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English

Does Teaching Material Matter?

Five teachers' perspectives on the use of teaching materials, other than traditional texts, in English education for upper secondary school.

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Degree Project Essay

Term 8: Spring 2024

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Abstract

This essay investigates five teachers' perceptions of teaching materials, other than traditional texts in English for upper secondary school. The study consists of five semi-structured interviews with upper secondary teachers to understand what materials they use and why they use them. The interviews show that teachers use for example film, music, and games to promote communicative situations in the classroom and the teachers use authentic materials to create authentic situations for language use. The study discusses the differences between textbooks and authentic materials to be able to reflect on how teachers choose and work with teaching materials. The study shows that, according to the interviewed teachers, different types of materials have positive effects that the teacher needs to be able to understand and adapt to the needs of the students, and that new language teachers have to get a better understanding of the materials at their disposal.

Keywords: Teaching materials, non-traditional teaching materials, teacher perceptions, upper secondary school

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Introduction

Our society constantly develops and changes, and with these changes come new ways of interacting with language. Students today interact with the English language in very different ways from students thirty years ago. This is something that teachers can use to help students to develop their proficiencies in English. In this essay, I want to get a better understanding of what teaching materials, other than traditional texts, teachers use in their lessons. I am also interested in how and why teachers have chosen to work with the teaching materials they use. The subject plan for English (Skolverket, n.d.) explains that teachers should work with materials that relate to the student's own experiences. It also explains that teachers should work with different types of media to help students to be able to interact and understand English in authentic situations after their time in school. Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016), Wouters et al. (2024), Zhang et al. (2021), and Schurz et al. (2022) all present positive aspects of extramural English, English used in situations outside of the classroom, and how it is positive for students to interact with English through different media. The studies also present the idea that students today learn a lot of their English in situations outside of school. This correlates with my own experiences of teaching materials because I learned mostly from interactions with English through modern media such as music, films, and games. The positive effects studies show of extramural English together with the requirements in the subject plan for English (Skolverket, n.d.) forces teachers to reflect on how they can bring in new media and materials as teaching materials to improve the way they teach. It also helps teachers adapt to how today's society works and interact with English, which was something I felt was missing when I was a student. Teachers can learn from each other and work together to improve and learn through each others' experiences. Why should new teachers invent the wheel if some other teachers already have invented it and developed it further?

An older report from Skolverket (2006) presents that textbooks are the most used teaching material and that most teachers base their lessons on materials from a textbook. The traditional use of books, and especially textbooks, does not reflect the ways students today interact with the English language. Tomlinsons' (2012) idea that everything that could be used to learn a language can be a teaching material presents opportunities to use more authentic materials in class. Authentic materials could be seen as materials that are authentic because they are not designed for a teaching situation. Authentic materials could be used together with textbooks to give students the possibility to work with both controlled materials from the textbooks and authentic materials that represent English in everyday situations. There is a lack of recent studies that show how teachers have

adapted their teaching in the classroom to a more digital society where students have an easier connection to authentic materials through the use of the internet. However, some studies present positive effects of authentic materials in extramural situations on students' motivation to learn and use English (Sundqvist and Sylvén, 2016). There is a need for new studies that explore how teachers use authentic materials in their lessons and how the use of teaching materials has developed with the more common use of new forms of media. This essay aims to contribute to the field through a more recent investigation of how teachers work with teaching materials while also investigating why teachers work in the way they do. Teacher cognition concerning teaching materials is a field where there is a lack of studies and hopefully, this study could be a part of filling that gap.

This essay presents results from 5 interviews of English teachers at upper secondary schools in Sweden. The interviews focus on the teacher's use of teaching materials and more specifically on how and why they use teaching materials, other than traditional texts, if they do. The study aims to present how teachers use different materials in class to create a better understanding of how teachers work and how they reflect on their teaching. A better understanding of experienced teachers' work can provide teacher students and new teachers with information that helps them improve as teachers. This study also aims to help teachers get an idea about the positive effects of extramural English and how teachers create more authentic situations by bringing in modern media the students feel comfortable with to their lessons. Language teachers need to develop and change with society to be able to help their students in the best way possible and one way to do this is to learn from each other's experiences.

Aim and research questions

This essay aims to map what non-traditional teaching materials teachers use and the benefits and challenges teachers perceive of using teaching materials, other than traditional texts, when teaching students English in upper secondary school.

The research questions addressed are:

- What teaching materials, other than traditional texts, do the teachers in this study use?
- How do the teachers in this study use teaching materials, other than traditional texts?
- Why do the teachers in this study use, or not use, teaching materials, other than traditional texts?

Background

This section presents the background information for this essay. It focuses on teacher cognition, teaching materials, and extramural English.

Teacher Cognition

Teacher cognition is what Borg (2003) describes as ”the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think.” (p.81). Borg (2003) describes that different aspects have an effect on teacher cognition and that all teachers have their thoughts and ideas, which makes each teacher unique. Kubanyiova (2015) presents the idea that teachers’ cognitions are the reflections of the teacher’s mental lives through what they do in the classroom. Zheng et al. (2022) further develop the idea of teacher cognition and teacher influence through their decisions and interactions. Teacher cognition is the teacher themself and how they impact learning situations through and together with students and together with different context and situations that affects teaching.

