and reading. During this part of the lesson the teacher actively encouraged the students to speak English and focused on praising them when they did well, rather than pointing out their mistakes. The group then went through the instructions for the assignment, which also included connections to the syllabus. During the last part of the lesson the students were given time to choose a book from the school library. Their chosen books would function as a basis for their reading journal. During this particular lesson we got to see a more teacher-centred approach to English teaching. The teacher provided the students with an assignment to work with during the lesson. Similar to our first observation all interaction with the students was done in English with a few clarifications done in Swedish.

4.2 Reflections on the observations

The two different sessions provide two distinctly different sides of English teaching. On the one hand, we have the workshop approach used by Elvira where students are tasked with planning their school day and what they are going to work with. The students are allowed to switch the subject they are working with throughout the lesson, resulting in a flexible learning environment that can be adapted to accommodate what the students feel they need to work with. Our second session on the other hand shows a more teacher-centred teacher approach where the students follow the teacher's planning and work with an assignment they are given. The students are given limited opportunities to exert influence on the work at hand. However, this can be a coincidence since we have only observed one lesson. Unfortunately, due to circumstances outside of our control we could not visit Minnie a second time.

Another apparent difference that can be seen between the two different sessions is the degree of integration of the programme in the English language education. The teachers of the first group are working towards replicating a similar work environment to the one the students will face when they graduate. They encourage the students to take personal responsibility for their planning as long as they get the work done. Furthermore, the material and assignments the students work with seems to be chosen, or created, with the programme in mind. As a result they utilize a specialized text book for English. It would be unfair to assume that the second group is without programme integration based on one lesson alone. However, they do not have the same possibilities as the first group due to the placement of their classroom and the nature of the programme. It is important to keep in mind that both student groups have only studied at the school for four weeks, this could function as limiting factor on their opportunities to exert influence over their work as they are getting accustomed to a new school form.

4.3 Results of the student interviews

The results of the student interviews are divided up into three different categories following the same structure as the interview guide. Furthermore, even though the two different programmes have different approaches to teaching the student groups are similar to each other and as such the results will be presented together. Additionally, for the sake of convenience, Minnie's group will henceforth be referred to as group one and Elvira's group as group two.

4.3.1 What is learner responsibility?

When asked what personal responsibility meant for them we received a wide range of answers, most referred to practicalities such as going to class, being on time but also bringing the materials meant to be used during class. In the context of English language learning student group one emphasized that you show responsibility for your own learning if you come to class and work with the assignments you are given. The students in group two mentioned the same, but also highlighted that you show that you take responsibility for your learning when you plan your own work, finish it and then evaluate it by the end of the day. They continued and explained that they are allowed to choose from a range of different exercises which they then can continue to work with in any order they see fit or as one student put it "we don't have goals of what to achieve after each lesson, rather for what we need to do over the whole term" (Student interview, 2013-09-17, our translation).

Even though the two student groups' opinions differed on some things, both shared the fact that they are feeling more motivated to take a greater responsibility of their learning. Something that is partly achieved due to the teachers' efforts to make sure that the material and tasks used is focused on their specific programs. This also ties into the fact that students have chosen to study at the program out of their own free will. One student, in group one, mentioned that she rarely attended English lessons previously but feels motivated to do so now "I want to, I mean this is something I want to work with" (Student

interview, 2013-09-19, our translation). However, both groups also mentioned that they felt a greater need to take responsibility for their English language learning since the teachers do not keep track of them in the same way as previously. In addition, to the effect of the teachers, they also pointed out that attitudes among parents and friends is a major influence on their willingness to take responsibility for their learning. Some students from both groups also mentioned that living away from home makes you take more responsibility in general but made no connections to learning English. An additional factor mentioned is the importance of English for their future careers. Students from both groups pointed to the relevance of English as a part of their future jobs:

English is important in itself. […]With engineering books in mind or maybe not books but manuals. (Student interview, 2013-09-17, our translation)

If you are going to work at a Zoo it is also very important to have that qualification and be able to speak English. (Student interview, 2013-09-19, our translation)

Since they are able to see the connection between studying English and their future profession they feel more obliged to take responsibility for it. The teachers were also mentioned when the students groups were asked about what factors they feel affect them to take responsibility. They pointed out the fact that they are given some freedom within the teaching and thus allowed to take full responsibility for parts of their own learning. Furthermore the students from group two also mentioned that they are encouraged to find solutions to problems they encounter on their own instead of always turning to the teacher first.