In a review of 64 published studies, that focus on second or foreign-language teachers thinking of language teaching, Borg (2003) presents four different aspects that influence teacher cognition: schooling, professional coursework, contextual factors, and classroom practice. Borg (2003) also presents how teachers’ experience has an effect on teacher cognition and how teachers prefer to work. He presents that more experienced teachers can adapt to their students and create more student-focused lessons. The more experienced teachers were also more open to adapting and improvising during the lessons to create situations that focus on the students.

A small study consisting of a group interview of 4 teachers in Sweden made by Smith et al. (2024) presents some ideological dilemmas teachers face when teaching Swedish and English as second languages. The study presents a problem in teachers’ ability to adapt to what each student wants and needs while still following the ideas presented by the syllabus. The teachers expressed a difference between what the students expected and what the societal norms expected from them as language teachers. The students expected lessons to be teacher-focused while the societal norm was to have more student-focused activities where the students were expected to take more responsibility. The teachers expressed that the adaptations they made due to expectations from others often differed from how they wanted to teach. The fact that teachers’ choices and ways of working are affected by

different contexts becomes evidence of how teacher cognition always affects the way teachers work and that teacher cognition is not stagnant but affected by different scenarios.

Teaching Materials

Teaching materials are materials used to help teachers to teach their students English. The traditional form of teaching materials is text in the form of a textbook with predetermined material for the teacher to share with the students. However, teaching materials can be more than just traditional texts. Brian Tomlinson (2012) describes teaching materials as "'materials for language learning' will be taken to be anything that can be used to facilitate the learning of a language" (p.143). This means that everything that could be used to help someone learn English could be used as teaching materials. So films, music, games, pictures, and more could be used as teaching materials.

Tomlinson (2012) raises the problem of textbooks generally trying to adapt to all students which leads to textbooks that lack focus because they are trying to do a little of everything. Tomlinson (2013) presents the idea that students learn English from language experience where the students learn from discovering how the English language is used outside of the classroom. He writes that this is an aspect of language learning that most textbooks neglect and don't work with. Tomlinson (2013) expresses the idea that teachers should promote activities students can do outside of the classroom, which promotes situations where students can be involved in the lesson through their own experiences. This would also help to present more authentic materials influenced by the students.

A study on Swedish teaching material developers for English as a foreign language made by Bergstöm et al. (2021) presents teaching material developers' thoughts concerning vocabulary in foreign language teaching. The study shows that material developers have a text-based focus when producing textbooks and that vocabulary will be learned from interactions with text. The study also shows that material developers are influenced by their target audience. The material developers claim that they choose what to include in textbooks based on feedback from teachers and what the teachers express they want from the textbook. The material developers expressed that they did not base the textbooks on vocabulary and instead based the textbooks on texts they believed teachers and students would like to work with, which affected the vocabulary presented in the books. The

belief is that the influence of the target audience has a bigger impact on the teaching material produced than research.

Allen (2015) presents a study on Swedish teachers in English as a foreign language attitudes towards course books. 30 teachers, 15 in-service and 15 pre-service teachers participated in the study by answering a questionnaire. The study showed that pre-service teachers were more positive about the use of coursebooks than in-service teachers. The in-service teachers believed the course book to be restrictive and that they believed it was better to use other material, especially in listening exercises where they saw the positive effects of presenting more authentic materials to the students. Neither the in-service nor pre-service teachers expressed that they fully departed from the course book but it was much more common for in-service teachers to have a topic-driven approach in contrast to the pre-service teachers who expressed they preferred a course book-driven approach. The result Allen (2015) presents could be connected to Borg's (2003) idea that more experienced teachers want to be more adaptable and student-focused than less experienced teachers.

Skolverket (2006) presents a report on teaching materials roles in education which is a report on what materials are used in the subjects of arts, English, and social studies. The focus here is on the part that focuses on teaching materials in English. The report presents a definition of teaching materials as something that teachers and students use to help students achieve determined goals. So teaching materials are everything that can be used to help students achieve those goals. The results of the report show that a majority of the 472 teachers who answered the questionnaire used textbooks in their lessons and that they believe there are positive effects in using a textbook. They say that the textbook provides security and structure to the students and that it makes it easier for the teacher to plan the lessons. The textbooks also become a more secure way for the teachers to make sure that the education they provide follows the guidelines and goals presented in the subject plan. The negative aspect teachers describe of using a textbook is that it does not motivate or appeal to the students. The teachers describe other materials or authentic materials as more interesting and inspiring for the students. Some examples of materials used, other than traditional texts, are recorded speech, music, students' own experiences, current events, tv-programs, radio programs, art, games, films, advertisements, guests, and study visits. The report shows that there is only a small amount of teachers that use teaching materials in the form of a person or interaction with another person for example guests or study visits. Instead, the most common way of including materials, other than traditional texts, is to use different recordings of either speech or music. The

results also show that authentic materials are more commonly used in situations where the students can influence their education and that lessons where the textbook is used are often more teacher-focused. One of the teachers interviewed for the report explains that the use of film is mostly seen as a reward for the students and a break from the usual lessons (Skolverket, 2006).
The report from Skolverket (2006) presents what teaching materials teachers prefer and also how teachers reflect on how they use different forms of material. Skolverket (2006) also shows that the aspect that teachers believe has the biggest effect on their choices of materials is the school's economic resources. The second most common aspect was the student's needs and possibilities while the third and fourth most common aspects were the teachers' pedagogical belief and the teachers' competence in the subject. Most of the teachers in the report thought that they had a lot of freedom to choose the materials they wanted even if there were a lot of aspects that affected their choices. The report shows that the most common demand teachers had for materials was that the material created interest among the students. Another interesting aspect of the report was that most teachers thought that the teaching material should enable the students to work independently. The report also specifies that teachers believe that students able to learn independently through teaching materials more often use the internet and different forms of games. A lot of different aspects affect teachers' choices of materials, for example, what the teacher wants to use the material for. The report from Skolverket (2006) presents these different aspects and presents the complex thinking teachers do when they choose materials.

Extramural English

Zhang et al. (2021) define extramural learning as "ELL(extramural language learning) refers to the learner-initiated activities beyond educational institutions that occur without an intention to learn a language but end with language educational effectiveness." (p.1) while Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) instead define extramural English as "In our definition, EE corresponds to 'English outside the walls' and by that we mean the English that learners come in contact with or are involved in outside the walls of the classroom." (p.6). The two definitions are very similar and describe the idea of extramural learning and extramural English when focusing on the English language. Extramural English is, based on the definitions, the English students interact with outside of school.

Some examples of extramural English activities are watching films, listening to music, reading magazines, or playing video games, these are just some examples of extramural English. Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) present results from different studies that show how extramural English has a

positive effect on a student's proficiency in English. One of the reasons presented for the positive effects of extramural English is that it is an easier way for students to interact with more English because it already is a part of situations they encounter in their everyday life. Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) promote the idea that language teachers need to adapt their lessons to extramural English because extramural English affects the student's proficiency in English. Extramural English also provides a problem in that it creates big differences in the proficiency levels of English students. Different extramural English interactions do also create differences in what skills the students learn from different interactions. The differences in language use between for example video games and social media create different learning situations for students.

A study made by Wouters et al. (2024) examined if there was a connection between extramural English and student motivation. The study collected data from 108 language learners through questionnaires, listening tests, and reading tests. The study showed a positive effect on students' listening and reading comprehension in correlation to the student's interaction with different kinds of extramural English. Wouters et al. (2024) also found indications that there is a correlation between extramural English activities, motivation, and anxiety. Students who more often engaged with extramural language activities had a more positive view of their future ability. The study also showed that students who interacted with some forms of extramural English had lower anxiety levels. Wouters et al. (2024) explain that the result of extramural English having a positive effect on anxiety and motivation needs to be cautioned due to the limited questions asked on the subject. In a review of 33 papers on extramural language learning in 6 different languages, Zhang et al. (2021) also present a correlation between students' interaction and enjoyment of extramural activities and student motivation and positivity to use a language. Zhang et al. (2021) also describe how motivation has an impact on the effectiveness of extramural language learning. The theory presented is that extramural activities are fun and that language learners engage in these activities for their enjoyment and therefore are more motivated to interact with the target language as well, which leads to more learning situations for the language learner. Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) write about the positive effects motivation has on learning a new language. The language learner becomes more motivated through extramural English because is necessary to understand English to interact and enjoy different media. English is used in films, on YouTube, in music, and by news stations which promotes the use of English in general because it becomes the language you need to understand to take part in media and popular culture.

Schurz et al. (2022) present a study on teachers from three countries' views on extramural language. The teachers were from Austria, France, and Sweden and were interviewed about their thoughts on extramural English and its effect on second language learning. The article shows that all teachers see extramural English as having a positive effect on students' general English language proficiency. The article explains that the views on extramural English differ between Sweden and the other two countries in that the teachers in Sweden adapted and saw more benefits in extramural English when compared to France and Austria. The reason for differences in perception of extramural English is believed to be that Sweden has a culture of not dubbing materials to Swedish which creates more situations where the students will have to interact with English, compared to students in Austria and France where it is more common to dubb media to German or French. An online survey made by Schurz and Sundqvist (2022) showed 534 secondary school teachers from four different countries' views on extramural English presenting a result similar to Schurz et al. (2022). The study made by Schurz and Sundqvist (2022) compares the teacher perception of extramural English from dubbing countries, Austria and France, with non-dubbing countries, Sweden and Finland. The study shows that there is a difference between how much extramural English Swedish and Finnish students use compared to Austrian and French students, this is believed to be because the non-dubbing countries give less opportunities for students to find interesting materials in their first language. The results from this study further establish the results found in Schurz et al. (2022) that extramural English has a positive effect on students' development in reading, listening, speaking, vocabulary, learner confidence, and motivation while there are different beliefs on the positive effects on learning grammar. Both studies do present that countries where the students interact more with extramural English also have a more positive view of extramural English and adapt to the use of extramural English.

Leona et al. (2021) present the effects and differences of extramural English for young English language learners in a study on Dutch primary school children. The study shows that extramural English has a positive effect on language learners' abilities and vocabulary. Leona et al. (2021) also make a difference between different forms of extramural English and the different effects these activities have on the language learners' skills in English. One of the categories of extramural English is entertainment which is the extramural English that is seen as fast, entertaining, and highly accessible to language learners. Examples of these types of media are listening to music, watching TV shows, playing video games, and using social media. Leona et al. (2021) explain that these types of media have an effect on language learners' vocabulary and skills in English. The

result of the study shows that there is a correlation between entertainment and vocabulary of young language learners. The other forms of extramural English are familiar English interactions through family and friends and low-frequency sources for example English books or newspapers. The study presents the result that interactions with family have a similar effect on vocabulary as early education exercises because the language learner can get input on their language use from a more experienced language user. The study also shows that the interactions with family and friends were more beneficial for the language learners because they felt more comfortable speaking with persons they had prior relationships with and felt safe with. The study shows that when the language learners were comfortable using English and got feedback on their use, they developed further than language learners who did not.