4.3.2 Possibilities for learner responsibility

Minnie's students mentioned that they have study workshops where they are allowed to choose freely what they want to work with without teacher involvement. One of the

students pointed out that this can be seen as an opportunity for the teachers to see if the students are able to take responsibility. Student group two mentioned that they feel their teachers are competent and teach in a way that makes sense, referring back to their teaching format. They also pointed out that the planning matrix plays a central part in helping them structure their learning but also helps them to take control over their learning process.

Furthermore, when the students were asked to compare learner responsibility at the upper secondary level with the compulsory level a majority of the students, in both groups, answered that they need to take more responsibility now. Students from both groups mentioned that their previous teachers were more willing to provide them with tasks and then continuously follow-up until they were finished, highlighting the teacher's role for learner responsibility. One student from group two also mentioned that a big difference can be seen in the way tasks are presented:

> We know what needs to be done, previously you just brought your books, sat down and started working with something and then talked for the rest of the lesson. (Student interview, 2013-09-17, our translation)

The student referred to the content of the overall English course and how the different parts relate to each other.

4.3.3 Learner responsibility in practice

When asked how they take responsibility for their own learning the students referred back to the answers they gave at the start of the interview and put an emphasis on actual classroom work. This includes things such as be on time, bring the material, focus on the lesson, not disturbing classmates and active participation. The students in group two added their process of planning and evaluating their own work. They also pointed out that the teachers are involved by following-up and signing the individual planning and evaluation sheets at the end of the day.

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Lastly when asked if they wanted to take more responsibility for their English learning the majority of the students mentioned that they are satisfied with the way it is at the moment. However, in group one, one student expressed a wish to have more time in the study workshop in order to have more time to plan the work individually.

4.4 Analysis of the student interviews

Through the results gathered from the student interviews we can see that learner responsibility can be perceived differently. Throughout the two group interviews a focus is put on practicalities such as coming to class and do what is expected of them during the lesson. These results are somewhat similar to Söderström (2006), who in her study of learner responsibility at the compulsory level found that students functioned more as consumers of teacher's planning. In accordance with the two dimensions presented by Little (1995) these would refer to pedagogical autonomy, i.e. the students are able to take responsibility for their learning of the language. Given that the students have studied at the upper secondary level for a limited time their previous experiences are likely to influence them in this regard. This interpretation is also supported by the report from the School inspectorate mentioned earlier in this paper. However, we can also see examples of students taking responsibility for planning, doing and evaluating their language learning. Furthermore, one of the student groups also pointed out that they are encouraged to find solutions to problems they encounter in their learning process. Something that can be seen as the first step towards creating communicative autonomy and an increased ability to use the target language, in this case English (see Little, 1995 & Illés, 2013).

Similar to Lamb's (2011) study our results show a close connection between motivation and students' willingness and ability to take responsibility for their own learning process. Some students pointed out that they previously did not take any responsibility for their learning since they failed to see the point of doing so. They pointed out that by integrating their programme focus in the English classroom their motivation has increased greatly and want to take responsibility for their learning. The students also pointed out that they feel a need to take more responsibility for their learning since the teachers do not exert as much

control on the working process. Rather than forcing students to do assignments in a specific order or in a certain way the teachers provide them with freedom as long as they are done. This can be referred back to the nurturing classroom ideal presented by Lamb (2011) where students are given space and freedom to grow towards becoming responsible learners with the teacher's help. In our two cases the teachers are defined as competent and central figures providing the students with ample support but also opportunities to take control of their learning.

As we have seen from previous research it is important to see the development of learner responsibility as an on-going process rather than an all-or-nothing concept (see Nunan, 1999). With this in mind, it is apparent that both student groups feel that it is important to take responsibility and influence their language learning process. However, at this stage their idea of learner responsibility is to a greater extent focused on direct pedagogical implications rather than exerting influence over their language learning process as a whole. As mentioned earlier they have only studied at the upper secondary level for a short period of time and can therefore be said to be still acclimatising to the new environment and as such are limited in their influence. A quality report conducted at the school in 2012 suggests that a clear majority (71,2%) of the students feel that they are given opportunities to plan and take responsibility for their own learning. Therefore it is not unreasonable to assume that the two student groups that participated in our study will develop a similar attitude over time.

Lastly, the differences that can be seen in the two groups' different perceptions of learner responsibility can be attributed to the different teaching approached applied. Another possibility that needs to be considered is also the readiness amongst the students based on their previous experiences.

4.5 Results of the teacher interviews

Similar to the other interviews the teacher interviews are divided into three different categories. As such, the results of the interviews are presented one category at a time.