Method

I have chosen to use interviews to collect empirical data in my study because this study focuses on upper secondary teachers' perceptions of teaching materials, other than traditional texts. This choice was made to be able to do a qualitative analysis to better understand how different teachers think and reflect on teaching materials.

Interviews

The interviews are structured after what Dörnyei (2007) and Cohen et al. (2018) present as a semi-structured interview. Cohen et al. (2018) describe a semi-structured interview as "In the semi-structured interview, the topics and questions are given, but the questions are open-ended and the wording and sequence may be tailored to each individual interviewee and the responses given, with prompts and probes." (p.511). The semi-structured interview focuses on themes ideas or questions that the interviewer wants to get answers to and the interviewer can follow an interview guide to help the person conducting the interview to get relevant answers. The semi-structured interview differs from the structured interview in that the interviewer in a semi-structured interview is able to adapt and change their questions to get a more relevant answer. It is possible to use what Cohen et al. (2018) describe as prompts and probes, in a semi-structured interview, to be able to deepen the understanding of the original answers from the person being interviewed. Prompts and probes are ways for the interviewer to clarify questions or ideas in the interview and also enable the interviewer to get more elaborate and detailed answers. In a semi-structured interview prompts and probes can be pre-planned or spontaneous and are a way for the interviewer to use to get more relevant and credible data. A semi-structured interview focuses on qualitative answers and answers that are more developed than just yes and no. A qualitative interview allows the interviewee to give more individual and specific answers because the goal of the interview is to get to understand how a person thinks or reflects on a subject.

Procedure

The interviews were conducted in one-on-one form where there was just one person being interviewed in one sitting. The person being interviewed was asked if they wanted the interview to be in English or in Swedish. One out of five interviewees chose English as the language for the interview. The interviews took place in the workspace of the person being interviewed for their convenience and to be able to fit their schedules. The shortest interview took twenty minutes and the longest one took one hour while the remaining three interviews took around thirty-five minutes.

All interviews were recorded on a computer and on a cellphone as a precaution if one of the recordings failed. The recorded interviews were stored on different hard drives as a safety precaution. Before the interview started, each person had to sign a consent form after an explanation both in spoken form and in written form.

The interviews followed an interview guide (see Appendix 2). The form of the interview was to ask two background questions to better understand the situation and context of the teacher being interviewed. The focus of the main part of the interviews was to understand the teacher's views on teaching materials, especially if the teachers used teaching materials that weren't traditional texts. There was also a question about the teachers' thoughts on traditional materials to better understand the teachers' views on teaching materials in general and how they themselves compared traditional materials with non-traditional materials. Because I also wanted to understand how different contexts could have an effect on the materials the teachers chose, I added some questions about what influenced the teachers and if they worked in a way they preferred.

Participants

I interviewed five different teachers who work in three upper secondary schools in Sweden. I sent e-mails to different schools to find English teachers who wanted to be interviewed for my essay and one of the participants answered my email and agreed to be part of the project. Because that was the only answer I received from the schools I contacted I instead chose to reach out to personal contacts I had who worked in different schools. With the help of my contacts, I was able to talk to the four other teachers who had chosen to be interviewed for my essay. I chose not to include the participants' gender or age of the participants because that information wasn't necessary for the study I conducted. I gave the teachers pseudonyms in the form of teacher 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 to make it harder to identify the participants.

	Subjects	Years as a teacher	School
Teacher 1	English and Swedish	25 years	School 1
Teacher 2	English, Swedish, and German	28 years	School 2
Teacher 3	English and Swedish	25 years	School 2
Teacher 4	English, Swedish, and Swedish as a second language	Soon 40 years	School 3
Teacher 5	English and history	18 years	School 3

Analysis

The analytic method used is a thematic analysis based on the structure presented by Braun and Clarke (2006). The structure of the analysis has 5 different phases. The first phase is familiarising yourself with the data, which was done through transcribing the interviews and then reading and re-reading the transcriptions to be familiar with the text and starting to note down some ideas. The next phase of the process is to generate initial codes. The coding process was concluded by noting down interesting parts of the data that could be relevant to the essay. The third phase is to combine the codes from all the data into themes. The themes are combinations of codes that are related to each other. The fourth phase is to review the themes found and create a thematic map of the analysis. The fifth phase of the analysis is to more clearly define each theme and give it a name. The definition phase helps to focus on each theme and more clearly define what should be included in each theme. The last part of the analysis process Braun and Clarke present is the writing of the report. This is the phase where the analysis is written down and finalized. The report should relate back to the research question in the essay and to the literature mentioned in the background to present a cohesive result of the data collected for the project.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were taken during this study. No sensitive information was gathered because it did not affect the focus of this study. Personal information such as gender identity was not collected because it wasn't relevant to the study. All data were collected in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The study followed the advice of Vetenskapsrådet (2017) and all participants in the study were informed about the purpose of the study and that they could withdraw their consent at any time. The participants had to read and sign a consent form before the interview. The consent form was presented and described before they signed it to make sure that all participants understood the study and so they understood what they agreed to. There was also a spoken explanation of how the data was collected, and stored, and what it was used for before the interview started to further ensure that the participants understood how the collected data were used and safely stored. ”the consent form can be found in Appendix 1”. The recording and the transcription of the interview were stored separately and protected with a password. All data will be destroyed after this study has received a passing grade.