4.5.1 What is learner responsibility?

When we asked the teachers how they perceived the concept of responsibility, connected to what is stated in the curriculum they both referred to students' abilities to take responsibility for their own learning. Furthermore, both teachers claimed that learner responsibility in English is not very different from other subjects. However, Minnie pointed out that responsibility alone is not always enough to achieve good learning results: "There are students that take a lot of responsibility, yet they fail. So obviously, it also has to do with subject skills" (Teacher interview, 2013-09-19, our translation). She also mentioned that the weaker students can show responsibility by asking the teacher for help when struggling with an assignment. Active participation during the lesson and keeping themselves up to date with what to work with, are also contributing factors for responsibility.

Elvira mentioned that learners show responsibility by taking initiatives and showing ability to plan their work. Similar to Minnie, she also highlighted learners' ability to solve problems as a way of taking responsibility, as opposed to just wait for help from the teacher. In addition, she mentioned that responsibility also has to do with maturity and that teachers should prepare students for adulthood in parallel with teaching them subject specific knowledge.

4.5.2 Possibilities for learner responsibility

Both Minnie and Elvira claimed that responsibility should be a mutual process between the teacher and the students. Minnie expressed that she would like to provide her students with more opportunities to take responsibility, however, she pointed out that it is difficult for the learners to decide the content of an English lesson and that it requires training. The actual teaching should be her responsibility while the students should contribute by being actively involved. An example would be to be to speak in class even though social pressure from other students may be present "as a student you have the responsibility to make sure that if your English speaking abilities need improvement, you need to speak" (Teacher interview, 2013-09-19, our translation). Elvira also pointed out that she has the overall responsibility. However, all individuals have their own personal responsibility to bear. Furthermore, she expressed that it was her job to make sure that the responsibility was evenly distributed in the classroom.

According to Elvira, the school also offers many possibilities for the students to take responsibility outside the classroom, such as being part of a student council. Furthermore, she mentioned that a key factor for responsibility is curiosity that can be stimulated due to the nature of the vocational programmes. As such, much of the literature and learning material is connected to the orientation of the vocational programme. To provide the learners with possibilities to work around their problems the school offers resources such as computers and special pedagogic support. In addition the school also offers possibilities for a study workshop one day per week, where the students themselves have the responsibility to prioritise their work. Elvira also mentioned that due to the vocational nature of the programme, the students feel that they are seen and accepted for who they are since they share a common interest.

Minnie mentioned that her students are welcome to offer suggestions for classroom activities, thus they are given possibilities for taking own responsibility. However, she chooses the majority of the material and similar to Elvira the students mainly work with a textbook, with some texts suited for the orientation of the vocational programme. Minnie explained that the students are working with one chapter per week. However, it should be mentioned that she has only been teaching the class for about approximately one month and

they are therefore still in a running-in period. Furthermore Minnie pointed out that she usually works with different tasks and assignments that need to be handed in or be accounted for by the learners. The deadline for handing in work is quite flexible since she does not want to close any doors if a student missed the deadline. As such, the students are given the responsibility to make sure that their work is handed in and Minnie usually takes on a teacher role where she is reminding and supporting the students.

Similar to Minnie, Elvira explained that she chooses what material the students should work with, but the students are given freedom and responsibility within the different assignments. "For example it says: a letter. Then they get to conduct the letter themselves with some guidance" (Teacher interview, 2013-09-17, our translation). Furthermore, Elvira mentioned that in order to teach the learners to take responsibility there needs to be a constant discussion between the students and herself. They sometimes need guidance from her regarding their progression and how to look forward. However, she also highlighted the importance of students expressing a long-term goal, since they need to think about their future and what they should do after their graduation.

4.5.3 Learner responsibility in practice

When asked how students take own responsibility for their learning of English, Minnie mentioned that they show responsibility by doing their homework. It becomes a way for her to check whether they have taken responsibility for their studies or not. By handing in assignments and improving them based on her comments they also show responsibility. Furthermore, she highlighted that students need to expose themselves to English outside the school environment through music, films or reading. Minnie also expressed that she would like to improve her written evaluations after finishing a project with the students. However, she pointed out that she provides the learners with an opportunity to evaluate the course themselves, when the course is finished. Elvira explained that a way for students to show responsibility is by being aware of what to do and by continue to work with their assignments. She also pointed out that English is not always the learners' favourite subject since their main interest is towards the orientation of the vocational programme. However,

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she expressed that the teacher needs to make students aware of the importance of passing every subject. By creating an environment with kind treatment and where students enjoy themselves, Elvira believes that it is possible to get the students to enjoy the subject. She also explained that her students only read English 5 as an obligatory subject during their first grade at the upper secondary level, and a few of them choose to continue with English 6 from there.

When asked what may affect students to take responsibility for their learning, Elvira mentioned that one contributing factor is the feeling of becoming equal with the other classmates and getting a grade. She also explained that the learners are not given anything beside the frames of the assignments, thus they have to plan and carry out the work themselves. Elvira mentioned that she also works with assessment matrixes with the purpose for the students to evaluate their own work. The planning stage for their work in English is made in consultation with Elvira on a daily basis. Every afternoon the students evaluate what they have done during the day and what they have learned. As such, it becomes a way for them to reflect on their own learning. "Did it turn out good or bad? Why did it turn out the way it did and how can the knowledge be used in the future" (Interview with teacher, 2013-09-17, our translation).

Similar to Elvira, Minnie also mentioned getting a grade as a motivating factor for the students to take responsibility for their learning. Furthermore she pointed out that her role as a teacher is important. As such, she tries to create lessons that are interesting and meaningful for the learners. She highlighted the importance of creating situations where students understand the importance of English in relation to themselves. Consequently, she connects her activities to the curriculum and explains to the students why they are working with specific assignments.

4.6 Analysis of the teacher interviews

According to the teachers, learner responsibility is connected to active participation as well as the ability to take initiatives. Furthermore, they also draw connections between responsibility and the ability for learners to plan and evaluate their work. This corresponds

to Rebenius' (2007) definition where planning, accomplish and evaluating work are mentioned as three essential cornerstones for learner responsibility. However, as previously mentioned, Dam (1998) suggests that responsibility should be perceived as a negotiation of meaning between students and the teacher. This is a concept that is apparent in the interviews where both teachers claimed that responsibility is in the hands of both teachers and students. In addition, one of the teachers highlighted the importance of learners exposing themselves to English outside the classroom environment. This is also apparent in Dam's (1998) model where she claims that an autonomous learner should be able to take responsibility for his own learning in favour for his own purposes and needs.

Similar to how Illés (2013) mentions that the pedagogical responsibility for selecting material should be in the hands of a person with pedagogic competence, since it might be difficult for the students to decide, both Elvira and Minnie feel that they have the overall responsibility in the classroom as well as for the selection of material. The students show responsibility by being actively involved and making sure that they keep themselves up to date with what they need to work with. In addition, as highlighted in the results of the interviews, the learners are given various amount of freedom within the assignments as well as opportunities to offer suggestions for classroom activities. Furthermore, the interviews show that both teachers select course material based on the orientation of the vocational programme, in order to stimulate the interest of the learners thus creating a higher degree of motivation. Elvira also highlighted that the learners' common interest for the vocational programme creates a feeling of belonging, since the students feel that they are seen and accepted. This is similar to Lamb (2011) and how motivation can generate an increased sense of responsibility. If students are motivated they are more likely to take more responsibility for their learning.

However, Lamb (2011) suggests that not all students are ready to take responsibility for their learning, since it is a process that requires time and effort. As such the nurturing classroom is crucial since it allows the learners to increase their abilities to take responsibility. In addition, Dam (1998) mentions that developing learner autonomy is a long process that demands trust and respect between the teacher and learners. This is apparent in the interview where both teachers also mentioned that learner responsibility is a process that requires practice and that the teacher's role is to support and guide the students.

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Tholin (1992) puts an emphasis on that learners should document their progress through evaluation sheets or planning forms, since it allow them to reflect on their learning development. Referring to the answers submitted by both Elvira and Minnie it is clear that both of them provide the students with possibilities for evaluation and planning opportunities. Minnie mentioned that she makes use of course evaluations by the end of the course where the learners are able to evaluate the course as well as their work. In addition, Elvira explained her use of development plans, where students plan and evaluate their work progress on a daily basis. It is clear that her view on using development plans is positive since she highlights the benefits of using them, namely that it allows the students to reflect on their learning process. It should however be mentioned that development plans are applied throughout the school, in all subjects. In the quality report (2012) it is also evident that the teachers at the school have a positive view on the use of development plans, since they support the development of learner responsibility.

4.7 Results of the head teacher interview

Similar to the other interviews we have divided up the results in accordance with the categories presented in the interview guide. It is important to bear in mind that since the head teachers are not involved in the practicalities of English teaching, the third category *learner responsibility in practice* was not included.

4.7.1 What is learner responsibility?

Given their position as school leaders the perspective provided by the two head teachers focused more on the role of the school and its teachers rather than the students themselves. They put an emphasis on the role of the teacher to enable learners to take responsibility for their own learning process.