Result

This part of the essay presents the results of the thematic analysis of the empirical data collected through the interviews. The data is presented in three sections based on the following themes: traditional materials, authentic materials, and communication is the goal. These themes present the interviewed teachers' thoughts on traditional materials, authentic materials, and lastly a section about the teachers' ideas of teaching and their main goal of communication.

Traditional materials

The first theme found through the interviews was the pattern that all the teachers saw positive effects from using traditional materials. Teacher 1, for example, explained that some students preferred the structure of a textbook and that it could help the students to know what they were supposed to do for each lesson. The teachers also said that the textbook was a great tool to help students feel secure and that it was positive for students who needed more structure.

Another pattern in the interviews, that connects to traditional materials, is that a textbook helps the teachers present materials that are at a level that the students can handle. For example, Teacher 2 said:

> Yes, I am positive about traditional materials due to many reasons, firstly I think that the textbooks are produced by a publisher that has thought through it critically based on the courses we teach. It costs money and usually, there are language teachers who have worked with the material. And for clarity for the students in increasingly complex groups with different needs, it is often appreciated to have a book.

The teachers also said that a textbook helped them know what the students were doing in each lesson because the teachers were familiar with the textbook and materials they worked with. Teacher 4, for example, explained that the textbook helped create structure and control over what the students worked on and had opportunities to learn; it also helped the teacher assess the students' levels. Teacher 2, 3, and 5 also explain that the textbooks were a great start for teachers because the textbooks were planned and made for the specific purpose of teaching in a specific course.

Another common thought among the teachers was that traditional materials, and textbooks in general, were seen as less motivating for the students. The teachers said that while the students liked

having a textbook, it was harder to create lessons and scenarios where the students enjoyed working with it. Teacher 1, for example, talked about how it is harder to get students to discuss and interact with traditional materials than to motivate them to work with authentic materials. Teacher 4 said that using a textbook was harder to make fun of because it became more of an exercise compared to working with authentic materials.

The last pattern regarding traditional materials was that traditional materials and textbooks helped teachers to save time. The teachers stated that working with a textbook made their job easier. Teacher 5 explained that they believed textbooks were a great tool for new teachers because finding authentic materials to use in class takes a long time. Teacher 1 expressed that they would use a textbook to make their work easier if they found one they liked.

Authentic materials

The second theme found in the interviews is the pattern that all of the teachers used some aspect of what they called authentic materials. Some of the types of authentic materials that the teachers in the study said that they used were films, music, tabletop games, pictures, video clips, and other materials that the students themselves could find. One of the reasons the teachers presented for using authentic materials was that they believed it was easier to get the students to interact with authentic materials because the students understood the connection these materials had to their own lives and situations outside of school. Teacher 4 presented one example of interaction with authentic materials when the teacher used different games to get the students to communicate. The idea of the game is that one student gets a picture and then they are going to describe it in English for one of their classmates, that classmate then paints a recreation from the description they get. The teacher explained that by making it a rule of the game to speak English, the students accepted it as a part of the game and only used English. The teacher explains that the students use more English when they play these types of games compared to when they do a speaking exercise. The teachers also explained that they use authentic materials to create interest and motivation in the students. The teachers explained that by using authentic materials they could use the student's interests to create situations where the students were more motivated to interact and speak. Teacher 2, for example, talked about how they used materials from the student's main school subjects, the subject each class mostly focused on, to create exercises that were relevant to the work the students hoped to do after their studies in upper secondary school.

The aspect of authentic materials that the teachers found most beneficial for students was familiarity. Authentic materials presented a clear purpose for the students because they were an example of how the English language could be used outside of the learning situations in the classroom. Teacher 1 said, ”What I reckon to be the primary benefit of using authentic materials is that it’s authentic. I’d rather try to bring the students up to the level of the materials as quickly as possible rather than bring the material down to the student’s level.” and explained how they preferred to work with authentic materials to create more authentic communication situations in the classroom, where the students didn’t feel the pressure of a school environment. Some of the teachers also said that some students preferred to work with authentic materials in the form of more modern media, such as films, games, or music, because these took less effort to understand. For example, watching a movie or listening to music takes less effort than reading a book. The teachers explained that because the students found it easier to understand the material in the form of films or music, they had more energy left to talk, discuss, and work with the materials.

Three of the teachers in the study explained that they had seen a positive effect on the student’s English skills when they interacted with authentic materials, such as YouTube videos or video games. One teacher explained that the lower-level students improved as more of them started to interact with English through the Internet or other media outside of school. The teacher observed a trend: students’ proficiency levels in general are higher now than they were ten years ago. They also explained that this development was more prominent in students who played video games together with people from other countries, as English became the common language for communication.

Communication is the goal

One other theme found through the interviews is that the teachers talked about how they chose teaching materials to promote communication. The teachers interviewed describe that they believe communication and interaction are the main purpose of language and that they choose teaching materials to promote communication. Teacher 1, for example, says ” Interacting in the present is the primary function or primary purpose of language, so why do so many English teachers focus solely on text?”. Teacher 1 explains that their main focus is to create situations where their students get to communicate and interact with both the teacher and other students. The teacher says that they choose materials together with the students to encourage them to be a part of the lessons and through that be more motivated to interact and use English.

The teachers also talk about how they want to create real conversations in the classroom and how they like to use authentic materials to promote conversations. The teachers say that they want to create authentic situations in the classroom and that they believe the use of authentic materials helps them to create more authentic situations. Teacher 2 explains that they like to use films as a basis for discussions because it helps them to create ”ett mer äkta samtal” [a more real conversation]. The teacher also say that they believe it is important for new teachers to not be afraid of speaking English with their students because they believe using English to communicate is the most authentic way to learn the language.

Teacher 5 describes how they prefer to work with different themes that they themselves find interesting or believe their students will find interesting instead of working with a theme presented by a textbook. The teacher explains that they want to use materials the students find relevant, and one of the ways to do that is by connecting the themes and materials to current events. The teacher believes that using materials relevant to the students' own lives will help the students to feel motivated which is one of the goals the teacher has. The teacher explains that there is material for language teaching everywhere and that it is a great tool for teachers to use to motivate students and adapt to what the students are interested in. The teacher chooses materials to motivate students to make the students more willing to learn.

All the teachers aimed to create classrooms where the students felt comfortable and able to speak and interact with each other. The teachers most commonly spoke about teaching materials as tools to help them engage students in exercises or activities in the classroom. The choice of a textbook was often based on what the students expressed they wanted and in that way motivated students to learn in the way the students expressed the most effectively-liked to learn. There was a difference when the teachers spoke about using authentic or non-traditional materials that were not written texts, then the focus was instead to create real situations where the students were ”tricked” into speaking and using English. The teachers used authentic materials to promote discussions or interactions because students were more familiar with different media than books. The teachers could also adapt authentic materials to motivate the students to speak by working with materials they believed the students wanted to discuss with each other.

Discussion

This part of the essay will discuss the result of my interviews in relation to the background materials in this study. It will also provide answers to my research questions based on the results of the interviews.

The first research question asked what teaching materials teachers use, other than traditional texts. The teachers in my study explained that they used different materials for different situations to help the students develop as language learners. Three of the teachers explained that they liked to base their lessons on a textbook, which is a majority of the teachers in the study, while two of the teachers explained that they only used authentic materials in their lessons. The result of a majority of teachers using textbooks aligns with Skolverkets (2006) report, but there is a difference in that some teachers choose to not work with the textbook at all. The teachers who didn't use the textbook explained that they wanted to create more interesting lessons where the students were more involved in promoting communication. The teachers believed that using more authentic materials that were connected to the student's own experiences made it easier for the students to engage in activities where they were supposed to communicate. This is in line with Tomlinson's (2013) argument about promoting student learning in situations both inside and outside of the classroom through bringing experiences outside of the classroom to the classroom. The teachers focused on authentic materials and Tomlinson (2013) explains that adapting to student experiences helps to choose teaching materials that are relevant for the students because the material is based on the student's experience and their lives outside of school.

A study by Allen (2015) presents teachers' attitudes toward course books that do not present the same result as the interviews made for this study. All teachers interviewed for this study are in-service teachers who have a lot of experience, the teacher with the least experience has worked for 18 years. This would indicate that they would be more positive to base their work on other materials or authentic materials rather than base their lessons on a course book. A majority of the teachers in this study, 3 out of 5, based their lessons on a course book and believed that their students preferred to have a book to work with. Even though this is a small sample size it shows that there is a majority of in-service teachers that prefer to base their lessons on a book. Allen's (2015) result that more experienced teachers still use other materials in combination with a book is something that is also true for 3 out of 5 teachers in this study. The teachers who based their lessons on a book still expressed that they sometimes used other materials in their lessons to promote communication. The

other 2 teachers claimed that they didn't base their lessons on a course book at all and instead only used authentic materials. The two teachers both used a topic-driven approach but differed in the way they chose what materials to use in class, one teacher searched and chose authentic materials for the students to work with while the other teacher let the students find their own materials. Even though these two teachers work in different ways they both are examples of Borg's (2003) idea that experienced teachers want to adapt more to the students.

The study by Schurz et al. (2022) and Schurz and Sundqvist (2022) also presented the differences in teachers from different countries' views on extramural English. The result of both studies showed that there was a more positive view of extramural English from countries where there was a culture of not dubbing media and that these countries adapted more of their teaching to use extramural English. The teachers interviewed for this study expressed the idea that students learned a lot from extramural situations and that this created both problems and benefits for their teaching. The benefit was that the students who had a lot of interactions with extramural English showed a higher skill level than the students who did not interact with extramural English. The teachers expressed that the inclusion of extramural English through modern media made the general skill in English higher in the classes they teach now compared to the teacher's earlier classes. The problem with extramural English was that it created classrooms where the proficiency levels of the students differed a lot which made it hard for the teacher to know how to adapt to all their students. This, in combination with the problems presented by Smith et al. (2024), creates a difficult scenario for teachers where they are expected to adapt to all students and their expectations while also adapting to the expectations of society. Even though the teachers expressed that there were difficulties in working with extramural English, they still saw it as something more positive for the students. The mostly positive views from the interviewed teachers could be expected in light of the results from Schurz et al. (2022) and Schurz and Sundqvist (2022) because all the interviewed teachers worked in Sweden, which is a country with a culture of not dubbing popular media.

The answer to the first research question is that teachers use a lot of different materials, other than traditional texts, for example, music, pictures, or games as teaching materials but that the materials the teachers use can differ based on the students they teach. Most teachers still base their lessons on a coursebook but use other materials to get students to communicate and therefore use teaching materials they have used before or materials they believe will motivate student interaction. Some teachers could not specifically explain what materials they use because they choose different

teaching materials for each class based on the student's interests. This result shows that new teachers need to learn more about how they can find or work with different materials and how they can adapt to better implement teaching materials based on the students. The skill of combining authentic materials with a textbook is also relevant for teachers due to it being more common to use a combination of both.

The second research question was how teachers used teaching materials, other than traditional text which is explained when the teachers I interviewed said that they use authentic materials to promote communication. The teachers expressed that the goal of a language was to communicate and that the use of authentic materials in modern media promotes discussions and communication through motivation. Leona et al. (2021), Wouters et al. (2024), and Zhang et al. (2021) describe how authentic materials and extramural English have a positive effect on students' language development because it promotes student motivation. The teachers in the interviews presented the same idea, that authentic materials motivate the students and therefore have a positive effect on students' language development. The teachers used authentic materials that connected to the student's interests and experiences to promote student motivation. The subject plan for English (Skolverket, n.d.) expresses that students should have the opportunity to communicate in both speech and writing and also that the teaching should stimulate students' curiosity. The interviewed teachers expressed that they mostly use authentic materials to promote the opportunities to communicate in the classroom and that this is an aspect where it is harder to use a textbook.

In an article reviewing literature about material development for language learning and teaching Tomlinson (2012, p.157-167) discusses the issues in material development. One thing he discusses is the use of textbooks and he presents both positive and negative aspects of teachers working with a textbook. One of the negative aspects he presents is that textbooks do not promote authentic situations for communication. The interviewed teachers shared this belief and expressed that the use of authentic materials becomes a counterbalance to textbooks because authentic materials can promote the students to learn the skills the textbook cannot. Bergström et al. (2021) present problems with teaching material developers adapting the way they work based on teachers instead of research. Textbooks become less reliable as a base for what the students should learn and instead focus more on what the teachers believe should be included in a textbook. This idea differs from the views of the teachers interviewed in this study. The teachers expressed that the biggest positive with textbooks was that they were a base for what was expected of the students and one teacher

expressed that this was because the textbooks were made from research. The result from Bergström et al. (2021) does not express that textbooks are not at all based on research but does show that textbooks are affected by other aspects that are not based on research. The teacher's trust in textbooks is therefore based on a preconception that is not fully true.

The answer to the second research question is that teachers use teaching materials, other than traditional texts, to promote communication through motivation. The teachers believe that the use of authentic materials helps students to improve their communication because authentic materials are more familiar to the students because of the student's interactions with extramural English. The positive effects of motivation through extramural English are also presented by Leona et al. (2021), Wouters et al. (2024), and Zhang et al. (2021). Teachers need to adapt to students' interactions with extramural English and the ways students interact with English through more modern media. One way teachers can do this is to use authentic materials that are connected to the student's life outside of school. The use of authentic materials based on the students becomes a way for teachers to create a clear connection between the subject English the students have in school and the language English that the students will need in situations outside of school. The teachers interviewed for this study expressed that they used authentic materials for this reason and that they believed there were positives of adapting more to the students. Teachers also need to understand the aspects that have an effect on textbooks and be more critical of the materials presented by the textbook. Even if the textbooks are based on some aspects of research teachers still need to be critical and not just trust textbooks because they are textbooks.

The third research question asked was why the teachers in my study use or do not use teaching materials, other than traditional texts which in part is explained through the teacher's ideas of traditional teaching materials in contrast to non-traditional materials. The teachers in my study explained that they believed textbooks were a great tool for teachers to use to create structure in the classroom and that this was something the students wanted. This mirrors the ideas presented by Smith et al. (2024) that some students prefer teacher-led lessons where the teacher presents material from a textbook. The expectations from the students that they should learn English through a textbook have an effect on the teacher's choices because it reflects the way they learned English or how their teachers used teaching materials. Time is another aspect that both Borg (2003) and the teachers in my interviews presented as a reason for teachers to use preplanned textbooks. The interviewed teachers explained that the use of textbooks made their job easier and that it took a lot

of time to find or use authentic materials compared to using a textbook. This idea is also presented by Skolverket (2006) where teachers expressed that it was easier to use a textbook and that it felt more safe. The use of a textbook is a safe and easy option for the teacher and makes it possible for teachers to not take full responsibility for the materials presented to the students and instead choose to trust materials that someone else has decided to use.

The interviewed teachers explained that they used authentic materials because they believed that the textbook was less fun and that the students were not motivated to work with the textbook due to it being seen as more school work than working with authentic materials. The teachers used different forms or media of authentic materials to create situations that the students found more fun or stimulating, for example making an exercise into a game, to promote more interaction from the students. The teachers also explained that authentic materials are more relevant for students because authentic materials are more similar to what the English students interact with outside of school. Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) promote the connection between students' experiences and the material the students work with in class because the connection improves the students' understanding of why they should learn and therefore also becomes more motivated. The teachers also used authentic materials because they believed it had an effect on the student's anxiety to speak in class. The teachers used authentic materials to create situations where the students could interact with themes they had an interest in or were good at to create situations where the students felt less anxiety and pressure of speaking. The goal with these situations or exercises was to first get students to speak which the teachers explained was more important than the students speaking correctly. This can be seen as the same effect presented by Leona et al. (2021) where language learners improved through interacting with families and friends in situations where the language learner felt comfortable speaking, making mistakes, getting feedback, and trying again. The teachers try to create similar situations where the students feel comfortable using the language which makes it possible for the teacher to better guide the students in how they can improve.

The answer to the third research question is that teachers use both textbooks and authentic materials to create situations that promote learning. The teachers use textbooks to get more structured lessons that feel safe for them and the students and therefore can show the students how they progress while simultaneously creating an easier job for the teacher. The structure and clarity of using a textbook create a sense of familiarity and security for the students which will promote their positive views on the English subject. Some teachers in this study do explain that the work in the textbook is seen as

more boring or irrelevant to the students which is the reason why they prefer to use authentic materials or combine it with a textbook. The teachers use authentic materials to promote communication and to create more stimulating and relevant exercises for the students. The use of authentic materials connects the English student's use outside of school with what they learn in the classroom. Authentic materials can be used to move the focus to a theme or topic the students are interested in to lessen the anxiety of using an unfamiliar language. The understanding of why teacher uses specific materials makes it possible for both researchers and teachers to further develop the knowledge of how different materials can be used and are used in school. The teachers that use a material have made a choice and it is possible to learn from each other choices to become better teachers or to better understand how to use different materials through someone else's experiences. The understanding of why teachers work in the way they do is the basis for learning from each other.

Conclusion

This study examined teachers' perceptions of teaching materials, other than traditional texts, for upper-secondary English. The results of the study showed that the teacher used a combination of traditional and non-traditional materials, specifically authentic materials. The use of authentic materials was based on the positive effects observed in students' learning from extramural English. The teachers' main goal was to make their students able to communicate in English and they expressed that that was the main aspect of a language. The non-traditional materials were mostly used to promote communication and were seen as a way to motivate the students because these materials were more connected to the English the students encountered outside of school. The biggest drawback of using non-traditional materials or authentic materials was that teachers found it time-consuming to find relevant materials or adapt the materials for the students. The teachers also expressed that they lost a sense of structure and guidelines, which the students liked when they didn't use a textbook. This study shows a development among modern language teachers where it is of greater importance for the teachers to reflect on the materials they use and how they can implement modern media to better adapt to their students.

Limitations and further research

The sample size of this study was small, which diminished the credibility of this study. The small sample size also makes it hard to generalize how teachers work and think about teaching materials. Some of the teachers interviewed also work at the same school which could have an effect because

they work together. More teachers could be interviewed from more schools and the development of the interview guide could help to create clearer data that presented a more clear and relevant result. The interview questions could be more specific to provide detailed data on what teaching materials were used and to give more examples of how different forms of teaching materials were used in the classroom.

Further studies on the specific ways of using different types of media as teaching materials would further add to the understanding of how to use authentic materials as tools to help students develop. The teachers in this study expressed that their own education did not provide them with the skills to use different types of teaching materials. More research and greater emphasis on training in the use of different teaching materials in English teacher programs at Swedish universities are necessary to prepare new teachers to be able to adapt to teaching materials in the future.

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Appendix 1: Consent form

Project: The use of teaching materials, other than traditional texts, in English education for upper secondary school.
Course: English IVb, Independent Project, with a Specialization in Upper Secondary School Teaching, Örebro University
Teacher student: Moltas Ullberg

Örebro University is responsible for the collection of personal information..
Representative of Örebro University: Jenny Bonnevier, course co-ordinator.

Information about this Project

The focus of the project is to better understand what teaching materials, other than traditional texts, teachers in upper secondary school use and how they use them. The goal is to better the understanding of how teachers work with teaching materials, other than traditional texts. The goal is that teachers can learn from the result of this project and will be able to reflect on how different teaching materials has an effect on their teaching.

What Project Participation Involves

If you agree to participate in this project you will be interviewed about your thoughts about teaching materials, other than traditional texts. The interview will take approximately one hour and be recorded. I need to collect this data to gain insight into how teachers thinks about the teaching materials they use and how they have developed their thinking over time.
The legal basis for data collection is consent, in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation.

Participation Is Voluntary

Participation is voluntary. In accordance with EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and national supplementary legislation, you have the right to withdraw your consent at any time.

How Your Personal Information Will Be Protected

To protect your personal integrity, all data collected in this project will be encoded. Names and other identifying markers that can be linked to directly or indirectly to you will be replaced by pseudonyms and other encoding devices. Material collected will be stored safely and only for as long as necessary to complete the independent project. Personal information in the data will not be shared with anybody. The legal basis for processing data is consent. Questions about what information is collected can be directed to me

(molle.ullberg@gmail.com). Questions about how Örebro University processes personal data can be directed to the university's data protection officer (dataskyddsombud@oru.se). Complaints that cannot be resolved with Örebro University can be submitted to the Privacy Protection Authority (imy@imy.se).

Statement of Consent

I consent voluntarily to the data collection specified above. I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I have been provided with the name of the student teacher and the representative of Örebro University who can be contacted in the event that I have any questions

Name (print):

_____

Signature: _____ Date (year/month/day):

_____

Appendix 2: Interview guide

Information questions:

1. What subjects do you teach?

2. How long have you worked as a teacher?

Main questions:

3. What are your thoughts about traditional teaching materials?

4. Do you use any teaching materials other than traditional texts?

- For example films, music, computer games or tabletop games.

5. What materials?

6. Why do you use these materials/Why do you not use other materials?

7. How much of your classroom time is spent on non-traditional teaching materials?

8. What do you believe is the positives of working with the materials you have chosen?

9. What do you believe is the negatives of working with the materials you have chosen?

10. Do you work with the materials you would like to?

11. Do different skills require different teaching materials?

12. What have influenced your use of teaching materials?

13. Anything you would like to add?