[…] a lot of teachers that thought that the students should learn to take responsibility, but that is not what it means. The meaning behind it is rather that the teachers should help the learners become able to take responsibility for their learning. (Head teacher interview, 2013-09-12, our translation)

They see the teacher as the facilitator for learner responsibility, the catalyst that starts the students on their way to take more responsibility given the right circumstances. Daisy suggested that the goal is for the learners to claim ownership of their education and that they have an inner desire to learn. However, she also highlighted the fact that there is no quick implementation of learner responsibility bur rather that it is an on-going process that involves both teachers and students, which takes time. Donald agreed and pointed out that for this to take place; there is a need to create a sense of unity throughout the different programmes.

4.7.2 Possibilities for learner responsibility

When asked about the possibilities in school to help learners take responsibility they focused on the overall structure of the school. One of the key points mentioned was the freedom granted to the different teams of teachers at the different programmes. Instead of having a schedule set at a school level the teachers that are in direct contact with the students are allowed to manage their own time and create suitable schedules that fit their students' needs. Daisy expressed some scepticism towards the commonly used system with schedules created centrally, where teachers come with everything planned and the students become more like consumers. She pointed out that their aim is to focus on learning and understanding rather than just doing. By doing so they hope to create "more possibilities for the learners to feel and take responsibility" (Head teacher interview, 2013-09-12, our translation). Donald pointed out that one way to achieve this is by making sure that the students are aware of the different aspects of their school programme. He suggested that there is a need to make the connections between the different subjects, and the programme focus, apparent for the learners so that they see the bigger picture rather than the different

subjects as separate part: "By making sure that the students' education is directed towards something they have chosen, it becomes easier to create openings for students to take responsibility" (Head teacher interview, 2013-09-12, our translation).

They emphasized the importance of creating an understanding of the learning process and the different subjects, since it can lead to a higher degree of motivation among the students. This is something they feel they are able to achieve with their approach.

In addition to understanding motivation is highlighted as a central aspect for learner responsibility, as Daisy put it:

> I do not take responsibility for something that I do not understand the purpose of and neither does the students. It is as you say [looks to Donald], you have to understand the purpose behind something otherwise you will not take responsibility for it. Very few people do things just because they are told to do something. (Head teacher interview, 2013-09-12, our translation)

They highlighted the need to mediate and create a sense of meaningfulness for the students in order for students feel motivation and as a result take responsibility for their own learning. Daisy pointed out that this idea is integrated in the school as a whole and that they work towards making all the students participate in every step throughout their education so that they feel that it belongs to them, making them more than mere consumers. In order to achieve this and continuously improve different forms of staff training is arranged yearly in addition to an independent controller conducting qualitative evaluations at the school in regular intervals. Furthermore, they also pointed out that the school has put a lot of effort into developing their existing model with each student assigned a tutor meant to help the students evaluate and plan their education in addition to coach them throughout the process.

4.8 Analysis of the head teacher interview

Referring to the answers, it is clear that the head teachers highlight the importance of learner training, and that the teachers should help the learners take responsibility. This is

similar to Little's (1995) suggestion that it is unlikely that learners are able to take full responsibility, if they are not provided with support and practice opportunities from their teachers. As such, the nurturing classroom mentioned by Lamb (2011), becomes an essential part for developing learner responsibility since the students are allowed to grow and gradually increase their amount of own responsibility. The head teachers also mentioned that learner responsibility is an on-going process that requires time and effort to implement. This is similar to Dam's (1998) suggestion that developing responsibility is a time consuming process where students and teachers need to trust and respect each other.

In addition, the head teachers also put an emphasis on the importance of motivation. They express that students should be provided with an understanding of the learning process in order to increase their motivation. As mentioned earlier, this is also apparent in Lamb's (2011) study where he highlighted the connection between motivation and learner responsibility. Lamb (2011) claims that if students find their work meaningful they are more likely to become motivated, thus take more responsibility for their learning. In addition to Lamb, Little (1995) mentions the importance of making a distinction between language learning and language use. In other words, if the students become aware of how the language can be used, it may have a positive outcome on their sense of responsibility. The head teachers make a similar point when they claim that there is no point in taking responsibility for something unless it is possible to understand the purpose behind it. Even though the head teachers highlighted their perceptions from a generalized point of view, it is possible to draw parallels to the English subject. In order to motivate the learners it is clear that the head teachers put an emphasis on the importance of connecting the programme focus with the different subjects. As such, the students are provided with an understanding of the learning process since the nature of the programme is implemented in the different subjects.

5. Discussion and conclusion

In the last section we discuss the results of our empirical study and account for the any possible conclusions we are able to draw. With the three research questions as the foundation, our discussion focuses on the main points presented in the analysis of the results from our interviews and our methodological choices throughout the project. We will also touch upon possible directions to take in future research. Lastly we will present the conclusions we are able to draw from our study.

5.1 Discussion

The aim of our study was to explore how some students, teachers and the head teacher at the upper secondary school level perceived learner responsibility in relation to student learning, and student learning of English in particular. We feel that our choice of methodology served the paper well and the informant triangulation functioned to create the bigger picture. A recurring theme throughout the project with regard to students' and teachers' perception about learner responsibility is that student motivation and understanding are seen as central to learner autonomy. The students highlighted that as their programme focus is increasingly integrated in their language learning process, their motivation and willingness to take responsibility increases. A similar connection is made by the head teachers who emphasized the need to create a sense of unity and understanding among the learners, something that is the school's main objective. Both the head teachers and the teachers pointed out the importance of the teachers' to take responsibility for the learning process if responsible learners are the goal, similar to Little's view.

The results suggest that among students and to some extent teachers there is a focus on pedagogical autonomy, the learners' ability to take responsibility for their language learning. One possible reason for this is the fact that the students have studied at upper secondary level for a limited amount of time and therefore are still adapting to the learning environment. However, the teachers showed awareness of the importance to provide

students with the opportunity to work actively with problem solving as a part of their learning process, in order to help them develop communicative autonomy and take responsibility for their learning in that sense.

Since the students participating had only studied at upper secondary level for four weeks it would be interesting to conduct a follow-up study to see how their perception of learner responsibility changes over time as they come further in their process. It is also important to point out that since our investigation is a case study it should not be seen as representative for all upper secondary schools. It has been interesting to see how learner responsibility is perceived and takes form at a time when the curriculum regards it as obligatory. However, we firmly believe that there is a need to conduct similar evaluations to the one done by the school inspectorate at the compulsory level, in order to ensure both equality and quality in upper secondary schools around the country. To give students the same chances on their way towards becoming responsible, autonomous learners.

As mentioned earlier, learner responsibility is a process that requires both time and practice on the behalf of the learners, and the more free method of working may not suit everyone. Some students require more structure in order to feel relaxed and secure about their learning process, which consequently means that they become more dependent on the teacher. As such, it is therefore essential to highlight that the overall responsibility should be in the hands of the teacher, and factors such as students' maturity and individual needs should be taken into consideration before implementing learner responsibility in a classroom environment. Otherwise, chances are that implementing learner responsibility could result in negative outcomes for the learners. One of the risks is that learners may feel insecure since they may not be certain of what is expected from them. It may also lead to learners feeling guilty when the goals set by the school or themselves and are not achieved, as mentioned earlier in Dovemark's study.

Our study functions to fill a gap in current research on how learner responsibility is perceived in upper secondary school settings, in relation to English language learning.

5.2 Conclusion

When we started our study we set out to explore how some students, teachers and the head teacher perceive learner responsibility, as shown in our research questions.

From the results we can clearly see that the students feel that they are given opportunities to take more responsibility for their learning and feel more motivated to do so due to the school's approach to teaching. At their current stage they tend to focus on forms of pedagogical responsibility but they also show tendencies towards developing communicative autonomy. It is suggested that the students at their previous schools were limited to no opportunities to take responsibility for their learning, something that most likely affects the students' ability to take responsibility now. As such it is important to highlight the fact that they are in the beginning of an on-going process and seen from that perspective, their chances to develop learner responsibility looks highly promising.

The teachers involved show a perception of learner responsibility similar to the students. However, they also highlight that they have the overall responsibility for both the learning process and the students' ability to take responsibility. Both teachers also put an emphasis on the need to see learner responsibility as a continuous process that needs to be developed over time with learner responsibility as the final goal.

Similarly, the head teachers shared the same perception of learner responsibility as the teachers, highlighting the responsibility of school, and its teachers, to accommodate the needs of different learners in order to provide everyone with equal opportunity. They also emphasized the importance of transparency and a sense of unity in the students' education.

Referring back to our research questions, the results of our case study show that both teachers, students and the head teacher share a positive attitude towards learner responsibility and that they share a common goal - in that the learners should feel in control of their language learning process and that they feel confident in their own abilities. They might not be the ideal responsible, autonomous learners from the start, but as we can see they are willing to go further and are given the means to do so.

Lastly, this study is limited to a single school and students in the beginning of their time there. As such, the results are not to be perceived as a definite answer to the perceptions of learner responsibility; however, they provide an insight into the area.

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[1] The source is known by our supervisor. However, due to confidentiality it cannot be disclosed in this paper.

Attachment 1

Till lärare i Engelska på _____.

Vi heter Daniel Ivarsson och Fredrik Pihl och är två studenter som läser vår sista termin på lärarutbildningen, vid Malmö Högskola, med Engelska som huvudämne. Med anledning av att vi nu skall skriva vårt examensarbete skickar vi ut denna förfrågan. Målet med vårt examensarbete är att undersöka lärare och elevers uppfattning av och syn på elevansvar i undervisning i ämnet Engelska. Om möjlighet finns skulle vi gärna vilja intervjua dig samt ett fåtal elever i den klass du undervisar. Vi räknar med att intervjun kommer pågå i max 45 minuter. Som ett komplement till intervjuerna skulle vi också vilja genomföra ett fåtal klassrumsobservationer.

Svaren som ges kommer att behandlas enligt de regler om sekretess och konfidentialitet som råder vilket innebär att de medverkande parterna samt skolan kommer att avidentifieras i det skriftliga arbetet. Undersökningen kommer att ske under veckorna 37-39 på en tid och plats som ert schema tillåter.

Vi hoppas att du skulle vilja ställa upp då vi tror att du har mycket intressant att delge.

Om ni har några frågor angående arbetet eller undersökningen går det att nå oss på följande:

Daniel Ivarsson   Fredrik Pihl

Email: Di.svalov@telia.com   Email: mail@fredrikpihl.com

Tack på förhand.

Attachment 2

MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA
Lärande och samhälle

Till rektor på_____.

Vi heter Daniel Ivarsson och Fredrik Pihl och är två studenter som läser vår sista termin på lärarutbildningen, vid Malmö Högskola, med Engelska som huvudämne. Med anledning av att vi nu skall skriva vårt examensarbete skickar vi ut denna förfrågan. Målet med vårt examensarbete är att undersöka lärare och elevers uppfattning av och syn på elevansvar i undervisning i ämnet Engelska. Om möjlighet finns skulle vi gärna vilja intervjua dig. Vi räknar med att intervjun kommer pågå i max 45 minuter.

Svaren som ges kommer att behandlas enligt de regler om sekretess och konfidentialitet som råder vilket innebär att de medverkande parterna samt skolan kommer att avidentifieras i det skriftliga arbetet. Undersökningen kommer att ske under veckorna 37-39 på en tid och plats som ert schema tillåter.

Vi hoppas att du skulle vilja ställa upp då vi tror att du har mycket intressant att delge.

Om ni har några frågor angående arbetet eller undersökningen går det att nå oss på följande:

Daniel Ivarsson   Fredrik Pihl

Email: Di.svalov@telia.com   Email: mail@fredrikpihl.com

Tack på förhand.

Attachment 3

MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA

Lärande och samhälle

Hej

Vi heter Daniel Ivarsson och Fredrik Pihl och är två studenter som läser vår sista termin på lärarutbildningen, vid Malmö Högskola, med Engelska som huvudämne. För nuvarande jobbar vi med att skriva vårt examensarbete. Målet med arbetet är att undersöka lärare och elevers uppfattning av och syn på elevansvar i undervisning i ämnet Engelska. Som en del i detta arbete skall vi genomföra några gruppintervjuer med elever och vi skulle uppskatta om du skulle vilja ställa upp. Intervjuerna kommer att vara i ca 45 minuter och spelas in för att vi skall få med så mycket information som möjligt.

Alla etiska principer kommer att iakttas; vilket innebär att namn på medverkande och skolan kommer att anonymiseras, och det material som vi använt vid dokumentationen (ljudupptagningarna) kommer att förstöras när arbetet slutförts. I samband med intervjun kommer vi att bjuda på lite fika.

Om ni har några frågor angående arbetet eller undersökningen går det att nå oss på följande:

Daniel Ivarsson   Fredrik Pihl

Email: Di.svalov@telia.com Email: mail@fredrikpihl.com

Attachment 4

Intervjuschema för intervju av skolledning.

Bakgrund

- Berätta lite om dig själv
  Ålder, kön, etnicitet, utbildning, tidigare arbetserfarenhet

- Hur länge har du arbetat som verksamhetschef för gymnasieskola?

- Hur länge har du arbetat på din nuvarande arbetsplats?

Elevansvar

1. Vad är elevansvar

Enligt läroplanen GY 11 skall läraren: "organisera och genomföra arbetet så att eleven successivt får fler och större självständiga uppgifter och ökat eget ansvar".

- Vad betyder begreppet ansvar för dig i detta sammanhang?

- Hur ser du på elevansvar i skolan?

2. Förutsättningar för elevansvar

- Vilka förutsättningar finns på skolan för att möjliggöra för eleverna att ta eget ansvar?

- Hur arbetar ni för att eleverna skall ta eget ansvar?

- Vad tror du påverkar elevernas vilja/förmåga till att ta eget ansvar?

Finns det något du skulle vilja tillägga som vi inte tagit upp?

Attachment 5

Intervjuschema för lärarintervju

Bakgrund

- Berätta lite om dig själv
  Ålder, kön, etnicitet, utbildning, tidigare arbetserfarenhet

- Hur länge har du arbetat som gymnasielärare i Engelska?
  Undervisar du i några andra ämnen?

- Hur länge har du arbetat på din nuvarande arbetsplats?

- Har du deltagit i någon särskild utbildning/kurs med fokus på elevernas eget ansvar i klassrummet?

Elevansvar

1. Vad är elevansvar

Enligt läroplanen GY 11 skall läraren: "organisera och genomföra arbetet så att eleven successivt får fler och större självständiga uppgifter och ökat eget ansvar".

- Vad betyder begreppet ansvar för dig i detta sammanhang?

- Hur ser du på elevansvar i skolan som helhet samt i Engelsk- undervisningen i synnerhet?

2. Förutsättningar för elevansvar

- Hur anser du att ansvaret för undervisningen bör fördelas mellan lärare och elev?

- Vilka förutsättningar finns på skolan för att möjliggöra för eleverna att ta eget ansvar?

- Hur arbetar du för att eleverna skall ta eget ansvar?

3. Elevansvar i praktiken

- På vilket sätt tar eleverna ansvar i samband med Engelsk-undervisningen?

- Vad tror du påverkar elevernas vilja/förmåga till att ta eget ansvar?

- Finns det något du skulle vilja tillägga som vi inte tagit upp?

Attachment 6

Intervjuschema för gruppintervju av elever

1. Vikten av eget ansvar

- Vad innebär det att ta eget ansvar för er?

- Hur viktigt tycker ni det är att ta ansvar för sitt lärande? Motivera ert svar.

- Vad betyder begreppet ansvar för er i förhållande till ert lärande i Engelska?

- Vilka faktorer påverkar er att ta eget ansvar för ert lärande?

2. Förutsättningar för eget ansvar

- Vilka förutsättningar finns det på skolan som ger er möjlighet till att ta eget ansvar?

- Hur tycker ni att lärarna arbetar för att ni som elever skall få möjlighet till att ta eget ansvar?

3. Synen på det egna ansvaret

- På vilket vis anser ni er ta eget ansvar för ert lärande i Engelska?

- Hur visar ni att ni tar eget ansvar?

- Skulle ni vilja ta mer eget ansvar för ert lärande? På vilket sätt?

Attachment 7

<u>Dagsplanering i IUP</u>   Namn:_____   Vecka:

<u>Dag:</u>	<u>Planering:</u>	<u>Sign:</u>
MÅN DAG	<u>Lärandemål:</u> Fm: Em: Utvärdering: **Vad lärde jag mig?** **Varför gick det bra/mindre bra?** **Vad kan kunskaperna användas till?**	
TIS DAG	<u>Lärandemål:</u> Fm: Em: Utvärdering: **Vad lärde jag mig?** **Varför gick det bra/mindre bra?** **Vad kan kunskaperna användas till?**	
ONS DAG	<u>Lärandemål:</u> Fm:: Em: Utvärdering: **Vad lärde jag mig?** **Varför gick det bra/mindre bra?** **Vad kan kunskaperna användas till?**	

TORS DAG	**Lärandemål:** Fm: Em: **Utvärdering:** **Vad lärde jag mig?** **Varför gick det bra/mindre bra?** **Vad kan kunskaperna användas till?**	
FRE DAG	**Lärandemål:** Fm: Em: **Utvärdering:** **Vad lärde jag mig?** **Varför gick det bra/mindre bra?** **Vad kan kunskaperna användas till?**	

Personlig utveckling

Väl ett eller flera av följande mål eller välj ett eget mål som du bör arbeta med under veckan.

Tider   Skyddskläder   Ordning och reda   Kamratskap   Arbetsdisciplin

Initiativförmåga   Bemötande   Språk   Visa intresse och engagemang

Mål:

Varför:

Utvärdering:

Sign: