# LEARNING FROM GIVING FEEDBACK: INSIGHTS FROM EFL WRITING CLASSROOMS IN A SWEDISH LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Jessica Berggren

Stockholm University

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# Abstract

The present thesis aims to describe teenagers as peer reviewers and explore possible benefits of giving feedback. My study was carried out in two EFL classrooms in year eight in a Swedish lower secondary school, where the pupils were engaged with the written task to write an informative reply letter in English. The teaching unit included negotiations of a joint criteria list, feedback training, peer review, and the production of first and final drafts of the reply letter. Data were collected from multiples sources: texts produced in class, audio- and video-recordings, questionnaires and interviews.

My main findings suggest that pupils can learn about writing from giving feedback. By adopting a reader perspective, the pupils raised their genre and audience awareness. Moreover, the peer-reviewed reply letters served as inspiration both in terms of transfer of structure, such as rhetorical organisation, and of ideas and content. Self-reports indicated that the pupils in my study enhanced their ability to self-assess and edit their own writing, which suggests that transferable skills were developed as a result of peer review. As regards micro-level aspects of writing, reading and commenting on peers' reply letters seemed to influence a smaller number of pupils to transfer patterns and spelling. In their role as peer reviewers, the pupils successfully identified strengths and weaknesses in their peers' writing, but the feedback comments did not include much specific formative information.

My findings contribute to research on L2 writing and peer feedback by showing that younger learners can benefit from giving feedback. This is significant since previous research has mainly been carried out at university and college level. In addition, by combining text analyses, classroom observation and pupils' self-reports, my study offers a comprehensive understanding of peer review.

**Key words:** *peer feedback; peer review; feedback training; EFL writing; revision changes; genre-based writing instruction; classroom research*

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# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CEFR | *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* |
| CLT | Communicative language teaching |
| EFL | English as a foreign language |
| ESLC | *European Survey on Language Competences* |
| ESP | English for specific purposes |
| GBWI | Genre-based writing instruction |
| L1 | First language |
| L2 | Second/foreign language |
| NR | New rhetoric studies |
| SFL | Systemic functional linguistics |
| ZPD | Zone of proximal development |

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Today, many young Europeans encounter the English language not only in school, but also through social media and intercultural exchanges (Berns, de Bot & Hasebrink, 2007). Thus, as a teenager in Europe it is possible to take part in a multitude of situations where English functions as a lingua franca; Berns et al. refer to these opportunities as the "multi-optional presence of English" (2007, p. 114). The use of the term "multi-optional" indicates that the use of English is determined by the teenagers' own interests and needs; individual choices guide their language use and learning. Thus, these teenagers are in many ways in charge of their own language learning.

Swedish teenagers in particular are exposed to extramural English through, for example, music, video games, TV, films, and the Internet (Sundqvist, 2009). Consequently, their proficiency level is relatively high, especially in terms of reading and listening. *The European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC)* (Skolverket, 2012b), which was carried out in the last year of Swedish compulsory school, evaluated Swedish pupils' proficiency as relatively advanced; for the receptive skills, the majority of the pupils reached level B2 as defined in the *Common European Framework of References (CEFR).* Ranging from A1 to C2, this scale identifies English language users as "basic" (A), "independent" (B), or "proficient" (C); thus, B2 denotes the higher level for proficient users (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 23).

This high level of English language proficiency among teenagers implies new challenges for EFL teachers; they need to meet the expectations and needs of teenagers who consider themselves competent users of English and may resist the notion of school English. In fact, one fourth of the pupils in the last year of compulsory school in Sweden expressed that they did not have the opportunity to show their English-language skills in school (Skolverket, 2008). In order to cater for these pupils' needs, it is necessary to adapt teaching to the teenagers' expectations in terms of offering challenging and useful tasks, for example, by targeting students' productive skills to help the teenagers develop a multifaceted communicative competence. However, school instruction can also acknowledge the teenagers' role as active agents in their own learning process. One way of addressing this issue is to invite the teenage students to take an active part in the assessment practice, for

instance by implementing student-centred learning activities as an integral part of the teaching. My study, which was carried out in two Swedish EFL classrooms, addressed this challenge by exploring how engaging in peer review can benefit pupils' written ability.

Student-centred approaches to assessment, as opposed to traditional evaluations performed by teachers, are conventionally collected under the umbrella term "alternative assessment" (Brown, 2004; Oscarson & Apelgren, 2011). Research studies devoted to different aspects of peer and self-assessment are plentiful; however, these methods have yet to be established in practice. The use of peer and self-assessment in the second language classroom entails loosening the teachers' grip on assessment and inviting the students into the practice and guild knowledge (Sadler, 1989; Topping, 2009), and some teachers express uncertainties regarding the implementation and efficacy of self- and peer review (Bruffee, 1984; Bullock, 2011; Cho & MacArthur, 2011; Oscarson & Apelgren, 2011). This is true also for the current situation in Sweden; assessment practices which include active engagement by students have low priority in secondary school (Oscarson & Apelgren, 2011).

The impact of various approaches to peer assessment on learning has received much attention, and numerous studies have contributed to the understanding of student involvement in the assessment practice of second language writing. These studies have, for example, compared various aspects of teacher and peer feedback respectively (Paulus, 1999; Hyland, 2000; Saito & Fujita, 2004; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006; Matsuno, 2009), examined the impact of received peer comments on revision (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Paulus, 1999; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Min, 2006; Diab, 2010, 2011) and evaluated the effects of peer-review training (Stanley, 1992; Berg, 1999; Min, 2005). However, the research to date has tended to focus on tertiary-level education and students enrolled in second language writing courses. This is problematic, as the context and conditions of secondary school instruction differ from that of university on a number of accounts, such as scope, time available for a specific task, and the pupils' proficiency level. This difference has been acknowledged by Rahimi who suggests that in "real classrooms" peer review needs to form an integral part of the syllabus (2013, p. 87). Finally, the focal point of most studies concerning peer review has been the students who receive the feedback (e.g. Tsui & Ng, 2000; Kamimura, 2006), and thus the possible benefits for the other party involved in the peer assessment activities, i.e. the reviewer, is underexplored.

To sum up, the widespread use of English outside the classroom entails new challenges for EFL instruction. One way of meeting the pupils' expectations is to recognise that they are, to a large extent, key agents in their own learning. Thus, by integrating student-centred learning activities as part of teaching and learning in the classroom, the pupils' might be able to contribute to their own learning within the school context. While there are many

studies which have explored different aspects of peer feedback in relation to L2 writing (e.g. Paulus, 1999; Min, 2005; Yang et al. 2006; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009), more research is needed into younger learners and the use of peer review in secondary school.

## 1.2 Aims and research questions

The purpose of my study is to contribute to the understanding of pupils' learning from giving feedback. Based on the notion of assessment as learning (e.g. Lundahl, 2010; Earl, 2013), a pedagogical intervention in the form of a series of lessons was planned and implemented. This intervention included negotiations of a joint criteria list, feedback training, peer reviewing in consensus groups with written feedback, and the production of a first and final draft of a written task. The theoretical framework for this study stresses the communicative purpose of the task, by combining sociocultural theories on learning and a genre-based approach to teaching.

The research reported in this thesis is a qualitative classroom study with a case study approach. The study has a dual aim: 1) to describe the young learners as peer reviewers, and 2) to explore potential benefits of giving feedback. The following research questions guided the investigation, by informing data collection and analysis:

1. How do pupils respond to the feedback training?
    a. How do the pupils understand the task and learning outcomes?
    b. To what extent do the pupils include formative information in the feedback comments?
2. What do pupils learn about writing from giving feedback?
    a. What do the pupils learn about writing in terms of structure and rhetorical organisation; content and idea development; and micro-level aspects of writing?
3. How can these findings be understood in light of the classroom activities and the pupils' perception of learning?

Whereas questions 1 and 2 focus on the outcomes in terms of the feedback comments produced in class (1) and the impact of peer review on the pupils' own writing (2), question 3 includes a more comprehensive perspective, by relating these findings to teaching and the pupils' self-perception of learning from giving feedback.

## 1.3 Outline of thesis

My thesis begins with a presentation of the theoretical framework, which contributes to the research design as well as the interpretation and understanding of my findings. Next, previous research focusing on the peer reviewer and feedback training is outlined, with the purpose of providing an overview of the research field. The Methodology section describes data collection and analysis in relation to the research questions. This section also includes a description of the participants and the implementation of the teaching unit.

The Findings section presents the results of the two-step analysis: first, the analysis of the first and second research questions which broadly represent the outcome of the peer-review activity, and second, the analysis of the third research question which entails a triangulation of these findings in light of observation data and pupils' self-perceptions. Subsequently, my findings are discussed within the context of previous research and theories. The last section summarises the main findings and my contribution to the field of research and practice.

# 2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study combines four elements: 1) sociocultural theory, 2) communicative language teaching (CLT) and genre-based writing instruction (GBWI), 3) English as a foreign language (EFL) writing, and 4) assessment theory. This section presents each of these elements and explains how they fit together and contribute to this study by addressing the different parts of the research questions (Section 1.2), and informing the research design (Section 4.2).

As will be shown below, sociocultural theories contribute to our understanding of learning, both in relation to peer review as a collaborative learning activity, and the operationalisation of learning in my study. CLT and GBWI supply a framework for the teaching unit, i.e. the intervention, by emphasising the communicative purpose of the written task, and providing an explicit approach to teaching and learning. This framework also facilitates the interpretation of the outcomes with respect to the impact of teaching. Furthermore, EFL writing plays a significant role for the evaluation of the pupils' potential learning from giving feedback. Finally, assessment theory, both in relation to teacher and peer feedback, provides insights into the different purposes of assessment, as well as a definition of feedback.

## 2.1 Sociocultural theories

My study is rooted in social cultural theories of learning, which imply that language learning is closely linked to social interaction (Mitchell & Myles, 2000). These theories stem from the works of Vygotsky on child development (e.g. 1978) which have been interpreted and transformed by other psychologists since they were written in the early 1900s. Indeed, today some strands differ widely from the original writings, and it has been suggested that the term neo-Vygotskyan is more appropriate for denoting contemporary uses (Mitchell & Myles, 2000). This section focuses on the aspects of sociocultural theories which deal with language learning and interpersonal relations. Relevant concepts for my study include scaffolding, zone of proximal development (ZPD), imitation and learning.

The communicative classroom, used to describe the setting of my study as a classroom where language use is stressed (Section 4.1.1), is in line with the sociocultural perspective on language learning which entails that learning

and meaningful use of language cannot be separated. Thus, student interaction and dialogue are significant classroom activities (Lundahl, 2010). This inclusion of the pupil voice and perspective can also be referred to as multivoicedness (Dysthe, 2002), implying that teaching and learning is co-constructed by the teacher and the pupils. Learning occurs as students move from other-regulation to self-regulation: ”successful learning involves a shift from collaborative inter-mental activity to autonomous intra-mental activity” (Mitchell & Myles, 2000, p. 195). This process is supported or, in Vygotskyan terms, scaffolded, by other people.

In school contexts, this support is described as a complex activity with a multitude of purposes, such as raising interest, simplifying, focusing the aim, indicating gaps in relation to standard and modelling (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976), and these activities have also been explored in different L2 contexts (e.g. Aljafreeh & Lantolf, 1994; van Lier, 1996). Originally, scaffolding denoted the guidance provided by adults or “more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86), i.e. an asymmetrical novice-expert relationship in which the expert possesses a clear sense of directions and consciously guides the novice towards this aim. However, more recent interpretations have challenged the conventional understanding of scaffolding as a conscious interplay between an expert and a novice (c.f. Donato, 1994; Lantolf, 2000), by suggesting that this relationship can be symmetrical.

This reinterpretation is obviously relevant for the understanding of students’ learning from peer assessment activities. Indeed, Swain, Brooks & Tocalli-Beller (2002) reviewed several studies which included peer-peer dialogue, and concluded that this collaboration can mediate second language learning. Similar techniques as the ones described by Wood et al. (1976) were employed by participants engaged with symmetrical peer scaffolding (Donato, 1994). Lantolf (2000) acknowledges that the support can come from “someone else” (p. 17), thus, omitting the notion of a “more capable” person from the original definition (Vygotsky, 1978). This symmetrical relationship has also been referred to as mutual or joint scaffolding (Donato, 1994). The fact that no expert is present might seem problematic from a learning perspective, but this reciprocal support can instead be understood as if “people working jointly are able to co-construct contexts in which expertise emerges as a feature of the group” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17).

One aspect which differentiates sociocultural theories from other learning theories is the interest in the learners’ potential development, as opposed to their actual level: “sociocultural perspective focuses on the conditions for the possibility of learning” (Gipps, 1999, p. 374). Indeed, the purpose of scaffolding is to stretch the learners’ progress by providing support within their zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD was originally defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as deter-

mined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

This focus on potential development and collaboration is somewhat problematic from an educational perspective, especially within the context of institutionalised assessment, since summative evaluations resulting in scores or grades neither take into account the process nor allow too much help (Gipps, 1999). However, the purpose of scaffolding which targets the ZPD is to promote further learning, which is in line with the purpose of assessment for learning, which forms part of the learning process, and assessment as learning, which is characterised by student interactions (Section 2.4).

In order to take potential development into account, Gipps suggests that the focus is shifted from "typical performance" to "best performance", where the latter is supported by external aid (1999, p. 375). In school settings, turning to outside sources for help during tests and exams is traditionally labelled plagiarism or cheating. Conversely, imitation is one of the cornerstones of sociocultural views on learning. Children develop their language in interaction with adults by imitating the interlocutors' use of language (Strandberg, 2006). This is applicable also for L2 learning; for instance, it is normal that L2 learners imitate and use language elements before they actually understand them (Lantolf, 2005). Within school contexts, Strandberg (2006) suggests that pupils' imitation can be derived from two distinct study techniques: one focusing on remembering facts and answers, and another focusing on understanding patterns and solving problems. Whereas the former denotes a more shallow learning, the latter entails a deeper understanding mediated by, among other things, collaboration.

The teaching unit in my study revolved around the task to write an informative reply letter. The pupils wrote two subsequent drafts, and the revision changes that they made to the first draft were considered signs of learning. This is in line with learning as defined within sociocultural theories: learning takes place in performance, which entails that a sign of learning is, for example, the use of new concepts in discourse (Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Mitchell & Myles, 2000). The operationalisation of learning used in my study is related to the idea of imitation; the pupils' revision changes were cross-referenced to the activity of giving feedback, i.e. the assessment of peers' reply letters, in order to determine whether this activity could have triggered the alterations (Section 4.4.3).

The definition of learning as a change in performance has been criticised for suggesting that learning is "local, individual and short-term" (Mitchell & Myles, 2000, p. 222). However, even if this focus on changes over short periods of time needs to be acknowledged by researchers (Lantolf, 2005), this is not really an issue since "the fact that learners are able to control the feature, if only briefly, indicates that it is within their ZPD" (Lantolf, 2005, p. 345). Thus, it corresponds with the idea that potential performance is emphasised in sociocultural theories.

This section has focused on some concepts from sociocultural theories which are relevant for the understanding of learning from peer collaboration: scaffolding defined as an asymmetrical relationship which includes peer-peer discussions and negotiations; the idea of potential development and the ZPD which corresponds with classroom assessment to promote learning; and imitation as part of the learning process. Last, sociocultural theories also contribute to the operationalisation of learning in my study.

As mentioned above, sociocultural theories recognise that language learning occurs in interaction, that is, when language is used for communication. This is also the foundation for communicative and genre-based language teaching, which is presented in the following section.

## 2.2 Communicative and genre-based language teaching and learning

The aim of this section is to introduce communicative and genre-based approaches to language learning and teaching, and describe how these contributed to the intervention, i.e. the teaching unit, in my study. Different communicative approaches to second language teaching began to surface from the 1960s onward as a reaction to methods which define language as a construct of a number of discrete items or building blocks to be memorised and accumulated before the language could be used in any communicative situation (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Research on first language acquisition challenged this view by showing that declarative knowledge developed from language use in meaningful situations rather than the other way around, thus placing production in first place (van den Branden, Bygate & Norris, 2009), as opposed to the Present-Practise-Produce (PPP) procedure which was favoured by many language teachers. This paradigm shift has prompted a variety of approaches to teaching and learning, for example content-based instruction, text-based instruction, competency-based instruction, task-based teaching and learning, and genre-based instruction.

The teaching unit, which also constituted the intervention in my study, adopted a genre-based approach. Genre-based writing instruction (GBWI) emphasises authenticity, meaning and social interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Hyland, 2004) by placing the communicative purpose of a text in the foreground. This approach is based on genre theory, which recognises that writing emanates from the purpose, context and audience of a text, instead of being guided by specific universal rules (Hyland, 2004). A genre-based approach is also in line with the most recent Swedish curriculum, implemented from the autumn term 2011, which highlights the significance of language in all school subjects. In order to receive a passing grade in English in compulsory school, it is now explicitly stated that the pupils should be

able to adapt their language use to context, purpose and recipient (Skolverket, 2011a).

Numerous disciplines utilise the term "genre" with considerably different definitions; even within the field of applied linguistics the concept of genre is not clear-cut. However, a broad definition is that a genre constitutes a "set of texts that share the same socially recognised purpose" (Hyland, 2006, p. 313). There are three distinctive linguistic schools of genre: Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the North American New Rhetoric studies (NR) (Hyon, 1996). The approaches represented by SFL and ESP are more linguistically and pedagogically oriented than NR, which tends to focus on the situational context and, accordingly, challenges the notion that genres are teachable (Flowerdew, 2002).

The school of Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics, also referred to as the Sydney School, has had an extensive impact on school teaching, especially in Australia. The basis for their pedagogy is a number of elemental genres, which form part of school and workplace practices. These are analysed and described according to their purpose, context, macro-structure and stages, which are defined as sequences of steps dictating the organisation (Ferris, 2011). In order to discern typical micro-level features of writing, the functional grammar plays a significant role. Within this approach a genre is defined as a "staged goal-oriented social process" (Martin, 2009, p. 10). Typical examples are, for instance, recount, narrative and procedure and the main foci for this school are primary and secondary school educational genres.

Unlike SFL, English for Specific Purposes is mainly concerned with professional and academic genres, which are defined in relation to specific discourse communities rather than text types. Examples of ESP genres include the research proposal, the business letter or the lab report. Regarding the definition of genre within this school, Swales proposes that "[a] genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. […] In addition to purpose, exemplars of genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience." (1990, p. 58). In line with the scope covered by SFL, ESP also encompasses both macro- and micro-level features of writing. Whereas ESP genres are referred to as "dynamic social process[es]" (Bhatia, 1993, p. 16), subjected to constant evolution by members of the discourse community which utilises them, the Sydney School has been criticised for presenting genres as more static forms (Ferris, 2011). From a pedagogical perspective, this difference entails that ESP courses usually include genre analysis, which provides transferrable skills to be used when students encounter new and unknown genres.

The genre perspective adopted in my study draws on the ESP approach. Although the SFL especially targets primary and secondary school educa-

tion, and is gaining ground in Swedish as a second language instruction in Sweden, it is far from established in Swedish schools. Thus, the use of a functional grammar approach in this study would have entailed a completely new approach to both teaching and learning for the participants.

The ESP approach adopted in my study also entails that the teaching of the informative reply letter was based on genre analysis. Genre analysis is a useful tool for uncovering the way in which different genres are constructed and applied in a specific discourse community. The primary concern is the communicative purpose of the genre, and focus lies on how language is used to convey the text's communicative objective (e.g. Bhatia, 1993, Hyland, 2004). The intention of genre analysis is to inform the teaching and learning of the genre. In my study, a genre analysis based on texts produced by pupils at the same school as the informants, made it possible to adapt the implementation of the teaching unit to the pupils' proficiency level and take their pre-knowledge into account.

The analytical framework used for the genre analysis of the informative reply letter in this study is based on Bronia (2005). The analysis was divided into three parts: First, a contextual analysis was conducted, primarily based on my own knowledge of the situation in which the texts were produced, as experienced first-hand in the role as teacher in the pilot study. Second, a structural or schematic analysis was performed by comparing the various parts of the corpus texts, focusing on their communicative function. Last, a lexical analysis was produced, broadly resembling the part referred to as "linguistic features" in the framework (Bronia, 2005, p. 70). The framework and the genre analysis are presented in Appendix A.

According to Hyland (2004), a genre-based approach in writing instruction has many advantages:

- It is based on the specific needs of the learner, focusing on genres that the learners are likely to encounter in real-world situations, whether for professional, academic or daily purposes.
- It combines both micro- and macro-levels of writing, by highlighting textual and contextual aspects, such as genre-typic lexico-grammatical patterns, structure, audience and social purpose.
- It is explicit, which entails providing the learner with transparent and lucid criteria. This is especially important for L2 learners, aiming to write for an audience whose context and cultural background are different from their own.
- It is supportive and implies cooperation between the teacher and the students, especially in the initial steps. Scaffolding, as defined by Vygotskian followers, is a key concept in most genre-based teaching models (Section 2.1).
- It is a tool for raising teachers' genre knowledge, thus improving their comprehension of writing in a second language.

Thus, apart from ensuring that the teaching unit implemented in my study complied with the Swedish curriculum, the genre perspective also contributed to my study in several ways: The teaching of the written task, the informative reply letter, was based on genre analysis to meet the pupils' needs. The explicitness facilitated classroom discussions on success criteria - how do you write a brilliant reply letter? - which were scaffolded by the teacher and the use of sample texts. Furthermore, GBWI combines a holistic perspective on writing with a more analytical approach which is useful for formative assessment (Section 2.4). Also, since this study entailed an intervention in collaboration with the teacher, GBWI provided a framework which facilitated our communication.

The third element which forms part of the theoretical framework for my study is EFL writing. The following section presents a discussion about writing ability, describes writing in Swedish school contexts, and defines successful EFL writing.

## 2.3 EFL writing

### 2.3.1 The writing ability

The importance of the ability to write in order to be a fully proficient English language user has become increasingly important with globalisation (Kroll, 2003). Earlier, the purpose of classroom writing was to strengthen the oral language use and practise grammar and vocabulary, but today the writing skill is regarded as an essential piece of communicative language use in its own right (Cushing Weigle, 2002). As a consequence, research on L2 writing and instruction has multiplied in the last decades (Kroll, 2003); however, studies including teenage learners are still relatively few (Leki, Cumming & Silva, 2008).

There is no single theory of writing to guide instructors; rather, the field seems to be occupied by different methods or methodologies, such as process writing or genre pedagogies (Kroll, 2003; Polio & Williams, 2009). Furthermore, pinpointing the nature of writing ability is a difficult task, since the use of writing in society is so diverse, which entails different needs for different categories and types of L2 learners (Cushing Weigle, 2002). A useful distinction can be made between three various orientations: text, writer and reader (Hyland, 2009). A text-based approach regards texts either as context independent entities based on grammatical rules, or as discourse, dependent on the writer's intentions. Whereas the former approach yields teaching focusing on accuracy, the pedagogical manifestation of a discourse approach relies on text analyses of recurrent rhetorical patterns in specific genres. Another approach to L2 writing is the writer-oriented. This strand

can be further divided into methods of teaching which define writing as personal expression, a cognitive process or as a situated act (Hyland, 2009).

A third orientation, which is in line with the communicative and genre-based approach adopted in my study, foregrounds the reader, thus broadening the context in comparison to the previously mentioned approaches and defining writing as a social activity. According to Hyland (2009), today writing is viewed as interaction: "modern conceptions see writing as a social practice, embedded in the cultural and institutional contexts in which it is produced and the particular uses that are made of it" (p. 42). The genre-based approach emphasises writing as a contextualised social practice. At the same time, the text and the writer remain essential elements of this practice.

### 2.3.2 Successful EFL writing

Since there is no universal theory of writing, it is difficult to define successful EFL writing. However, much of the research on writing, both in L1 and L2, has aimed to map how expert writers approach written tasks (e.g. Sommers, 1980; Skibniewski & Skibniewska, 1986). Among other things, these findings show that there are differences in the way that novice and expert writers plan their work, and in the amount of time and effort they dedicate to different aspects of writing. Hedge (2000) suggests that the three most important procedures characterising successful writers are the way they approach planning, revising, and producing reader-based prose. These three stages are both useful and relevant in relation to my study.

In a reader-oriented genre-based EFL writing approach, which my study adopts, the pre-writing stage is extensive and usually involves classroom discussions about context, purpose and audience in relation to the genre of the writing task, joint sample text deconstruction, reconstruction, followed by a teacher-modelled construction (Hyland, 2004). Individually, a writer's approach to planning appears to make a difference in terms of the overall quality of the final piece of writing. More experienced writers tend to plan their writing more lengthily than inexperienced writers; moreover, they focus primarily on the global aspects of writing, such as organisation and content (Hedge, 2000), and on possible rhetorical choices (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

The revision process also plays a significant part of successful EFL writing, and the pupils in my study received the opportunity to revise their texts after having given feedback. Although revision is usually depicted as a separate stage of the writing process, it is in reality embedded in the writing activity *per se*; the writers move back and forth in the text and changes are made as a piece of writing evolves. Nonetheless, research in L1 and L2 has shown that inexperienced and experienced writers have distinct ways of approaching this activity. Inexperienced writers tend to focus on editing, i.e. punctuation, spelling, word choice and grammar (Faigley & Witte, 1981;

Lai, 1986), whereas experienced writers attend primarily to content and idea development in order to ensure that their ideas are conveyed (Faigley & Witte, 1981; Skibniewski, 1988). Moreover, less experienced writers find it more difficult to describe the rationale behind their alterations, possibly due to lack of relevant terminology (Sommers, 1980). Interestingly, revision is rarely taught in schools (Porte, 1997), but students are generally expected to complete several drafts. For pedagogical purposes, feedback, which normally precedes revision in school contexts, can be used to draw the inexperienced writers' attention to the global aspects of writing, rather than corrections (Chenoweth, 1987).

Last, one of the key components in successful writing is to consider the audience (Hedge, 2000; Cho & MacArthur, 2011). It has been suggested that inexperienced writers find it difficult to adapt their texts to potential readers, whereas more experienced writers can take on the reader's perspective (Skibniewski & Skibniewska, 1986; Cho & MacArthur, 2011). This might also explain the different approaches to revision; for expert writers with the reader in mind, it is more important that the ideas are transferred clearly, and that the writer's intention and the outcome converge. Fostering audience awareness can pose challenges in education, where there is often no real audience apart from the teacher (James, 1981).

### 2.3.3 EFL writing in Swedish schools

As mentioned earlier (Section1.1), Swedish pupils' level of English language proficiency in terms of reading and listening is high. Written production, however, yielded lower results in the *European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC)*, although the pupils still held their ground in relation to other European countries (Skolverket, 2012b). As opposed to the receptive skills, which language learners develop both outside and inside school, writing is mainly the product of instruction (Cushing Weigle, 2002). Consequently, writing instruction demands special attention.

The written task which constitutes the core of the teaching unit implemented in my study has previously been used to assess the writing ability in the national standardised test which pupils are required to take in the last year of compulsory school, year nine. Writing tasks given in Swedish schools differ on a number of accounts from the tasks that pupils meet in international large-scale surveys. Generally, school writing assignments in Sweden are more open and not as rigid in terms of content and organisation as the tasks included in, for example, *ESLC* (Skolverket, 2012a). Writing prompts used in Swedish classrooms - and the national standardised tests - are "accordion-like" tasks, i.e. tasks constructed to suit all proficiency levels. Moreover, the guidelines are relatively free, which enables students to interpret the same topic in a range of different ways, and students are encouraged to write longer texts. In contrast, the writing tasks in *ESLC* were adapted for

different levels of proficiency, and clearly guided by information on purpose, audience and content. These divergences might partly explain why Swedish pupils received lower scores on the writing tests, than reading and listening. Nevertheless, it is clear that Swedish pupils' written proficiency is not on a par with the receptive skills; it is, thus, an important and relevant object of study.

Writing instruction and assessment pose challenges for teachers in Sweden. As mentioned previously, the development of written proficiency is mainly a concern for formal instruction (Cushing Weigle, 2002), and pupils are dependent on their teachers' ability to organise successful teaching in order to improve this skill (Skolverket, 2012a). The results on written production in *ESLC* within Sweden display significant intraschool variation, which indicates that there is variability in the efficacy of the teaching (Skolverket, 2012a). Furthermore, teachers find the assessment of writing somewhat problematic. For example, the salience of content, organisation, task fulfilment and length (Erickson, 2009) roughly correspond to the same areas which are likely to pose problems for Swedish students in international studies.

However, it appears as if these issues have influenced the curriculum. The most recent curriculum for English, implemented from autumn 2011, accentuates that the pupils develop their ability to "adapt language for different purposes, recipients and contexts" (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 32), and, consequently, the assessment of the written part of the national standardised tests should include this consideration. In addition, the pupils' instructions include a word limit (250-500 words) (Skolverket, 2013).

In brief, it is clear that Swedish pupils' writing ability needs to be put in the spotlight. Many of the issues touched on here can be linked to issues related to the purpose of writing in school and the complexity of this skill. One in particular is the assessment of writing. The following section provides a background to the different purposes of assessment in school, presents the definition of feedback adopted for my study, and introduces the idea of peer and self-assessment in the classroom.

## 2.4 The purpose of assessment

Assessment is a broad concept which encompasses all judgements teachers and students make, and it can be used for a number of different purposes. The dichotomy summative –formative, describing different views on the *why* of assessment, roughly represents what has been described as the two major functions attributed to assessment practices (Sadler, 1989; Hedge, 2000; Brown, 2004; Davison & Leung, 2009). Whereas the aim of summative assessment, also known as assessment *of* learning, is to measure the knowledge acquired by a student at the end of a teaching unit or term, formative assess-

ment, or assessment *for* learning, should function as a helping hand in the process of learning (Hedge, 2000; Black & Jones, 2006; Lundahl, 2010). The latter often includes elements of summative assessment, which is why the dividing line is not as clear-cut as expressed in the original dichotomy. In assessment for learning the information obtained from test or assignments is used for diagnostic purposes rather than grading, thus constituting a starting point for formative feedback (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Harlen, 2005; Hamp-Lyons, 2007). Moreover, assessment can form an integral part of the instruction, thus functioning as a learning activity: assessment *as* learning (Lundahl, 2010; Earl, 2013).

My study adopts the notion of assessment as learning in order to emphasise the purpose of the peer-review activity in conjunction with the high degree of student involvement. Characteristics of assessment as learning include discussions about aims, standards and criteria, as well as the use of various methods for ongoing evaluation which involve the students, for instance peer and self-reviewing techniques (Lundahl, 2010). In other words, assessment as learning emphasises the students' role in building the bridge between evaluation and their own learning process (Earl, 2013).

Assessment in general and assessment of writing in particular can be challenging for teachers. There are issues regarding the use and formulation of criteria, for example how to capture the complexity of a piece of writing in a bullet list, and the communication of feedback which promotes learning. Engaging pupils in peer and self-assessment implies that the students should be able to take on similar tasks. Indeed, including the pupils in the assessment practice entails inviting the pupils into the "guild knowledge" (Sadler, 1989, p. 126) by sharing the purpose and the aims of the instruction, and developing a joint perception of good quality and standards. This section outlines these issues, both in relation to teacher and student assessments.

A metaphorical road map (based on e.g. Ramaprasad, 1983, Sadler, 1989, Hattie & Timperley, 2007) is often used to depict how the result of a classroom assessment can be communicated. This map should provide the learner with 1) a sense of the goal (Where am I going?), 2) an idea about progress in relation to the standard (How am I doing?), and finally, 3) information about how to progress (Where am I going next?). In order to be able to assess students' work, teachers and students first need to recognise the standard or reference level for a certain task and, subsequently, compare this benchmark to their own performance. This is usually done by setting up a list of criteria against which a task can be evaluated. Literature about formative assessment is usually heavy with examples on how to present criteria for students, such as pre-flight check lists and rubrics (e.g. Wiliam, 2011). However, formative assessment has been criticised for leading to an oversimplification of the criteria by promoting the use of bullet points and easily quantifiable measures in order to increase the transparency for the pupils (Marshall, 2004).

The above-mentioned critiques claim that these representations neglect to take into account the complexity and multidimensionality of learning, since it appears as if there is only one way to move forward in order to improve a certain aspect and reach the aim (Sadler, 1989). Indeed, it is suggested that a metaphorical horizon better describes the end product instead of a one-dimensional goal. For instance, within the context of L2 writing, a large amount of criteria may be applied to the same task, but still fail to capture its complexity: "the sum of a piece of writing is more than its constituent parts" (Marshall, 2004, p. 105). Consequently, it is argued that pre-set criteria cannot account for all the qualities that constitute a well-executed written composition (Sadler, 2009). This discussion has points in common with the debate on holistic versus analytical assessment on writing (c.f. Hamp-Lyons, 1991). It is suggested that holistic assessments can focus on the whole text, while, at the same time, stressing specific features (Hamp-Lyons, 1991). Assessment criteria can also be accompanied by a variety of authentic sample texts, which function as reference levels against which students can compare their own writing (Sadler, 1989, 2009). An approach which accounts for certain aspects of writing, without neglecting the context, also has pedagogical and formative benefits, since it facilitates the communication of the classroom assessment (Hamp-Lyons, 1991).

The outcome of an assessment is conveyed in the form of feedback. However, much of the teacher response, such as grades and scores, should not be considered feedback since they say very little, if anything, about the pupils' learning process (Perrenoud, 1998; Hedge, 2000). Ramaprasad defines feedback as "information about the gap between the actual level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way" (1983, p. 4). This definition implies that feedback includes a formative element, i.e. that the purpose is to promote learning by narrowing the gap between students' actual performance and a benchmark (Black &William, 1998; Lundahl, 2010). In fact, in a criterion-based system, like the Swedish one, goal attainment should always be explained in qualitative terms (Lundahl, 2010). Useful feedback comments should target the task at hand, thus focusing on the aim of the activity in order help the students identify problem areas and also provide the teacher with useful information for future classes (Hedge, 2000). Conversely, feedback targeting off-task norms, for example the individual, can even have negative effects on the learning process (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The issues presented here are relevant also for the present study, and have been taken into consideration at the planning stage of the teaching unit which formed part of my data collection procedure. The pupils took an active part in the formulation of criteria, and the classroom discussions were based on a number of sample texts. The pupils received feedback training which focused on the communication of feedback intended to promote learning, i.e. formative feedback.

### 2.4.1 Peer and self-assessment in the classroom

The students' roles in peer learning vary depending on the purpose of the implemented activities. Topping & Ehly (2001) suggest the following four categories of approaches to peer-assisted learning (PAL): 1) peer tutoring, 2) peer monitoring, 3) peer modelling, and 4) peer assessment. Whereas tutoring and monitoring closely resemble activities conventionally undertaken by teachers, and therefore imply that peers put on the teacher role, both peer modelling and peer assessment can add a further perspective to teaching and learning (Topping & Ehly, 2001). By observing and subsequently imitating peers' work and behaviour, students can improve their skills within the same domain, but also develop their metacognitive awareness. Similarly, the development of transferable skills is promoted in peer assessment, which is defined as a formative activity, i.e. assessment as learning (Topping & Ehly, 2001; Topping, 2005, 2009).

However, some teachers question the effects of introducing student-centred assessment activities (Bruffee, 1984; Bullock, 2011; Cho & MacArthur, 2011; Oscarson & Apelgren, 2011). Their uncertainties encompass implementation as well as the validity and reliability of peer and self-assessments (Topping & Ehly, 2001; Gielen, Peeters, Dochy, Onghena & Struyven, 2010). Triggered by these reservations, several studies have juxtaposed teacher and peer feedback, using the teacher evaluations as norms or standards (Saito & Fujita, 2004; Cheng & Warren, 2005; Cho, Schunn & Wilson, 2006; Dragemark Oscarson, 2009; Matsuno, 2009; Suzuki, 2009; Gielen et al. 2010). These studies mainly examined validity and reliability from a summative perspective, by comparing peer and teacher scores and grades. However, this approach is not in line with peer assessment defined as a formative activity: "the acquisition of knowledge and skill through active helping and supporting among status equals or matched companions" (Topping, 2005, p. 631).

# 3 Research related to the study

As mentioned in the Introduction (1.1) several studies have contributed to the understanding of student involvement in the assessment practice of second language writing (e.g. Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Saito & Fujita, 2004; Yang et al. 2006, Diab, 2010). However, most of the studies to date have focused on the receiver. This section begins with an overview of research into potential benefits for the reviewers engaged with peer assessment activities, followed by a presentation of various aspects of peer feedback relevant for my study, such as feedback training, and organisation of peer-review activities in the classroom.

## 3.1 Learning by giving feedback

In a study by Lundstrom & Baker (2009), students enrolled in university L2 writing classes at two proficiency levels were divided into two groups with the purpose of studying potential benefits for the peer reviewers. The study employed an experimental design with a control group of receivers, i.e. students who only received peer feedback, and an experimental group of reviewers, i.e. students who only provided feedback. The receivers were trained in how to use feedback for revision, whereas the reviewers practised giving feedback intended to improve a piece of writing. A rubric comprising both holistic and analytical aspects of writing was used to score essays written before and after the treatment, i.e. receiving or giving feedback, and it was discerned that the reviewers, especially at the beginner level, improved the global aspects of their essays more than the local aspects. It was concluded that students who commented on their peers' writing improved their own written proficiency more than those who only received peer feedback, because of the development of transferrable skills which could be used for self-assessment.

To my knowledge, the study by Lundstrom & Baker (2009) is the only one which has focused primarily on the peer reviewer and L2 writing, and provided a comprehensive account of possible benefits of giving feedback. However, other studies have also reported findings related to giving feedback, even if that was not the main object of study. L2 students in several studies have self-reported an increased awareness of the importance of global aspects in their own writing due to peer-review activities which included

training on how to provide useful feedback (e.g. Berg, 1999; Min, 2005). For example, 70 % of the students in Yang et al. (2006) recognised that reading and commenting on peers' texts provided them with good examples of writing that they could apply in their own texts.

It has also been suggested that peer reviewers' own writing can benefit from improved audience awareness as a result of giving feedback. Berg (1999) discussed how peer response can improve students' ability to identify potential communication problems since this activity provides a "model for how to read a text through the eyes of someone else" (p. 232). The reader role was also commented on by Tsui & Ng (2000) whose results indicated that by addressing peers rather than the teacher, more effort was placed on avoiding miscommunication. In fact, the secondary school pupils in their study self-reported that reading peers' texts promoted their learning more than receiving peer comments.

In addition to the development of the students' composition skills, increased vocabulary as well as enhanced self-assessment skills were self-reported by students in Min's study (2005). Likewise, pupils believed that they improved their ability to spot weaknesses in their own writing thanks to giving feedback (Tsui & Ng, 2000), and students in a study by Rahimi (2013) developed their critical thinking in relation to their own writing.

While outside the field of L2 writing, but still pertinent, are two studies on L1 disciplinary writing. Cho & Cho (2011) studied the relationship between giving feedback comments and improving the quality of essay writing with undergraduates in physics. It was found that providing comments which focused on the meaning of the reviewed essays, both weaknesses and strengths, prompted an improved quality of writing after the reviewer's own revisions. Similar to some of the above-mentioned studies, these findings were discussed in the light of an increase of audience awareness. In addition, the enhanced written proficiency was attributed to a better understanding of the essay criteria. Cho & Cho (2011) also suggested that both good and bad examples of writing can prove beneficial for the reviewers' writing skills. In short, the results supported their learning-writing-by-reviewing hypothesis.

Another experimental study by Cho & MacArthur (2011) introduced the distinction between reading and reviewing. Physics undergraduates either read or peer-reviewed lab reports in their L1, followed by the undertaking of an individual writing assignment. A comparison of the writing outcomes post treatment revealed that the group of reviewers outperformed the readers as well as the control group, who neither read nor reviewed sample lab reports. The difference was explained by the higher cognitive process involved in identifying and solving problems, i.e. producing peer feedback. It was also found that the number of comments identifying problems in the peer-reviewed texts could be connected to the increased writing quality.

To conclude, studies within both L2 composition writing and L1 disciplinary writing have reported benefits for the peer reviewer. These benefits

include an increased understanding of the reader's perspective, resulting in meaning-level revisions rather than error correction. Moreover, reading peers' texts seems to inspire students to include new ideas in their revisions, even if there is some indication that reviewing can be even more powerful than reading only. Students have also self-reported improved critical thinking skills which facilitate self-review; this indicates that transfer of skills developed in peer-review activities results in improved writing quality for the reviewer.

As discussed earlier (Section 2.4), setting up clear and relevant criteria for a task and giving feedback which facilitates learning present challenges for teachers as well as students. The following section reviews research dealing with these issues.

## 3.2 Feedback training and assessment criteria

A recurring theme in studies concerning peer assessment in L2 writing is the importance of training in order to be a proficient peer or self-reviewer (e.g. Stanley, 1992; Berg, 1999; Min, 2005; Rahimi, 2013). This practice should include all aspects involved in successful peer review, such as feedback etiquette, what aspects of writing to consider, and how to include the formative element. The training usually involves activities such as modelling (e.g. Berg, 1999) and teacher-student conferences focusing especially on the production of effective feedback comments (e.g. Min, 2005; Rahimi, 2013). It has been observed that successful training results in higher quality comments, i.e. comments which are more specific and target global aspects of writing rather than surface errors (e.g Stanley, 1992). Studies in L1 show that more qualitative feedback also entails better revisions and outcome (e.g. Althauser & Darnall, 2001).

Being a proficient peer reviewer also means giving valid feedback, i.e. feedback which is related to the task. Guidance sheets, general or task-specific, seem to be preferred (e.g. Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996; Paulus, 1999; Zhu, 2001; Min, 2005); however, there is little information concerning the students' possible involvement in criteria negotiations. In their study of undergraduate biology students, Orsmond, Merry & Reiling (2000) let students construe their own criteria in collaboration with a tutor. Each criterion was assessed on a scale of 1-4, but it is not clear how the scale was implemented or how the standards were determined. It was observed that the criteria discussions engaged the students, but they did not expand their thinking outside their "comfort zone".

Previous studies frequently employ guidance sheets or feedback forms to assist students giving feedback (e.g. Paulus, 1999; Min, 2005; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009); however, little information is given as regards the students' understanding and use of these criteria. Still, it has been suggested that peer-

review activities can increase the reviewers' comprehension of assessment criteria (Althauser & Darnall, 2001; Cho & Cho, 2011). Another issue is that the formative information included in the peer feedback training seems to focus on pinpointing problems and offering solutions, without explicit attention to describing why this is a problem (e.g. Jacobs, 1987; Berg, 1999; Kamimura, 2006). This explanation, intended to help the receiver "fill the gap" and reduce the distance to the benchmark (Ramaprasad, 1983), might be a key element for the possible transfer of knowledge from one writing task to another.

The feedback training the pupils received in my study was based on the four steps to effective peer feedback advocated by Min (2005, p. 296): 1) clarifying writer's intention, 2) identifying problems, 3) explaining the nature of problems, and 4) making suggestions by giving examples, this type of declarative knowledge is included. These steps are derived from a synthesis of findings in other studies about peer feedback. A similar approach is proposed by Cho & MacArthur, suggesting that students practise "problem detection, diagnosis, and solution generation" (2011, p. 75). A description of how the feedback training was implemented is presented in Section 4.2.2.

## 3.3 Organisation of peer-review activities

In order to ensure successful outcomes, peer-learning activities need to be carefully organised and implemented; collaborative learning is more than "putting children together and hoping for the best" (Topping, 2005, p. 632). Studies have reported positive effects related to oral interaction and negotiation between the reviewer and the writer (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al. 2006), usually referred to as peer response groups. However, it has been suggested that the use of written communication may be more appropriate in the EFL classroom where the students might lack the skill to express themselves orally (Min, 2005). The use of written feedback entails a need for clearer and more precise comments, since the potential receivers do not have the possibility to ask for clarifications (Min, 2005). Thus, it is more demanding for the peer reviewer. One way of organising peer review in an EFL classroom is in "consensus groups", where several reviewers negotiate the feedback before writing the comments (Rollinson, 2005, p. 27). This arrangement includes the oral negotiation and text review, but without the presence of the writer. Hence, even students who lack the oral proficiency level to express themselves effectively and correctly in terms of politeness can participate in the discussions, without risking negative affective consequences.

The studies reviewed in this section have contributed to the field by showing that giving feedback can improve students' writing in a number of different areas. However, these results are mainly related to university stu-

dents' learning. Moreover, the findings are based on self-reports or experimental studies. Thus, there is a lack of qualitative studies carried out in natural settings with younger learners. My study seeks to contribute to this research field by exploring secondary school pupils' learning from giving feedback. The study is carried out in the EFL classroom, and offers a comprehensive perspective of the potential of peer review, by including several different perspectives: The texts produced in the classroom, the teaching, and the pupils' self-perception of learning are combined to provide a broad understanding of the potential of giving feedback. Moreover, the research design of my study was informed by findings from studies regarding feedback training and organisation of peer-review activities (Section 4.2.2).

# 4 Methodology

## 4.1 A case study approach to classroom research

The aims of the present study are to describe the pupils as peer reviewers and to explore potential benefits of giving feedback, which implies the use of qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. Descriptive and exploratory research in real-life settings aiming to obtain a deeper insight into a specific phenomenon is commonly carried out as case studies (Yin, 2009). My study complies with the case study definition as proposed by Yin (2009, p. 18):

> A case study is an empirical inquiry that
> - investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when
> - the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident

The contemporary phenomenon in my study is learning from giving feedback and it is studied in a classroom setting. In addition, case studies are characterised by collection of data from several sources and the use of theory to guide analysis in order to further the understanding (Yin, 2009). These criteria also apply to my study: both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from multiple sources, and the analysis was guided by a theoretical framework. However, the present study entailed an intervention: the teaching unit which formed the foundation for the classroom activities and data collection was primarily designed by myself. Intervention in case studies is a subject of debate (c.f. van Lier, 2005), but van Lier acknowledges that case studies can take different approaches along an intervention continuum, from a "least-intervention end" to a "more intervention end" (2005, p. 197). In light of this interpretation, my study can be defined as a case study with an intervention.

The fact that the study was carried out in a classroom with the intention of improving practice also classifies it as classroom research (Nunan, 2005; Dörnyei, 2007). Even though not all classroom studies are case studies, there are several overlapping features, such as the focus on the particular circumstances in which the research is conducted, the flexible research design, and the possible inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data (Dörnyei, 2007; Stake, 2008; Yin, 2009). However, by specifying that my study is a

classroom study, it is also recognised that the investigation was guided by the special circumstances involved with pupil participants.

The emphasis on the context and the real-life setting, a communicative EFL classroom in a Swedish secondary school, implies that there are two sets of aims which need to be addressed: first, the pupils' goals as learners in this environment, and second, the researcher's aims which entail the collection of viable data (Dörnyei, 2007). In order to merge these possibly divergent aspirations, the research design should endeavour to mimic the type of teaching the pupils would normally meet in their class. The research design of my study included the implementation of a series of lessons based on previous research findings related to the success of peer-review activities in the classroom; moreover, it was developed within the framework of genre-based pedagogies. These foundations were chosen both in order to provide favourable conditions for the students, but also to facilitate the analysis and relate the teaching to contemporary views on language education.

As mentioned previously, the degree of intervention in a case study is subject to debate (van Lier, 2005); likewise, there are divergent views on the use of theory in exploratory studies. This study is dependent on several theoretical perspectives (Section 2), with the purpose of providing a framework guiding both teaching and interpretation of the results. This is in line with the approach advocated by Yin, who promotes the idea that that theory might serve as a helping hand and advance the understanding (2009). Conversely, it is argued that the connection to theory might restrict the explorative approach to data analysis. However, it is also proposed that theory in combination with pre-knowledge of the studied phenomenon and the use of previously explored tools for analysis might facilitate the justification of the findings as well as accommodate the results to the expectations of the discipline (Stake, 2008; Yin, 2009). In this study, these prerequisites were met by my teaching experience and the application of theories for the understanding of teaching and learning in relation to peer review.

Moreover, a theoretical framework is a requirement when multiple cases function as "literal replications" (Yin, 2009, p. 54). The present study included two classes. These classes were taught by the same teacher, and the lessons were based on the same plan. In my thesis, I refer to these two groups as cases. This term is used to encompass not only the class as such, but also the studied phenomenon in relation to this class. The selection of parallel cases was justified by the belief that the classroom activities and, subsequently, outcomes are shaped by the teacher and pupils conjointly; in other words, relating the teaching rather than the teacher to the results (c.f. Doyle, 1977, on classroom ecology). Consequently, the use of parallel classes in this study can contribute to the understanding of the relation between teaching and pupils' response to feedback training or learning about writing from giving feedback.

### 4.1.1 Sampling

The best sample in qualitative studies consists of "individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation so as to maximise what we can learn" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 126); likewise, the case selection is one of the most important decisions a case study researcher has to make (Yin, 2009). In my study, the sampling process was purposive. The sampling criteria included a communicative classroom, defined as a setting in which language use was focused and in which the target language was the main language of instruction. In addition, it was preferable that the informants had yet to receive grades, in order to avoid focus on summative rather than formative assessment. Another essential condition was the teacher's willingness to collaborate with me throughout the study, in matters concerning content and instruction. Finally, for practical reasons, the geographical position was considered.

With the purpose of establishing contact with interested teachers, I sent out an e-mail to possible candidates via contacts. This resulted in contact with two teachers whom I met for a longer talk focusing on the purpose of the study, conditions for participating, and my expectations. However, neither of the candidates, classes and circumstances discussed in the interviews fulfilled my requirements. Instead, I approached a teacher recommended by colleagues; her classes and approach to teaching complied with the criteria, and she agreed to devote four weeks of teaching to the teaching unit *How to write a reply letter* including learning activities such as peer review. Informed consent was also attained from the school's headteacher.

#### 4.1.1.1 Participants

The sampling process resulted in three parallel cases, each consisting of a class in year 8 in a Swedish secondary school, located in Stockholm. The pupils and their parents were informed of the study via a letter distributed in May, 2011, the term before the study took place. The given information included the purpose of the study and ethical considerations. I also visited all classes in order to present the study and to describe what participation would involve for the pupils. During these visits, the English teacher of the classes was also present, and the pupils were encouraged to ask questions. The informed consent (Appendix B), signed by both pupil and parent, was collected by the teacher and forwarded to me.

Data were collected in all three cases, but in order to limit the study presented in this paper, only two of them were analysed. These two classes both had 60-minute English lesson two times per week, whereas the third class had three 40-minute lessons, which meant that the lesson plan was somewhat different. The final number of participants and external as well as internal attrition is presented in Table 4.1. External attrition refers to the pupils who

declined to participate in the study, whereas internal attrition includes the pupils who were excluded during the study.

Table 4.1. *Participants and attrition*

| Class | Number of pupils in class | External attrition | Internal attrition | Total number of participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 27 | 2 | 9 | **16** |
| B | 25 | 5 | 9 | **11** |
| Total | 52 | 7 | 18 | **27** |

In the two classes included in my study, which were labelled A and B, the external attrition comprised of two and five pupils respectively. However, internal attrition was higher; since the purpose of this study was to describe the outcomes of a teaching unit which encompassed several consecutive lessons, the pupils who were absent from one or more of the lessons during the four weeks were excluded from the study. In classroom research this is more or less expected; Dörnyei discusses this type of attrition in terms of "the fluidity of the student body" (2007, p. 188). Moreover, in class B, five students were excluded because they never completed the first drafts of their reply letters. The criterion for incomplete draft was that the pupils themselves reported that that they had not finished. One of the pupils in Case A rewrote the entire essay, which implied that it was not possible to analyse the revision changes.

The study took place at the beginning of year 8 in Swedish lower secondary school. The two classes had had the same English teacher for a year. The pupils were 14–15 years old, and all but one reported Swedish as their first language. The pupils' level of proficiency was relatively high: all of them passed a proficiency test (reading and listening comprehension) intended for the last term of year 9 in Swedish obligatory school, and most of them received scores which corresponded to top grades. The teacher had 19 years' experience of teaching English and described her approach to teaching as focused on language use. According to the teacher, her teaching mainly consisted of tasks that the pupils would not only find interesting, but that would also offer them an opportunity to grow intellectually. The classes that participated in the study had written texts in a number of different genres during their first year together: A "Dear Teacher" letter, a portrait of their favourite singers, an argumentative dialogue, a manuscript for a radio-show, and a text based on a theme from a film. With the exception of the letter, these tasks were similar in the sense that they were part of a larger theme and included some use of student examples. The teacher's feedback on these written assignments consisted of comments identifying strengths and some areas which could be improved. Moreover, classroom activities included a mixture of group and individual work. Teaching had not previously included organ-

ised peer review, but the pupils had read parts of each other's texts occasionally.

The intervention included close collaboration with the English teacher, which was facilitated by my own background as a secondary school teacher. The English teacher was presented with an outline of the issues that were to be addressed in class, as well as the material used in the pilot study (Section 4.2.1), but was then free to choose mode of presentation and adapt the teaching to accommodate the pupils' needs. In addition, the teacher and I engaged in a debriefing after each class in which we evaluated the lesson and discussed possible alterations in the plan.

### 4.1.2 Ethical considerations

This study followed the ethical guidelines promoted by the Swedish Research Council (*Vetenskapsrådet*) regarding information, consent, confidentiality and use of collected data (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). The potential participants were informed about the study orally and in writing (Appendix B). This information included a description of the purpose of the study, the data collection methods, and the voluntariness of participation. Moreover, secrecy and anonymity were addressed. Since the potential participants were minors, the informed consent included the consent from both the pupils and their legal guardians.

The teaching unit was planned and implemented in collaboration with the teacher, and the aims were in alignment with the national curriculum for English (Section 4.2.2). The teacher chose the mode of presentation and was able to adapt the teaching to the classes. Nevertheless, in any classroom research there are elements which possibly impose on the pupils' education. In this study, the intervention entailed that the pupils did not receive any feedback from the teacher, which they normally did before revision. Also, there was data collection equipment, such as dictaphones and a video-camera in the classroom, and parts of the lessons were also used for the completion of questionnaires (approximately 30 minutes). The interviews were carried out during the school day, which meant that the pupils missed part of other lessons than English as well. The schedules for the interviews were approved by the teachers and the pupils, in order to ensure that they did not miss too much of their regular education.

The questionnaires and the interviews, which focused on the pupils' self-perceptions of learning, were carried out without the teacher present since they could include sensitive information. Like all the collected pupil data, including the texts produced in class, the pupils' names were replaced by a code (e.g. A1, A for class, and 1 for pupil) to ensure anonymity.

### 4.1.3 Reliability, validity and generalisation in qualitative studies

There are a number of ways to describe issues related to validity in studies. They depend for example on the purpose of the study and the type of knowledge claim; consequently, quantitative and qualitative approaches have different sets of validity criteria (Dörnyei, 2007). Even though part of the data collected in this study was quantitative (closed-ended questionnaire items), it was not analysed using statistical methods; thus, my study is best described as a qualitative study.

Reliability is concerned with consistency and rigidity in procedures used for data collection and analysis in order to avoid bias (Dörnyei, 2007; Yin, 2009). This means that the procedures need to be transparent, and this transparency is normally achieved through clear documentation. Consequently, qualitative studies, including mine, include comprehensive descriptions of the methods used.

In line with recommendations for achieving construct validity, multiple sources were used for the collection of data in my study (Yin, 2009). Construct validity is used as an umbrella term to denote the validity of the interpretation in research (Dörnyei, 2007). In qualitative and case studies this validity is also obtained by "establish[ing] chain of evidence" (Yin, 2009, p. 41). This refers to the presentation of the findings, which should include examples from the empirical data as support. In my study these examples consist of excerpts from the reply letters and the feedback forms, as well as quotes from interviews and questionnaires, for example. Throughout the process, my data and preliminary interpretations have also been presented and subjected to study by fellow researchers, which is another way to ensure construct validity (Yin, 2009).

Generalisation, or external validity, in qualitative studies usually refers to ideas or theories, rather than population (Dörnyei, 2007). This entails that generalisability has to be discussed from different perspectives depending on approach. As regards case studies, for example, Dörnyei (2007) proposes two alternative approaches: purposive sampling and analytic generalisation. Purposive sampling, which was used in this study, implies finding the best case by applying relevant sampling criteria, and analytic or theoretical generalisation refers to the formation of models or principles from a bottom-up perspective. A combination of these two approaches ensures the validity of a case study, as long as the claim is in line with the boundaries of the study (Dörnyei, 2007).

Larsson (2008) adopts a more comprehensive model and suggests a "pluralist view" (p. 25). This view presents five different ways of reasoning, related to the type of study and knowledge claim: 1) the ideographic study, 2) studies that undermine established universal 'truths', 3) enhancing generalization potential by maximizing variation, 4) generalization through con-

text similarity, and 5) generalization through recognition of patterns (2008, p. 28). The nature of the first two types of studies implies that generalisation is not an issue. The third suggestion is similar to purposive sampling, but refers to multiple case studies where the studied phenomenon is analysed through the prism of a range of cases selected along a continuum. The fourth option which proposes that results could be transferred between comparable contexts is relevant for classroom studies. An interesting line of reasoning brought forward in relation to this type of generalisation is that "[i]t is the audience that is often in the best position to judge the similarity of a context with the one portrayed in the research work" (2008, p. 33). This approach entails that the researcher needs to convey the setting and the understanding of the object of study in a manner which renders it possible for other people to draw comparisons to their own context. Hence, studies which intend to inform classroom practice should include a comprehensive description of the teaching activities. The last suggestion is similar to analytic generalisation, but Larsson stresses that since we can never accurately predict how people will react in a situation, the generalisation is best described as a potential outcome: "generalization is an act, which is completed when someone can make sense of situations" (Larsson, 2008, p. 34).

The theoretical framework adopted in this study (Section 2), as well as the description of the teaching unit (Section 4.2.2) should function as a platform for generalisation to other classroom contexts. The transferability of the results is then in the hands of the teachers, who, based on the given information and their experience, can adapt the findings to suit their contexts.

The aim of this section on methodology was to present classroom research and the case study approach, the sampling procedure, ethical considerations and reliability and validity in relation to my study. The next section describes my study in more detail.

## 4.2 The present study

As mentioned previously, conducting a study in a classroom setting entails converging the researcher's and the participants' aims (Dörnyei, 2007). Thus, when designing a task for this project, the main objective was twofold: the task should function as a teaching unit in the two classes, and it should also elicit the data necessary for analysis in compliance with the aims of the study. This section focuses on the former, the pupils' needs, whereas the latter, the researcher's needs, are presented in relation to the data collection (Section 4.3). Before the plan for the teaching unit was finalised, a pilot study was conducted.

### 4.2.1 Pilot study

The pilot study was carried out in two parallel classes during the spring term prior to the data collection for the main study. The purpose was to test teaching materials, to evaluate the function from different perspectives, and to collect texts to be used for genre analysis and sample reply letters in the main study. Moreover, the pilot study functioned as practice and evaluation with regard to the positioning of recording equipment, i.e. video recorder and dictaphones. The teaching was based on PowerPoint presentations, and all the materials used were later evaluated in collaboration with the teacher in the main study. An overview of the lesson plan implemented in the pilot study is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. *Lesson plan for the pilot study*

| **Lesson** | **Activities** |
|---|---|
| 1 | Discussion of genre, based on sample texts |
| 2 | Joint construction of success criteria, based on sample texts |
| 3 | Discussion on how to give feedback, with examples from pupils |
| 4 | Practise giving feedback on sample texts, in group |
| 5 | Write first draft of reply letter |
| 6 | Give feedback individually on peer's letter |
| 7 | Revise first draft based on peer comments |

The texts used for classroom discussion were slightly adapted versions of sample pupil letters which form part of the assessment package for the national standardised tests. These were presented as responses to the writing prompt *Hi Ohio!,* a letter from American teenagers working on a school project about Sweden which had previously been used in the written production part of the national standardised test in year 9 (Appendix C). A similar prompt was designed for the pupils' own production, this time from British teenagers planning a school trip to Stockholm (Appendix D).

The research question which guided the pilot study was: "What do pupils learn from giving feedback?", but in this primary lesson plan the pupils also received feedback before they revised the first draft of their reply letter. This meant that it was not possible to study the impact of giving feedback only. Furthermore, it was evident that pupils who received peer feedback needed training on how to use the comments. Consequently, it was decided that the pupils would only provide feedback in the main study, i.e. neither receive peer nor teacher feedback on their own first drafts. Also, some pupils complained that the teaching unit was too long; there were four lessons before they wrote their own first draft. These remarks resulted in a revised lesson plan (Table 4.3), with six lessons instead of seven, and with the criteria- and feedback discussions separated by the completion of the first drafts of the pupils' reply letters.

Table 4.3. *Revised lesson plan for the main study*

| Lesson | Activities |
|---|---|
| 1 | Discussion of genre, based on sample texts |
| 2 | Joint construction of success criteria, based on sample texts |
| 3 | Write first draft of reply letter |
| 4 | Discussion on how to give feedback, with examples from pupils |
| 5 | Give feedback in groups on peers' texts |
| 6 | Revise first draft |

Another significant change was that the feedback on the peers' letters was produced in groups. This alteration was prompted by the variation of quality of the feedback comments produced, and it was believed that the organisation of the peer review in groups would benefit the pupils' learning. Other minor changes included some formulations in the feedback form. No alterations were made to the writing prompts. A more detailed description of the lesson plan implemented in the main study is presented in Section 4.2.2.

Apart from providing the opportunity to test and evaluate the teaching unit, the informative reply letters written by the pupils in the pilot study formed part of the teaching material in the main study. Whereas the writing frame employed in the pilot study was adapted from a generic structure of a letter, and writing in general, e.g. greetings, signing-offs, paragraph and text structure (introduction, body, conclusion), the discussions on the generic structure of an informative reply letter in the main study were based on the genre analysis of authentic pupil examples. Moreover, some of the pupils' reply letters were also employed as sample texts, which was made possible since the two writing prompts were used in reversed order.

### 4.2.2 Main study

The national curriculum for English in Sweden, which adopts a communicative stance to language use, states that teaching should provide necessary conditions for the pupils to develop their abilities to "interact with others in the spoken and written language", and "adapt use of language to different situations, purposes and recipients" (Skolverket, 2011a , p. 32[1]). Furthermore, the students should be given the "opportunity to develop their skills in relating content to their own experiences, living conditions and interests" (2011, p. 32). These aims were reflected in the task, the informative reply letter, which in this study was instigated by a writing prompt in the form of a letter written by American teenagers (Appendix C). The content of the letter revolved around the pupils' experiences and reflections about everyday life in Sweden. As mentioned previously (Section 4.2.1), the *Hi Ohio!* writing prompt was originally designed for a national standardised test. Moreover,

[1] This and the following quotes are from the English version of the *Curriculum for the compulsory school* (2011).

the informative reply letter, albeit a typical school genre, is a genre that the pupils are might meet outside school as well.

Apart from the communicative aims, both the syllabus for English and the overall curriculum include some focus on metacognitive skills. In the school subject English, the pupils are supposed to "use different tools for learning" (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 32), and part of the general goals of school is that each pupil "develops the ability to assess their own results and relate these and the assessments of others to their own achievements and circumstances" (p. 19). These abilities are also mirrored in the knowledge requirements (i.e. grading criteria) which state that the pupils should be able to "make **simple** [grade E]/**well-grounded** [grade C and A] improvements to their communications" (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 37–38). Thus, the goal of the peer-review activity in the plan also mirrors the aim as expressed in the national syllabus.

At the beginning of the teaching unit, the pupils received a pedagogical plan, based on the template normally used in these classes (Appendix E). It is based on the guidelines provided by the National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2011b). The goals formulated and communicated with the pupils were to improve the ability to express oneself and communicate in writing, and to improve the ability to adapt the language depending on context, recipient and purpose. This pedagogical plan also included information about how the pupils were going to be assessed by the teacher.

The lesson plan, which was tried, evaluated and revised in the pilot study, adopted a genre-based approach to teaching, as described in Section 2.2. This approach influenced the use of sample texts, and provided a communicative perspective on the different parts, or, in ESP terminology, rhetorical moves of the informative reply letter (e.g. Swales, 1990). A genre analysis carried out on the top twelve letters from the pilot study considered good examples of this genre within this age group and ensured that the instruction was relevant for the pupils. A description of the analysis as well as the results is presented in Appendix A. In short, five rhetorical moves were identified: *Greeting, Acknowledging the received letter, Replying, Assuring, Signing off.*

Apart from the pedagogical tools provided by genre-based approaches to writing, the sequencing and choice of activities were inspired by the five strategies for teachers to implement formative assessment in the classroom (Thompson & Wiliam, 2007, p. 7):

1. Clarifying and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success;
2. Engineering effective class-room discussions, questions, and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning;
3. Providing feedback that moves learners forward;
4. Activating students as instructional resources for one another;
5. Activating students as the owners of their own learning.

In addition, findings from previous studies informed the organisation of feedback training (Min, 2005) and the peer-review activity (Rollinson, 2005). An overview of the lesson plan is presented in Table 4.4, which is followed by a description of the different lessons.

Table 4.4. *Lesson plan*

| Lesson | Scope | Activities | Teaching material | Purpose[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Class | Reading letter and reply letter and discussing genre-related aspects of the reply letter, such as context, purpose, recipient/audience, structure and lexico-grammatical features. | Sample letter from British teenagers planning a school trip. Sample reply letter (response to sample letter) | Clarifying and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success |
| 2 | Group<br>Class | Reading and comparing two sample reply letters, and negotiating a joint criteria list for an excellent reply letter. | Sample reply letters | Clarifying and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success |
| 3 | Individual | Writing the first draft of an informative reply letter | Writing prompt: Letter from American teenagers working on a project about Sweden<br>Criteria list | |
| 4 | Group<br>Class | Practicing giving feedback on strengths and weaknesses in a sample reply letter.<br>Discussing feedback etiquette | Sample reply letter (response to writing prompt)<br>Criteria list | Providing feedback that moves learners forward<br>Activating students as instructional resources for one another |
| 5 | Group | Giving feedback in writing. | Two reply letters written by classmates<br>Criteria list | Providing feedback that moves learners forward<br>Activating students as instructional resources for one another |
| 6 | Individual | Writing the final version of the reply letter | Writing prompt: Letter from American teenagers working on a project about Sweden<br>Criteria list | Activating students as the owners of their own learning |

[a] See Thompson & Wiliam, 2007, p. 7

The aim of the first two lessons was to produce a joint criteria list, based on the discussions of sample reply letters. Next, the pupils wrote the first draft of the reply letter using the criteria list as support. The following two lessons concerned giving feedback, and included both practice with sample texts and peer reply letters. The feedback training was based on the four consecutive steps proposed by Min (2005, see Section 3.2), and the feedback comments were collected in written form. Even though previous studies have suggested that oral interaction and negotiations between the reviewer and the writer are beneficial (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al. 2006), it has also been suggested that the use of written communication may be more appropriate in the EFL classroom (Min, 2005). Apart from anonymising the writer, the use of the written mode for feedback gives the peer reviewers more time to formulate appropriate feedback.

In this study, feedback training only consisted of one lesson, contrary to suggestions promoting lengthy training provided in previous studies (e.g. Stanley, 1992; Berg, 1999; Min, 2005). In lower secondary school the limited time allotted for each subject renders comprehensive training nearly impossible. The classes in this study had two 60-minute lessons per week to cover the curriculum; therefore, setting time aside to train peer reviewers individually, for example, was not feasible. Instead, this teaching unit represented a first attempt to include peer assessment in the instruction.

Following the evaluation of the pilot study, the peer review was organised in consensus groups (Rollinson, 2005). Thus, since the group task was to agree on what feedback to include in the feedback form, elements of discussions and negotiations could form part of the peer review, even without the writer present. During the subsequent lesson the pupils revised their own reply letters. It is worth emphasising that the pupils did not receive any feedback before they wrote this final version of their letter; hence, the only input the pupils received from classroom activities was from the feedback training and peer review, i.e. reading and commenting on peers' letters.

This section has provided an overview of the lesson plan, as well as a description of the rationale behind task sequencing and activities. Next follows a more practice-oriented account on how this plan was implemented in the classroom.

#### 4.2.2.1 Implementation of the teaching unit

With the lesson plan as a starting point, the teaching unit was implemented in the two classes. In order to illustrate the instruction and the collaborative teaching approach, this section presents a description of what actually happened in the classrooms. For this purpose the two classes are merged. Overall, the teaching in the two classes was similar. The few, but potentially influential, differences are discussed in the Findings section (5.3).

The purpose of the first two lessons was to produce a list of criteria, thus setting a standard for the task to write an informative reply letter. The basis

for the instruction consisted of various sample texts, and the students were introduced to the concepts of context, purpose and audience, which were discussed in relation to the informative reply letter. Furthermore, the students were engaged in a dialogue about the different moves of the informative reply letter, modelled from the sample texts. Another essential activity was the identification of strengths and weaknesses in the sample reply letters. This procedure resulted in a list of criteria representing important characteristics of a well-written informative reply letter (Appendices F and G). The first drafts of the reply letters were written during the third lesson. The task was timed (60 minutes) and computer-written. The writing prompt *Hi Ohio!* is presented in Appendix C.

The second half of the teaching unit focused on giving feedback. Before the students read and commented on the first draft reply letters written by their peers, they practised using sample texts. The feedback training was influenced by the four consecutive steps suggested by Min (2005, see Section 3.2). The students were asked to provide examples of aspects of the sample texts which could be improved, and the teacher scaffolded them by posing questions. The purposes of the questions were to demonstrate feedback etiquette, "How can you tell her in a nice way?"; to specify the problem, "What was the question Linda [the fictitious writer] forgot to answer?"; to explain why this is a problem, "Why is it good to paragraph?"; and to suggest solutions; "What would you put in the introduction, acknowledging the writer?". A "pre-step" which encouraged the pupils to include praise and good examples was also added. The steps were also included in the written instructions on the feedback form (Appendix H), used in the group peer-review activity. It is worth noting that most of the examples jointly produced by the teacher and the pupils during the instruction did not include all the steps; this referred in particular to the third step, explaining the nature of problems.

Each consensus group consisted of 3-4 students, and the principle underlying group selection was that they should be able to collaborate well. The students were asked to read and jointly produce written comments on two letters written by classmates. The teacher scaffolded these group procedures by providing guiding questions and suggestions for each group. It is important to note that since the purpose of this project was to examine the effect of giving feedback, the students included in the study did not receive any feedback on their writing before revising their reply letter. However, the teacher pointed out that the purpose of the peer-review activity was to give the students some ideas to improve their own work.

## 4.3 Data collection

As mentioned previously, the research design had a dual purpose: 1) to function as a unit of teaching and 2) to collect the data necessary for analysis. The teaching unit has been described in Section 4.2.2, and the aim of this section is to account for the data collection. Due to the exploratory nature of my study, the data were collected using multiples sources: texts used and produced during the teaching unit, audio- and video-recordings from the classroom, observation notes, questionnaires, interviews, and proficiency tests. This richness of available data is characteristic for both qualitative research (Dörnyei, 2007) and classroom research (Nunan, 2005). Moreover, by collecting various types of data it was possible to approach the research questions from different perspectives, and thereby achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. According to Dörnyei, however, "the real challenge [in qualitative studies] is not to generate enough data but rather to generate useful data" (2007, p. 125). Hence, some of the collected data were never used; these included, for example, most of the closed-ended items from the questionnaires, as well as some questions in the interviews. Selection of data might be problematic if the researcher picks and chooses without clear criteria. In order to avoid this, I used the research questions as a guiding principle, and made certain that the sampling from the questionnaire and the interviews were based on the questions posed to the pupils, and not their responses.

This section outlines the relevance of the data in relation to the research questions (Section 1.2) and provides an account of the data collection procedures. Focus lies on the data which were used in this study. The section is divided into two parts: first, the classroom data which include the material collected during the lessons, and second, the data which were collected before and after the teaching unit. An overview of the data collection is presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. *Overview of data collection*

| **Time** | **Data collected** |
|---|---|
| Before the teaching unit | Questionnaire 1 |
| Lesson 1 | Video-recording of whiteboard<br>Audio-recordings of teacher and pupils<br>Observer notes |
| Lesson 2 | Video-recording of whiteboard<br>Audio-recordings of teacher and pupils<br>Observer notes<br>Criteria list |
| Lesson 3 | Reply letter, first draft<br>Audio-recordings of teacher and pupils |
| Lesson 4 | Video-recording of whiteboard<br>Audio-recordings of teacher and pupils<br>Observer notes |
| Lesson 5 | Video-recording of whiteboard<br>Audio-recordings of teacher and pupils<br>Observer notes<br>Feedback form |
| Lesson 6 | Audio-recordings of teacher and pupils<br>Reply letter, final draft |
| After the teaching unit | Questionnaire 2<br>Proficiency tests<br>Interviews |

## 4.3.1 Classroom data

### 4.3.1.1 Teaching material and texts produced during class

The teaching material was collected in order to contribute to the description of the classroom activities, in other words the implementation of the lesson plan. This material included the written plan of the teaching unit presented to the pupils (Appendix E); the sample texts used to discuss the informative reply letters, negotiate a list of success criteria, and practise giving feedback (Appendix I); the writing prompt *Hi Ohio!* (Appendix C); and the feedback form (the template distributed to the pupils, Appendix H).

In addition, some of the texts produced in class also functioned as teaching material. These included the criteria lists (one from each case) which were employed by the pupils when they wrote their reply letters (Appendices F and G). The lists, as presented on the whiteboard at the end of the discussions, were typed and distributed to the pupils. The distinction between content, organisation and language was added to provide a structure. In addition, the first drafts of the pupils' reply letters were used during the peer-review activity. The pupils e-mailed their drafts to me as attachments, and in order to ensure anonymity, personal information was deleted before they were distributed for peer review.

Other textual data produced in class included the feedback comments and the final version of the reply letters. The completed feedback forms were collected by the teacher and, subsequently, forwarded to me after the lesson had finished. Like the first drafts of the reply letters, the final versions were sent to me as attachments via e-mail. The criteria lists and the feedback comments in the form contributed to the description of the pupils, and the two drafts of the reply letter constituted the basis for exploration of the pupils' learning from giving feedback.

Classroom data also included video- and audio-recordings. Apart from providing useful information about the implementation of the teaching unit (in combination with the teaching material mentioned above), the teacher-pupil interaction contributed to the interpretation of the findings.

#### 4.3.1.2 Observation

Observation is one of the most basic methods for data collection since it provides the researcher with a first-hand perspective of the setting and activities, and it is frequently used in classroom research (Dörnyei, 2007). Contrary to ethnographic observation, where the aim is to provide a thick description, thus covering the entire field, classroom observation normally targets certain features of the learning activities (Dörnyei, 2007). Moreover, Dörnyei (2007) distinguishes between structured and unstructured observations, where the former targets specific features and the latter lacks a specific focus. The observations in my study are best described as unstructured; however, decisions made in relation to the location of the equipment employed for documentation, in this case video-camera and dictaphones, still entail that certain features are placed in the foreground, whereas others are in the background (Heikkilä & Sahlström, 2003).

In order to provide a picture of the classroom activities and interaction, a video-camera and two dictaphones were positioned in the classroom. The video-camera was placed in the front of the classroom, targeting the whiteboard with the purpose of documenting the development of the discussions via the teacher's notes. The microphone integrated with the camera also recorded the class conversations. In order to ensure that all oral interaction between the teacher and the class was captured, a dictaphone was placed on the opposite side of the classroom from the video-camera. In addition, the teacher was equipped with a microphone and recording device. For the purpose of this study, it was not necessary to include footage of the pupils, since individual pupils were not the focus. Instead, all pupils were regarded as part of the classroom ecology. It is possible that the presence of this equipment might have affected the informants and, thus, constituted an intrusion in the natural setting. In order to limit possible consequences of this disturbance, the equipment was placed and turned on before the pupils entered the classroom.

I was also present in the classroom as observer. Initially, the purpose of the attendance was to ensure that the technical equipment functioned and was not tampered with by the pupils, which happened during the pilot study. However, during the first debriefing with the teacher, we decided to include this method for observation since it meant that the teacher and I could discuss our impressions from the teaching in direct relation to the lessons and, consequently, make appropriate adjustments in the following lesson plan. I did not function primarily as an observer, since the camera and dictaphones recorded the instruction, but I made notes of reflections and questions related to specific classroom events that were later used during the analysis. I sat in the back of the classroom, behind the pupils and I did not engage in any conversations with them. Nevertheless, this could also be considered an intrusion in the natural setting, the "obtrusive observer effect" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 190).

To conclude, the purpose of the classroom data in my study was, on one hand, to help describe and explore the pupils as peer reviewers and possible benefits of giving feedback (research questions 1 and 2 respectively), and on the other hand to depict the implementation of this teaching unit, and thus contribute to the understanding of these findings (research question 3). In order to include the pupils' perspectives, questionnaires and interviews were carried out in relation to the teaching unit. Furthermore, the pupils completed reading and listening comprehension tests to assess their level of proficiency.

### 4.3.2 Additional data

#### 4.3.2.1 Proficiency tests

In order to assess the pupils' general level of proficiency, which formed part of the participants' background description, they were given reading and listening comprehension tests. These tests consisted of two parts of a former national standardised test in the school subject English, and included both multiple choice and open questions where the pupils had to formulate their own answers. The tests were comprehensive and took approximately three hours to perform. They were carried out after the teaching unit for practical reasons, and the selection of tests was a joint decision by the teacher and myself. The distribution, collection and assessment of the tests were carried out by the teacher, who also compiled the informants' results.

#### 4.3.2.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were distributed before and after the teaching unit, with the purpose of mapping the pupils' self-perception of learning. However, the data from the first questionnaire were not included in my study, since the areas which were covered lie outside the scope. The second questionnaire mainly focused on the pupils' perception of learning from giving feedback.

The purpose of the pupil responses was to complement the analysis of the texts produced in the classroom by including the pupils' perspectives.

The aims of the this questionnaire (Appendix J), which was distributed after the last lesson of the teaching unit, were to target the following four content areas: 1) the pupils' understanding of the criteria, 2) the pupils' own perception of their possible learning from reviewing texts written by other pupils, 3) the pupils' experience of assessment and peer assessment in relation to this specific task, and 4) the pupils' background. The first two content areas were selected in order to include the pupils' own perspective in relation to the studied phenomenon, namely peer review. The third content area mapped the pupils' perception of the teaching unit in broad outline, i.e. they were more general than the second content area. The purpose of the final content area was to retrieve information about the informants' age, first language, and years of studying English in school, to form part of the participant description.

The questionnaire used in my study was composed in accordance with the guidelines provided by Dörnyei (2003), which include attention to choice of items, formulations, instructions, sensitive items, anonymity, motivation and time. The items in the closed-ended questions were relatively short, written in informal language, and formulated both negatively and positively. Furthermore, these items were constructed as a number of statements, followed by a Likert scale with four steps indicating to what extent the respondent disagrees/agrees with the statement. The choice of an even number of steps meant that the informants had to "choose sides". These closed-ended items were subsequently compiled in random order. The open-ended questions included in the questionnaire were constructed as relatively broad *How*- and *What*-questions. Also, there were relatively few items in order to encourage the respondents to give more substantial and detailed answers. In relation to the questions concerning potential learning from giving feedback, some examples of aspects which could have been improved were provided, such as organisation, content and vocabulary, but also an open category: other. Contrary to Dörnyei's guidelines (2003), the open-ended items were placed first in the questionnaire, followed by the closed-ended items since it was assumed that the informants would be more alert at the beginning of the session.

The instructions were placed on a separate page together with an example guiding the respondents in the completion of the questionnaire. These written instructions were complemented by an oral introduction by myself during which the pupils were given the opportunity to pose questions. For sections 1 and 2 in the questionnaire, short introductions reminding the pupils of specific activities during the teaching unit were inserted.

Potentially sensitive items in the questionnaire concerned the teaching and learning. In order to ensure the pupils' anonymity, the teacher was not present in the classroom during the completion of the questionnaire; in addi-

tion, the pupils were informed, both in written and oral instructions, that the teacher would not have access to their answers. Also, the pupils' names were replaced by a code once the information had been transferred from paper to digital version.

Two additional factors which required consideration included time and motivation. The questionnaire used in my study was short; a maximum of twenty minutes were estimated for completion. It was distributed and answered at the end of an English class, so the informants were not asked to take up any of their spare time. In addition, the questionnaire was piloted by a group of pupils in year nine, who filled in the questionnaire so that potential problems could be identified. As a result of their comments (e.g. "It's obvious how I should answer these if I want to be the teacher's pet"), some wordings were changed and the instructions concerning their anonymity in relation to their own teacher were emphasised.

Questionnaires are useful tools for collecting large amounts of data, since they are relatively easy to distribute and administer (Dörnyei, 2003). However, this also presents limitations. In order to give some pupils the chance to expand their ideas and thus providing more insight, a number of group interviews were carried out after the last lesson of the teaching unit.

#### 4.3.2.3 Interviews

The main purpose of the interviews was to complement the second questionnaire and to deepen my understanding of the pupils' perspective of the use of assessment activities in class. The interviews conducted in this study are best described as semi-structured which entails the use of a set of fixed questions, but allows follow-up questions (Dörnyei, 2007). Thus, the questions were compiled after the pupils had completed the second questionnaire, and the informants and groups in which the interviews took place were also based on the pupils' responses.

The pupils were interviewed in groups to possibly lower the anxiety level, and the sampling of informants was primarily based on their responses to the second questionnaire. The main principle was to join pupils with similar replies. Three groups of informants were sampled in each of the cases: One consisted of pupils who believed they had learnt something from the peer feedback activities, another grouped pupils who had primarily stressed the criteria as main source for learning, and last, a group whose members were more uncertain as to whether they had learned anything. For each of the groups, a list of potential informants was compiled in alphabetical order. The three names on top of the list were asked to participate after receiving information about the purpose of the interviews. If any of them declined to participate, number four was approached, and so on. The interviews were scheduled during a three-week-interval after the last lesson of the *How to write a reply letter* teaching unit. They were conducted during the school day, which

meant that I had to adapt the times in accordance with the class teachers' and pupils' wishes.

The questions in the interview guide (Appendix K) were composed based on queries developed after the teaching unit and the informants' responses from the questionnaire. One of the questions, for example, regarded the definition of "learn", which was used in the second questionnaire (e.g. "*What did you learn about organisation?*"). In the questionnaires, the pupils' answers ranged from "nothing" to very detailed accounts. This suggests that this verb had different meanings for the informants. Moreover, the interviews included questions regarding the purpose of the learning activities, as well as questions targeting the pupils' opinion about the teaching unit. In order to jog the informants' memory, references to the classroom activities were given in the prompts, and some of the questions were complemented by the teaching materials used in class.

The interviews took place in one of the classrooms, and were recorded with a dictaphone. Before the interview started, I chatted with the informants about their day in order to establish a rapport. In line with the guidelines provided by Kvale & Brinkman (2009), the interview started with information about the purpose and the voluntariness of the situation, for example, the respondents' right to avoid answering. Also, there was a debriefing at the end so that the informants were given the opportunity to pose questions or follow-up on their answers. The order of the questions was respected throughout the interview, and follow-up questions were inserted when necessary.

By combining data from texts, observations, questionnaires, and interviews, the findings based on the texts that the pupils produced in class (i.e. criteria list, feedback form, first and second drafts of the reply letters) could be interpreted in light of the teaching as well as the pupils' perceptions. Thus, it was possible to triangulate the findings which provided further support and understanding of the studied phenomena (Dörnyei, 2007; Yin, 2009). The collection of data from multiple sources also facilitated an exploratory approach to the analysis; the following section describes the iterative and inquiring approach adopted for the analysis.

## 4.4 Data analysis and coding

This section describes the process of coding and analysing the data used in this study. The exploratory approach adopted for this study entailed the collection of great quantities of material; thus, data sampling, that is the selection of data relevant in light of the research questions, formed part of the analysis process. Furthermore, the analysis was iterative in the sense that the analysis and findings of a sample of the data resulted in new queries. Accordingly, more data were sampled and analysed. Consequently, the coding

and analysis presented here do not depict a linear process; instead, they represent the result of a recurrent engagement with the data.

The exploratory nature of qualitative studies often entails that the research questions emerge and are specified during the process (Dörnyei, 2007). This applies also to my study; the research purpose, to study potential benefits of giving feedback, formed a starting point, and the specific research questions were formulated during the initial analyses. The purpose of the research questions was to guide the analysis and function as organising principle for the findings. The research questions consisted of two main questions (1 and 2) and their subqueries, followed by a synthesising question (3):

1. How do pupils respond to the feedback training?
    a. How do the pupils understand the task and learning outcomes?
    b. To what extent do the pupils include formative information in the feedback comments?
2. What do pupils learn about writing from giving feedback?
    a. What do the pupils learn about writing in terms of structure and rhetorical organisation; content and idea development; and micro-level aspects of writing?
3. How can these findings be understood in light of the classroom activities and the pupils' perception of learning?

This section initially presents the coding and analysis of the different data sets separately, and next, describes how triangulation of data was carried out with the purpose of advancing the understanding of the studied phenomenon from several perspectives.

### 4.4.1 Analysis of feedback comments

During the peer-review session, the pupils used written feedback forms to collect their comments. In order to compile a relevant corpus of the feedback comments, the first step comprised cross-referencing the feedback forms with the informants to ensure that only data from the informants included in the study remained. If at least one of the group members was a participant in the study, the comments were included in the corpus. It is important to note that it was assumed that all the members of the consensus group had participated in the discussion and formulation of the feedback comments, for the purpose of this analysis. In class A, all the eight peer feedback groups still had one or several representatives left in the study, whereas in class B the feedback comments from one of the seven peer-review groups were excluded since neither of the participants was left in the study, due to internal attrition. The remaining feedback comments were typed word by word as they appeared in the feedback form.

Subsequently, the comments were divided into units of analysis, each defined as a comment concerning one aspect of the reply letter (FC1[2], FC2). In some instances, this meant that sentences had to be divided into smaller units, for instance FC3, which consisted of two units of analysis: one regarding the lack of questions, and the other the absence of an ending.

FC1 you didn't sign off

FC2 You could be a bit more specific in your letter, because sometimes the reader may want to know more

FC3 Some things to improve was that you didn't ask any questions and your letter didn't have an ending

Furthermore, each comment was coded depending on the attention to strengths or weaknesses respectively. The category of feedback comments denoting aspects which could be improved, weaknesses, was given some extra attention, since they could be carriers of formative information. The starting point for this analysis was Min's four steps (2005, p. 296): 1) clarifying writers' intentions, 2) identifying problems, 3) explaining the nature of problems, and 4) making suggestions by giving specific examples. These steps are based on previous research into effective peer feedback, and this was also the framework used for the feedback training in class. However, as mentioned previously (Section 4.2.2), the implementation differed slightly from the lesson plan. In order to accommodate for this divergence, and also in line with the exploratory stance, a combination of inductive and deductive approaches was adopted.

The first step suggested by Min (2005), "clarifying writers' intention", was omitted from the analysis, and comments regarding possible misunderstandings were instead merged with other identified problems. Moreover, an extra step was introduced to denote comments which included a suggestion, but did not contain information about the nature of the problem. Given that the steps are presented as qualitatively distinctive on an increasing scale, this step was inserted between "identifying problems" and "explaining the nature of problems".

In relation to the steps "identifying problems", and "making suggestions by giving specific examples", specificity is explicitly mentioned as a significant quality (Min, 2005). Some of the comments intended to identify problems in the corpus were rather general (FC4), and most of the suggested solutions were also broad, and could not be labelled "specific" (FC5) as suggested by Min (2005). For example:

FC4 The text was sometimes hard to read.

[2] FC denotes Feedback Comment, and will be used subsequently when referring to the examples.

FC5 OK explanations, you can even develop it more.

Nevertheless, it was deemed appropriate to code these more generic comments as identifying problem (FC4) and suggesting solution (FC5) respectively, but with the added distinction between general and specific. This decision was based on the consideration of the age and proficiency level of the pupils in my study. Hence, the final categorisation comprised four steps: 1) identifying problem, 2) identifying problem and suggesting solution, 3) identifying problem and explaining the nature of the problem, and 4) identifying problem, explaining the nature of the problem and suggesting solution. Steps 1, 2, and 4 also included a further division into general or specific problems, suggested solutions or explanations. An overview of the coding and examples of comments is presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. *Overview of the coding of feedback comments*

| **Step** | **Example** | **Comment** |
|---|---|---|
| 1 (general problem) | FC6 | You didn't answer all the questions |
| 1 (specific problem) | FC7 | You for got the question about what we talk about |
| 2 (general solution) | FC8 | Watch out for miss spelings, you may want to check that |
| 2 (specific solution) | FC9 | For next time remember to hav a comma after the greeting and then a capital letter |
| 3 | FC10 | Some sentences are a little hard to understand right away. In the 6th paragraph it was a few sentences that were a bit confusing. |
| 4 (general solution and explanation) | FC11 | We didn't understand the last paragraph, can you maybe develop it? |
| 4 (specific solution and explanation) | FC12 | It would be better for your organisation e.g. Sweden is a good place but sometimes like in the winter is it depressing (you put the sentence is the beging) |

Comments which identified a problem in the peer-reviewed text, but lacked formative information, were coded as step 1. Example FC6 is general, i.e. points to a problem without specifying exactly where in the text it occurs or giving an example, whereas FC7 is specific since it also includes information about which question the writer forgot to answer. The difference between step 1 and step 2 is that the latter also comprises a suggested solution. The comments labelled general solutions (FC8) were in most cases formulated as examples of actions that the writer could take to avoid a problem, such as "check", "develop" and "explain". More specific solutions (FC9) offer the writer advice which, if applied, could immediately solve the problem. Comments which identified a problem and explained why this was a problem belong to step 3 (FC10), whereas feedback comments which contained all the formative information, i.e. identification, solution and explanation, were categorised as step 4. This step also included general suggestions (FC11) and more specific solutions (FC12).

The results from this analysis provided information about the impact and outcome of the feedback training, i.e. the first research question. The second research question concerned learning from giving feedback, and in line with the operationalisation of learning (Section 2.1) the revision changes that the pupils made to their first drafts constituted the foci of this analysis.

### 4.4.2 Analysis of revision changes

In order to be able to determine possible effects of peer reviewing, the revision changes, i.e. the alterations that the pupils had made to the first draft of their informative reply letter, were identified. The unit of analysis was defined as every noticeable alteration between the subsequent drafts of the text; these changes were identified through a close reading and comparative analysis of each pupil's two reply letters. Consequently, the revision changes could differ greatly in terms of scope: from the capitalisation of a letter (RC1)[3], to the inclusion of a new answer to one of the questions posed by the American teenagers (RC2) or the deletion of information (RC3).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RC1 | I don't really know so much about ohio, but many Swedish people think that | I don't really know so much about **Ohio**, but many Swedish people think that (A20) |
| RC2 | we don't were school uniforms. I'm born in Stockholm | we don't were school uniforms. **Here in Sweden when you are a little child you can go to kinder garden, and then you go to the elementary school and after that you go to, almost like college. In Sweden the college it´s called "gymnasiet", it´s not like you work out every day as it sounds.** // I'm born in Stockholm (A13) |
| RC3 | I also like to paint caricatures. // **I heard that in some schools in England you are only boys or girls. // In Sweden I don't think there are any schools with just boys or girls. And I like it that way :D**. //In my school we are also a lot of children | I also like to paint caricatures. // In my school we are also a lot of children (A10) |

[3] The examples of revision changes are labelled RC (revision change). They include corresponding parts of the text from the first and the final drafts of the reply letters (2nd and 3rd column respectively). Double slashes (//) indicate paragraph break and square brackets […] indicate that a part of the text has been omitted. The revision change is indicated in bold type. The informant code in the parenthesis refers to the pupil who made the change: A or B signify the class and the number replaces the pupil's name.

In some of the instances, it was initially unclear whether the alterations represented one or more units of analysis (RC4, RC5). The distinguishing criterion in these cases was whether the change regarded one or several ideas or features of the informative reply letter. Thus, RC4 exemplifies one revision change since the informant added a number of questions for the recipient clustered in a separate new paragraph. Conversely, the two subsequent sentences in RC5 concerned different topics or answers in the reply letter: the first one is related to personal information about the writer, whereas the second addition is part of an answer describing Sweden. Hence, these two consecutive sentences exemplify two revision changes.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RC4 | what's your plan for the future? // Goodbye, Debbie, Carlos, Said and Tom, | what's your plan for the future? // **What do you talk about in your country? What are your people interested in and what do they think is funny to do? What is your favorite TV-show, and finally what are your plans for the future?** // Goodbye, Debbie, Carlos, Said and Tom, (A13) |
| RC5 | live in Sweden. We don´t have that many | live in Sweden. **I´m living in Stockholm which is the capital of Sweden. It´s a lot of forest here in Sweden.** We don´t have that many (A15) |

The comparative analysis resulted in a compilation of revision changes, which were subsequently evaluated based on the aspect of writing affected by the alteration. Previous research has provided various models of classifications of revision changes in successive drafts of writing, each adapted for different purposes, stances and scopes of writing (e.g. Sommers, 1980; Faigley & Witte, 1981). Common features include focus on the level of changes (e.g. word, sentence, surface, global), as well as type of procedure (e.g. deletion, addition, substitution). Inspired by these studies, and especially the Faigley and Witte (1981) taxonomy based on whether or not an alteration resulted in a change of meaning, the corpus of revision changes was coded. Also relevant for the categorisation was consideration for the specific genre-based task and the age group.

The analytical approach involved a flexible approach and subsequent adjustments where appropriate. A number of different levels and types of operations were introduced and evaluated in conjunction with the examples of revision changes. The aim was to find a coding scheme which accounted for all the alterations and was relevant in relation to the task to write an informative reply letter. For this reason, an iterative process which included recurrent engagement with the data was initialised, and the end result was a cate-

gorisation which included a division of the revision changes into three main categories: 1) *Structure and rhetorical organisation*, 2) *Content and idea development*, and 3) *Micro-level aspects of writing*. The two first categories, which denoted the macro-level of writing, were relevant in relation to the genre-based task to write an informative reply letter, whereas the latter, concerning the micro-level of writing, also included more general language related aspects. These three broad categories were further divided into a number of subcategories with the purpose of providing a more comprehensive picture of the aspects of writing which were altered. An overview of this division, including examples, is presented in Table 4.7.

Revision changes affecting *Structure and rhetorical organisation* were also coded either as *Paragraphing* or *Moves*. *Paragraphing* encompassed the inclusion or deletion of paragraph breaks, whereas alterations coded *Moves* entailed that a new move was included.

The category of revision changes which altered the meaning or content of the text, *Content and idea development*, was closely related to the genre of the informative reply letter, since the main purpose of this type of letter is to provide the recipients with answers to their questions. The revision changes which were placed in this category were coded according to their effect on the content: *Deletion*, *Substitution* and *Addition*. Revision changes which resulted in the omission of information were coded as *Deletions* and revision changes which caused a change in meaning were labelled *Substitutions*. Revision changes coded as *Additions*, comprising all the revision changes which in some way added information to the first draft, were further categorised as *Clarification*, *Elaboration*, *New answer* or *New question*. These categories covered the different types of information added, related to the genre.

Both *Clarification* and *Elaboration* included revision changes which added information or ideas to themes introduced in the first draft. The distinction between the two categories was that whereas *Elaborations* provided more information in general, *Clarifications* included alterations which specifically explained or described something. This difference was deemed significant for communicative purposes. In addition, there were two categories which comprised new content: *New answer* and *New question*. *New answer* included the revision changes which provided answers to questions (in the writing prompt) that were not answered in the first draft, and alterations which resulted in questions aimed for the recipients were labelled *New question*.

Table 4.7. *Overview of coding of revision changes*

| **Aspect of writing** | **Type of revision change** | | **Excerpt from first draft** | **Excerpt from final draft (**revision change in bold, informant code in brackets**)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Structure and rhetorical organisation | Paragraphing | | we can start playing like soccer with a team. I think the Swedish school system is pretty good | we can start playing like soccer with a team. **//** I think the Swedish school system is pretty good (A12) |
| | Move | | Please write back if it's something more you want to know about Sweden ore Swedes // Best wishes X | Please write back if it's something more you want to know about Sweden ore Swedes // **Good luck with your project! Hope I helped and taught you guys something about Sweden** // Best wishes X ☺ (A12) |
| Content and idea development | Addition | Clarification | from "Xskolan" In Stockholm | from "Xskolan" **a school** in Stockholm (A16) |
| | | Elaboration | I'm living in the middle of Stockholm, | I'm living in **an apartment** in the middle of Stockholm, (A16) |
| | | New answer | American teenagers. // I don't really know | American teenagers. **Almost everyone here has ''facebook'' and uses it daily. Do you have facebook? And in that case maybe we can get friends?** // I don't really know (A21) |
| | | New question | whatever we want to. When it comes to | whatever we want to. **Do you have it? And if, what do you think about it?** // […]. When it comes to (A16) |
| | Deletion | | make a lot of money **ha ha**. | make a lot of money. (B8) |
| | Substitution | | I´m so excited to start high school it´s going to be so fun I think | I´m so excited to start **gymnasium**, it´s going to be so fun I think. (A21) |
| Micro-level aspects of writing | Grammar | | In Stockholm is it a lot of parks | In Stockholm **are there** a lot of parks (B15) |
| | Punctuation | | My school it's called Xskolan | My school it's called **"**Xskolan**"** (A6) |
| | Rearrangement | | In Sweden it´s not common to play American football. | It´s not common to play American football **in Sweden.** (A15) |
| | Vocabulary | | Hello fellows from Ohio! | Hello **friends** from Ohio! (A12) |

Last, revision changes coded *Micro-level aspects of writing* had four subcategories: *Grammar*, *Punctuation*, *Rearrangement*, and *Vocabulary*. They encompassed changes which did not alter the meaning. *Grammar* included alterations regarding, for example, article use and concord, and *Punctuation* encompassed additions or deletions of punctuation marks, and also quotation marks. Changes affecting sentence structure or order of elements in the text were coded *Rearrangement*. Finally, the category *Vocabulary* included changes affecting spelling and substitutions of words for synonyms or equivalents.

As mentioned previously, the coding scheme was flexible and a result of a combination of deduction and induction. Faigley & Witte's generic taxonomy (1981), especially the distinction between revision changes which affected the meaning and those which did not, provided some guidance initially, but the final scheme as presented here was based on the corpus of revision changes from my study. Thus, it reflects the revision changes which were made by the participants in this study while revising their informative reply letter. Consequently, most of the categories are genre- and context-dependent, and also mirrored in the success criteria which the pupils used as support when revising.

In order to ensure reliability, the coding of the revision changes was repeated several times, a couple of weeks apart. An external rater analysed the thirty-seven revision changes made by two of the informants (13% of the total number of alterations). There was disagreement in three of the cases; one of them was due to lack of contextual information, and the others caused by uncertainties about the labels. After discussion of these three instances there was a complete interrater agreement.

The analysis of revision changes resulted in a coding scheme which provided information about the informants' alterations. These data formed the basis for the analysis conducted to study possible relations to the peer-review activity, which is described in the following section.

### 4.4.3 Analysis of links between revision changes and the peer-review activity

The purpose of this analysis was to identify possible links between the pupils' revision changes and the peer-review activity in order to identify signs of learning. Before the procedure is described, it is important to clarify the foundation for this analysis. First, learning from giving feedback was operationalised as a revision change which could be linked to either a feedback comment or the content of reviewed peer letters. Second, for the purpose of this analysis, the feedback comments were assumed to be the written outcome of a discussion in the consensus group, in other words, the result of an evaluation of a specific aspect of the reviewed letter. For example, the com-

ment “you can answer more questions” would then have been proceeded by an assessment of the criterion/move *Answer all the questions* (Criteria list, Case A). Thus, the link (LC2, see below) indicated that the discussion about this criterion/move had prompted the writer to evaluate the same aspect of their writing. For the purpose of this analysis, the feedback comments were treated as “general”: for example, the comment “Please, check your spelling. e.g. kindergarten” was treated as the outcome of a discussion about spelling.

Initially, the analysis focused on the revision changes and the feedback comments, representing the result of the peer-review activity. However, while studying the pupils’ reply letter and their changes, similarities between different pupils’ letters suggested that the content of the reviewed letters had prompted some changes. Therefore, the peer review was divided into two activities: reading and commenting. During this analysis the informants’ revision changes were cross-referenced to the content of the peer reply letter and to the comments produced in the consensus group. Examples of identified links between peer comments and revision changes are presented in examples LC1[4], LC2 and LC3, and examples of links between reading and revision changes are represented by examples LR1[5], LR2 and LR3.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC1 | and guitars, my friends and I go | and **guitars. My** friends and I go (A16) | you had perfect length of the sentences |
| LC2 | think that? // Some more questions | think that? // **I haven’t decided what I want to be when I grow up, but I probably want to travel to some warm place after high school and work there. After that I don’t know yet.** // Some more questions (A20) | you can answer more questions |
| LC3 | a really popular sport | a really popular sport | You could be a bit |

[4] The examples of links between revision changes and peer comments are labelled LC (Link to Comment). They are presented in three columns: excerpt from first draft, excerpt from final version, and feedback comment. Double slashes (//) indicate paragraph break. The revision change is indicated in bold type. The informant code in the parenthesis refers to the pupil who made the change: A or B signifies the class and the number replaces the pupil’s name

[5] The examples of links between revision changes and reading, i.e. content of the reviewed letter, are labelled LR (Link to Reading). They are presented in three columns: excerpt from first draft, excerpt from final version, and excerpt of content from the reviewed peer reply letter. Double slashes (//) indicate paragraph break and square brackets […] indicate that a part of the text has been omitted. The revision change is indicated in bold type. The informant code in the parenthesis refers to the pupil who made the change: A or B signifies the class and the number replaces the pupil’s name

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | here. | here. **Many people have favourite football-teams.** (A1) | more specific |
| LR1 | 8:th class. // Now I have some questions | 8:th grad. // **But we are not as much students as in your school. I think we are around 700 people in my school.** // Now I have some questions… (A10) | In my school it is like around 700 students (A21) |
| LR2 | classes just for 8:th class. // | classes just for 8:th **grad.** // (A10) | I'm in 8th grade (A19) |
| LR3 | ore Swedes // Best wishes X | ore Swedes // **Good luck with your project! Hope I helped and taught you guys something about Sweden** // Best wishes X (A12) | And last good luck on the project! […] more about Sweden now (A16) |

Connections between the content of the peer-reviewed letters and the reviewers' subsequent revision changes regarded transfer of ideas and content, similarities in rhetorical organisation, and use of comparable phrases. This analysis provided information about the extent to which peer reviewing had influenced subsequent revision changes. In combination with the coding of the revision changes as described in the previous section, it was also possible to pinpoint which aspects of writing were affected.

This analysis did not take into account the number of feedback comments pertaining to the different aspects of writing. Overall, there were more comments which regarded content and idea development; however, this aspect also included more subcategories.

The analyses presented so far contributed to the findings related to research questions 1 and 2. In order to account for teaching and the pupils' self-perceptions of learning (research question 3), the findings corresponding to the first two research questions were triangulated with data obtained from classroom observation, questionnaires and interviews.

### 4.4.4 Triangulation of data

My findings from the text analyses were triangulated with observation data and pupils' self-reports from questionnaires and interviews in order to expand the understanding of the pupils as peer reviewers and learning from giving feedback. Triangulation is broadly defined as "mixing methods", and this mixing can concern, for instance, data collection techniques, methods

for analysis, and application of theories (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 156). The purpose is usually to gain deeper insights into a phenomenon or to validate findings (Dörnyei, 2007). Thus, in my study, it was possible to interpret the findings related to the feedback comments and the revision changes in light of the teaching and the pupils' self-perception. In fact, it has been suggested that triangulation is especially relevant for classroom research in general and peer revision in particular (McGroarty & Zhu, 1997). This section first describes how the additional data was analysed, followed by a description of the triangulation process.

#### 4.4.4.1 Video-recordings of the instruction

The video-recordings of the instruction were transcribed in three steps: First, each lesson was divided in different parts depending on purpose, such as *Introduction*, *Discussion of sample texts*, or *Feedback training*. Second, each of these episodes was transcribed broadly, in order to provide an overview of what happened in the classroom. This transcription covered the interaction between pupils and teacher, as well as the text on the whiteboard, but the dialogues were not rendered exactly. This version was later used to identify episodes relevant for the interpretation of the results of research questions 1 and 2; the selected episodes were subsequently transcribed word by word. Full stops were inserted to denote longer pauses, and question marks were used to denote questions. In the Findings section (5), examples from this transcription are labelled *Classroom (CR)*.

#### 4.4.4.2 Questionnaires

The purpose of the questionnaire distributed after the teaching unit was to map the pupils' self-perceptions of learning in relation to peer feedback. In order to limit and focus the scope of my study, only the items which were relevant in relation to the research questions were analysed. These are presented in Appendix J. The closed-ended items included in the questionnaires were answered on a Likert scale of four steps: "do not agree", "agree to some extent", "agree almost completely", and "agree completely". For the analysis the pupils' responses were collected and counted. No statistical analyses were applied.

The open-ended questions were transcribed word by word and transferred into a spread-sheet. Subsequently, the coding followed the procedure suggested by Dörnyei (2007): read several times to get to know the data, mark interesting passages and give these relevant labels. Some pupils chose not to respond to all questions (usually indicated with a hyphen), and these were labelled "no answer". The responses used as examples in my thesis were translated into English.

The coded responses were used to triangulate and interpret the findings related to research questions 1 and 2 (Section 4.4.4.4). In the Findings section (5), examples from the questionnaires are labelled *Pupil response (PR)*.

#### 4.4.4.3 Interviews

The interviews, which also contributed to the interpretation of the pupils as peer reviewers and the pupils' learning from giving feedback, were transcribed word by word using the software *Express Scribe*. Full stops were inserted to denote longer pauses, and question marks were used to denote questions. Next, the responses were coded using the same procedure as described in the previous section (4.3.2.2). When referred to in the Findings section (5), examples from the interviews are labelled *Pupil response (PR)*.

#### 4.4.4.4 Triangulation

In my study, triangulation entailed cross-referencing findings from the text analyses with data obtained from classroom observations and pupils' self-perception of learning. This procedure entailed studying the pupil responses from questionnaires and interviews, and the transcripts of the classroom interaction (including the whiteboard) in light of the findings from the text analyses. Table 4.8 presents an overview of the triangulation of the findings from research questions 1 and 2 and the additional data. This analysis also included a comparison of the findings in the two cases.

The data from the questionnaire item *I found the criteria useful* initially formed part of this process; however, in several instances this data contradicted the pupils' responses to the question regarding how the pupils had used the criteria. Pupils who had self-reported that they found the criteria very useful ("agree completely" on the Likert scale) also reported that they had not used the criteria (open-ended question). It was decided to only include the data from the open-ended questions, which were considered more reliable.

On individual level, the pupils' responses did not always agree with the text analysis, i.e. someone who believed that they had learnt new words for example, had not made any revision changes affecting vocabulary. The text analysis, which linked revision changes to peer review, identified learning which resulted in alterations. It is also possible that the pupils learnt new words which they did not include in their own text, or that they understood the importance of paragraphing, evaluated their own text, and decided not to change anything.

Table 4.8. *Overview of data triangulation*

| **Research question 3: How can these findings [from research questions 1 and 2] be understood in light of the classroom activities and the pupils' perception of learning?** | |
|---|---|
| 1. How do pupils respond to the feedback training?<br>a. How do the pupils understand the task and learning outcomes?<br>b. To what extent do the pupils include formative information in the feedback comments? | Interview question: *What was the aim of this teaching unit? What were you supposed to learn?*<br>Questionnaire item: *I know the aim of this teaching unit*<br>Interview question: *Why did you negotiate the criteria lists?*<br>(Questionnaire item: *I found the criteria useful*)<br>Questionnaire item: *How did you use the criteria when you wrote your own texts?*<br>Transcript from classroom observation |
| 2. What do pupils learn about writing from giving feedback?<br>a. What do the pupils learn about writing in terms of structure and rhetorical organisation; content and idea development; and micro-level aspects of writing? | Interview question: *How do you know that you have learnt something?*<br>Interview question: *What was the purpose of giving feedback?*<br>Questionnaire items: *What did you learn about*<br>• *Organisation/Structure*<br>• *Content*<br>• *Phrases/Expressions/Vocabulary*<br>• *Grammar*<br>*from giving feedback?*<br>Questionnaire item: *I've learnt something by looking at my peers' reply letters*<br>Questionnaire item: *I can self-assess the quality of my own letter*<br>Transcript from classroom observation |

To conclude, the data from a multitude of sources were evaluated and analysed with the aim of exploring and describing what pupils learn from giving feedback: classroom material such as the joint criteria list, feedback comments written during the peer-review activity, the two subsequent drafts of the informative reply letter and video-recordings, as well as additional material from two questionnaires and interviews. During the analysis the data were categorised, cross-referenced and compared in order to answer the research questions.

# 5 Findings

This section presents the findings from my study. First, the analyses of the feedback and the revision changes cross-referenced with comment and content of the peer-reviewed reply letters in each case are reported, followed by a section in which these results are interpreted in light of the observation data as well as student responses from the questionnaires and interviews. Thus, the first part focuses on the outcome of the peer-review activity, i.e. the feedback comments, and the revision changes made to the first draft. The revision changes which could be linked to either the peer-reviewed reply letters or feedback comments were considered signs of learning from giving feedback in this study. Subsequently, the results from Cases A and B are explored in relation to the classroom activities and the pupils' self-perception of the teaching unit. It is in this second part that the research questions are addressed:

1. How do pupils respond to the feedback training?
    a. How do the pupils understand the task and learning outcomes?
    b. To what extent do the pupils include formative information in the feedback comments?
2. What do pupils learn about writing from giving feedback?
    a. What do the pupils learn about writing in terms of structure and rhetorical organisation; content and idea development; and micro-level aspects of writing?
3. How can these findings be understood in light of the classroom activities and the pupils' perception of learning?

In order to separate various types of data, the examples used to illustrate the findings and interpretations are labelled either classroom (CR), feedback comment (FC), revision change (RC), pupil response (PR), link to comment (LC), or link to reading (LR). The examples are numbered and formatted according to the outline given in Table 5.1. The codes in brackets after the examples refer to the pupil from whom the example was borrowed; the code consists of a letter, A or B, denoting the case, and a number representing the informant (e.g. A1).

Table 5.1. *Outline of formatting of examples in Findings*

| **Example** | **Presentation** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CR | Example from classroom (teacher, pupil, or whiteboard) | | |
| FC | Feedback comment | | |
| PR | Pupil response (informant code) | | |
| RC | Excerpt from first draft | Excerpt from second draft with change in bold (informant code) | |
| LC | Excerpt from first draft | Excerpt from second draft with change in bold (informant code) | Feedback comment |
| LR | Excerpt from first draft | Excerpt from second draft with change in bold (informant code) | Excerpt from reviewed letter (informant code) |

In addition to these examples, tables and figures are used to illustrate the findings.

## 5.1 Case A

### 5.1.1 Feedback comments

Two of the comments from this case were excluded from the corpus since they did not relate to the task: one referred to the font used (FC13), and one gave some general praise (FC14).

FC13 The letter size was right first but then it was to big

FC14 X, we think that you did a good job

In Case A, there were 83 task-relevant feedback comments which focused on both well-executed features of writing and on areas which could be improved. As presented in Table 5.2, the total number of comments produced by each group ranged from six to sixteen. All the groups were given two peer reply letters, but due to the time restriction only three (B, C, D) commented on both of the texts. Since every group had included pencil markings in both the texts, it was assumed that the pupils had read the two texts, but not discussed them enough to produce joint feedback comments. The three groups which had included feedback comments on both texts naturally had a higher number of written comments (see Table 5.2). However, this quantitative difference did not entail a higher quality in terms of formative information.

Table 5.2. *Categorisation of feedback comments in Case A*

| Consensus group | Good aspects[a] | Step 1[b] | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 7 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | **10** |
| B | 8 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | **13** |
| C | 12 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | **16** |
| D | 5 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | **12** |
| E | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | **9** |
| F | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | **6** |
| G | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | **8** |
| H | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | **9** |
| **Total** | **47** | **13** | **15** | **1** | **7** | **83** |

[a]"Good aspects" refers to the feedback comments which provided information about strengths.
[b]The steps refer to the categorisation of the feedback comments which is presented in Section 4.4.1.

Moreover, there was variation among the groups as regards the proportion of comments on good aspects related to comments on problems: from one third of the comments (group H) to three quarters (group C). The feedback comments which concerned problems were analysed in order to determine their quality in terms of formative information. The results of this qualitative analysis are presented in Table 5.2. Nearly two thirds of the comments which pinpointed weaknesses (23 out of 36) included some formative information, i.e. information intended to help the reader improve the text.

Among the feedback comments which concerned identified problems, both general and specific comments were found. The general comments mainly regarded the lack of questions for the recipients (FC15, FC16).

FC15 And you didn't really asked any questions

FC16 Some things to improve was that you didn't ask any questions

The specified problems contained more information, such as which particular question the writer had neglected to answer (FC17), or which specific move the writer had forgotten to include (FC18).

FC17 You for got the question about what we talk about

FC18 You didn't sign off

Most of the comments labelled step 2, identifying problem and suggesting solution, provided general advice on how to solve the problem (FC19, FC20). In comparison to the comments in step 1, these included explicit suggestions on how the potential problem could be solved. However, most of these suggestions did not contain specific information, for example indicating which sentences should be shorter (FC19) to guide writers without the knowledge required to fix the problem, even if comment FC20 could be interpreted as an attempt to do so: "[m]ore dots".

FC19 You could try to write shorter sentences

FC20 More dots maybe your sentasise were to long

Although a great deal of the comments provided rather general suggestions, there were some examples of more specific solutions. These mainly regarded micro-level aspects of writing, such as punctuation (FC21), and grammar (FC22), where the dividing line between correct and incorrect is relatively clear. However, here were also a couple of suggestions linked to organisation, e.g. indicating where the writer could include a new paragraph break (FC23).

FC21 Next time you will write a letter try to remember to use a comma in the beginning

FC22 Some gramma like (rest Sweden) should be rest of Sweden

FC23 We think he cold have used more paragraphing, eg greater school in Stockholm

The remaining comments pertaining to steps 3 and 4 included an explanation intended to describe why the identified problem was an issue. All of these explanations were related to the recipient, for example, by pointing out potential problems regarding understanding (FC24, FC25), politeness (FC26, FC27), or information (FC28).

FC24 Some sentences are a little hard to understand right away. In the 6th paragraph it was a few sentences that were a bit confusing.

FC25 maybe you shoulden't had so many Swedish words, the once in Ohio want understand

FC26 We think that you could be a little more polite for example not telling them that they are rich and spoiled

FC27 Please ask questions so you can keep the contact with the recipient.

FC28 You could be a bit more specific in your letter, because sometimes the reader may want to know more

Example FC24 was the only example which was labelled step 4, since it contained an explanation, but lacked a suggested solution. As regards step 5, the suggestions were both general (e.g. FC27) and more specific (e.g. FC26).

### 5.1.2 Revision changes and links to peer review

The total number of revision changes in this case was 283, and more than 60 % of these affected the macro-level of writing, i.e. structure and content (Table 5.3). However, there were huge individual differences; revision

changes performed by the individual informants ranged from seven to thirty-one.

Table 5.3. *Distribution of revision changes in Case A*

| Aspect of writing | Type of revision change | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Structure and rhetorical organ-isation | Paragraphing | 19 | 23 |
| | Move | 4 | |
| Content and idea development | Addition | 112 | 155 |
| | Substitution | 29 | |
| | Deletion | 14 | |
| Micro-level aspects of writing | Vocabulary | 38 | 105 |
| | Punctuation | 24 | |
| | Rearrangement | 24 | |
| | Grammar | 19 | |
| | | **Total** | **283** |

The category *Content and idea development* was considerably the largest one, including more than half of the alterations, and the subset of changes labelled *Addition* outnumbered the other categories at the same level (RC6, RC7) (Table 5.4).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RC6 | and rivers, and we also have some | and rivers. **It´s very much nature reservations and** we also have some (A13) |
| RC7 | But at the winter it's really cold and dark so at the mornings you just wish that you could stay in bed and don't go anywhere before the spring comes. // Some famous things here in Stockholm | But at the winter it's really cold and dark so at the mornings you just wish that you could stay in bed and don't go anywhere before the spring comes. **If didn't live in Sweden I think I want live o a little bit warmer place like Spain, Italy or maybe somewhere in Africa .**Do you like to live in Ohio? // Some famous things here in Stockholm (A8) |

Table 5.4. *Distribution of revision changes in* Content and idea development *in Case A*

| Type of revision change | Number |
|---|---|
| Elaboration (Addition) | 66 |
| Substitution | 29 |
| New answer (Addition) | 20 |
| New question (Addition) | 18 |
| Deletion | 14 |
| Clarification (Addition) | 8 |
| **Total** | **155** |

A more comprehensive analysis of the revision changes which affected the content revealed that elaborations which provided more information about topics introduced already in the first draft (RC8, RC9) and substitutions which altered the meaning (RC10, RC11) were the most common operations.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RC8 | in first grade and goes up a step | in like a **"preschool"** and go up a step (A12) |
| RC9 | Our school system is quite okay. I'm in the 8th grade | Our school system is very good, I think that our education (A9) |
| RC10 | in this big country. // The children in Sweden | in this big country. **The three biggest cities in Sweden are Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö.** // The children in Sweden (A10) |
| RC11 | the future? // Goodbye, Debbie, | the future? // **What do you talk about in your country? What are your people interested in and what do they think is funny to do? What is your favorite TV-show, and finally what are your plans for the future?** // Goodbye, Debbie, (A13) |

Other examples of content-altering revision changes were the inclusion of new answers to questions posed in the writing prompt (RC12, RC13) and questions for the recipients (RC14, RC15).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RC12 | were school uniforms. I'm born in Stockholm | were school uniforms. **Here in Sweden when you are a little child you can go to kinder garden, and then you go to the elementary school and after that you go to, almost like college. In Sweden the college it´s called "gymmnasiet", it´s not like you work out every day as it sounds.** // I'm born in Stockholm (A13) |
| RC13 | watch family guy. // I hope knows | watch family guy. // **My plans for the future… / Maybe I want to be a doctor but I know that it's really hard and you have to have very high grades for that and really work hard in school. Maybe I could work with nails as** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | **I do right now. At the moment people give me a call and then I "fix" there nails at their home so it would be fun to have an own salon**. What are your plans for the future? // I hope know (A8) |
| RC14 | with each other. | with each other. **Do you have a "inferno online"?** I have heard that it is "inferno online" in other countries. (A3) |
| RC15 | In my school we don't wear school uniforms. We can wear whatever we want to. When it comes to | In my school we don't wear school uniforms. We can wear whatever we want to. **Do you have it? And if, what do you think about it?** // […]. When it comes to (A6) |

Some of the revision changes entailed the deletion of information from the first draft, for example content about teenagers' interests in general (RC16) or the information that "gymnastics" is an obligatory school subject (RC17). Moreover, a small share of the alterations included clarifications, mainly concerned with additional information to facilitate understanding and communication, such as the inclusion of the explanation "a school" (RC18) in relation to the name of the school which, in Swedish, includes this information.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RC16 | different things. But I´m interested in music **and some are interested in sports**. // | different things. But I´m interested in music. // (A10) |
| RC17 | We don´t have a football team, or any other activities in school besides from gymnastics. **(which is obligated )** | We don´t have a football team, or any other activities in school besides from gymnastics. (A2) |
| RC18 | I'm writing you back from "[name of school]" In Stockholm | I'm writing you back from "[name of school]" **a school** in Stockholm (A16) |

Changes altering the generic structure of the informative reply letter were relatively few (23); these alterations comprised both the inclusion of a new move, for example *Signing off* (RC19), and paragraph breaks to indicate a different reply (RC20). The most common of the revision changes regarding micro-level aspects of writing, concerned vocabulary, e.g. corrections of spelling (RC21) or the substitution of a word for an equivalent (RC22).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RC19 | Good luck at your European project! // X | Good luck at your European project! // **Best regards,** X (A2) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RC20 | and there you plugs after high school and that´s for the one who got the best result. In my school it is like around 700 students | and there you study after gymnasium and that´s for the one who got the best results and wants' to get better. […] // In my school it is like around 700 students (A21) |
| RC21 | Do you have shool uniforms? | Do you have **school** uniforms? (A20) |
| RC22 | friends, play TV-games and sports. | friends, play **videogames** and sports, (A22) |

The connections between the revision changes and the peer-review activity constitute the operationalisation of learning in my study. An overview of these links is presented in Figure 5.1. There was a huge variation between the different types of alterations; whereas most of the changes affecting the organisation of the reply letter seemed to be influenced by giving feedback, some of the categories had very few links.

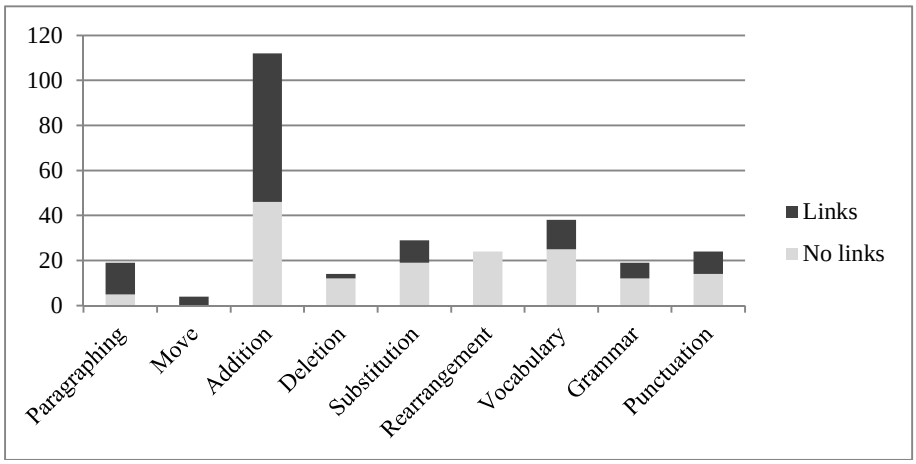


Figure 5.1. *Links between revision changes and peer review in Case A*

### 5.1.2.1 Structure and rhetorical organisation

As noted previously, there were relatively few revision changes altering the structure or rhetorical organisation (24 out of 282) of the reply letters. Nonetheless, a high number of these seemed to be influenced by the peer-review activity (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5. *Links to revision changes in* Structure and rhetorical organisation *in Case A*

| **Type of revision change**[a] | **Total**[b] | **Number of links**[c] | **Students with links**[d] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Paragraphing | 19 | 14 (14/1) | 7 |
| Move | 4 | 4 (0/4) | 4 |

[a] See Table 4.7. [b] Number of revision changes in Case A. [c] Number of revision changes that could be linked to peer review (commenting/reading). [d] Number of students who had made revision changes that could be linked to peer review.

For example, all the four changes regarding *Move* could be linked to the same move in peers' letters. These alterations included the insertion of the move *Assuring* with similar content as in the reviewed letter (LR4) and *Acknowledging the writer* at the beginning of the reply letter (LR5).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LR4 | my dad and grandfather. // best regards X | my dad and grandfather. // **Now I need to go because I'm stating my other lesson soon. I hope this letter helped you. Goodbye ☺** // Best regards X (A3) | I'm short of time so this is all I mannish to write. I really hope my letter helped you with your assignment. (A19) |
| LR5 | But now we are friends. // In Sweden there are | But now we are friends. **I think there are very cool that you have a working with Sweden.** // In Sweden there are (A10) | How fun that you write about Europe. I have match to tell you about Sweden. (A21)<br>I think your project sounds really interesting and would love to help you with facts about Sweden (A19) |

Three quarters of the revision changes which altered the paragraphing in the final version of the reply letter could be attributed to the peer-review activity. Even if the total number of alterations (19) was low, 7 of the 15 pupils in this case made the changes after having discussed paragraphing in the consensus groups. The paragraph breaks were introduced to separate different answers in the replying part of the letter (LC4), or, as was the case in the only change which was linked to reading, to divide one paragraph in two. This resulted in the move *Acknowledging* being separated from *Replying*, as it was in the reviewed letter (LR6).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC4 | soccer with a team. I think the Swedish school | soccer with a team. // I think the Swedish school (A12) | You haved good paragrafing. |
| LR6 | you about Sweden. Sweden is a country | you about Sweden and answer your questions. // Sweden is a country (A13) | would love to help you with facts about Sweden. // My name is X (A19) |

#### 5.1.2.2 Content and idea development

The vast majority of the pupils, 14 out of 15, made revision changes which added information to the content of the reply letters, inspired by both reading and commenting on their peers' reply letters (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6. *Links to revision changes in* Content and idea development *in Case A*

| **Type of revision change**[a] | **Total**[b] | **Number of links**[c] | **Students with links**[d] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Addition | 112 | 66 (39/39) | 14 |
| Deletion | 14 | 2 (1/1) | 2 |
| Substitution | 29 | 10 (0/10) | 7 |

[a] See Table 4.7. [b] Number of revision changes in Case A. [c] Number of revision changes that could be linked to peer review (commenting/reading). [d] Number of students who had made revision changes that could be linked to peer review

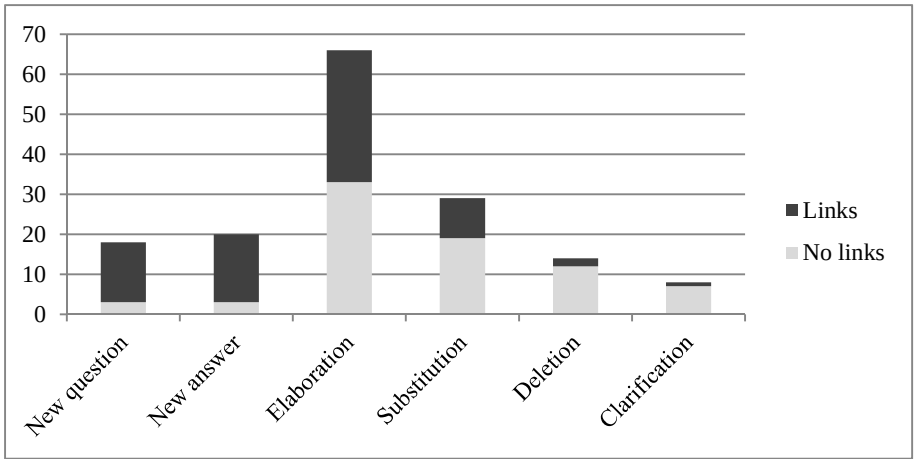


Figure 5.2. *Links between revision changes in* Content and idea development *and peer review in Case A*

Among the links found in the subcategories of *Addition*, revision changes which entailed the inclusion of new questions or new answers showed a high degree of links to the peer-review activity: 15 out of 18 revision changes resulting in the inclusion of new questions seemed to be prompted by the

peer-review activity. The corresponding proportion concerning new answers was 17 out of 20 (Figure 5.2).

These categories included links both to comments (LC5, LC6) and to content; in some cases this inspiration related to the full answer in the reviewed peer reply letter (LR7), and in others, parts of answers appeared to have motivated the addition (LR8).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC5 | rest of America? // | rest of America? **What are your plans for the future?** (A12) | You had many good questions. |
| LC6 | as I do. // Well, I think your right | as I do. **I think "the young people" here are interested in the same things as you are music, movies, cloths, sports and so on. As I said I think "the young people" here thinks it´s important to have good grades in school so you can get a good job when you're older.** What do you think is important? // Well, I think your right (A15) | you didn't answer all the questions |
| LR7 | were school uniforms. I'm born in Stockholm | were school uniforms. **Here in Sweden when you are a little child you can go to kinder garden, and then you go to the elementary school and after that you go to, almost like college. In Sweden the college it´s called "gymmnasiet", it´s not like you work out every day as it sounds**. // I'm born in Stockholm (A13) | In Sweden we start school when we are 5-6 years and that´s preschool, preschool-the 9th class is primary school and after primary school you can choose if you want to go on "gymnasium" who is like High School there you go in three years. (A21) |
| LR8 | as I do. // Well, I think your right | as I do. **I think "the young people" here are interested in the same things as you are music, movies,** | but we think that education is quite important. (A9) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **cloths, sports and so on. As I said I think "the young people" here thinks it´s important to have good grades in school so you can get a good job when you're older. What do you think is important?** // Well, I think your right (A15) | |

Half of the elaborations, 33 out of 66, could be connected to the peer-review activity. For instance, information about there being "water and bridges" in a peer-reviewed reply letter prompted the inclusion of a comparison of Stockholm and "Venezuela" (probably the misspelling of Venice), thus elaborating on the answer to the part of the received letter/writing prompt where the American teenagers say that "we don't know very much about your country" (LR9). This revision change could also be linked to the feedback comment "She/he had really short answers".

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LR9 | My name is X and I'm 14years old, I live with my family in a apartment in Stockholm (which is the capital of Sweden) and it's a very beautiful city, I think it's because we have very beautiful and different kinds of nature (just like the rest Sweden), … | My name is X and I'm 14years old, I live with my family in a apartment in Stockholm (which is the capital of Sweden) and it's a very beautiful city, I think it's because we have **so much water, Stockholm is even called little Venezuela and I like that the different parts of Stockholm looks so different not only the buildings but also the people.** […]//Actually the hole Sweden is really beautiful and have very varied nature; … (A19) | It´s a City built on Islands. So there are lots of water and bridges. (A2) |

In other instances, the elaboration was more directly linked to the reviewed letter, as in the following example where the pupil included the additional information that the school is in the capital of Sweden (LR10).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LR10 | called Xskolan. What I know we unfortunately | called “Xskolan” **and it is situated in the capital of Sweden – Stockholm**. [...//...] What I know we unfortunately... (A6) | and I live in the Swedish capital Stockholm (A2) |

There were very few (2) deletions of content which could be connected to either reading or commenting on peers’ texts. There was one example of a deletion with connection to the reviewed letter; the informant had omitted a whole paragraph which referred to the use of school uniforms in England, as mentioned in one of the sample letters used in the instruction (LR11), but not in the writing prompt used for this task. The other deletion was linked to a comment which concerned repetition; subsequently, the writer deleted information which could be inferred from the previous sentence (LC7).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LR11 | paint caricatures. // **I heard that in some schools in England you are only boys or girls. // In Sweden I don’t think there are any schools with just boys or girls. And I like it that way :D**. // In my school we are | paint caricatures. // In my school we are (A10) | so match about US […] from US […] good acters in US. […] travel to US (A21) |
| LC7 | I agree with you about the fact that many people get the wrong impression of America through TV and media. **I think so too.** | I agree with you about the fact that many people get the wrong impression of America through TV and media. (A1) | You didint repeat too much also |

More than one third of the revision changes which altered the information, i.e. pertaining to the category *Substitution*, were influenced by the content of the reviewed peer letters. In other words, these texts prompted seven pupils to change the information given previously. These alterations entailed both corrections (LR12) and completely transformed answers (LR13).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LR12 | What do you like to do in England? | What do you like to do in **U.S**? (A10) | I don’t so very much about you country but I’m going to New York on my fall holiday (A19) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LR13 | here in Sweden it is not so much violence here, and I like our weather here | here in Sweden **because it´s very fair between boys and girls and it´s a very free country not like free to do whatever you want more like free… I don't know how to explain it but I really like Sweden**, and I like our weather here (A22) | I like the fact that everyone is treated equal (A6) |

#### 5.1.2.3 Micro-level aspects of writing

The category *Micro-level aspects of writing*, which encompassed changes which did not alter the meaning of the text, had fewer links overall, approximately one quarter of the revision changes (Table 5.7). The subcategory *Rearrangement* did not have any links.

Table 5.7. *Links to revision changes in* Micro-level aspects of writing *in Case A*

| **Type of revision change**[a] | **Total**[b] | **Number of links**[c] | **Students with links**[d] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Vocabulary | 38 | 13 (5/11) | 7 |
| Punctuation | 24 | 10 (10/2) | 4 |
| Rearrangement | 24 | 0 (0/0) | 0 |
| Grammar | 19 | 7 (6/2) | 4 |

[a] See Table 4.7. [b] Number of revision changes in Case A. [c] Number of revision changes that could be linked to peer review (commenting/reading). [d] Number of students who had made revision changes that could be linked to peer review

Approximately half the pupils, 7 out of 15, made revision changes affecting vocabulary influenced by reading and/or feedback comments. Alterations included in this group concerned spelling and word choices which could be linked both to the content of the peer-reviewed letters (LR14, LR15) and to comments (LC8, LC9). Even though almost half of the pupil population was influenced to alter vocabulary from peer reviewing, the total number of links (13) was low in relation to the sum of changes (38).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LR14 | classes just for 8:th class. // | classes just for 8:th **grad**. // (A10) | I'm in 8th grade (A19) |
| LR15 | wrong impression of Usa trough tv-series and movies | wrong impression of **U.S.A.** trough TV-series and movies (A12) | in U.S.A (A16) |
| LC8 | much about ohio, but many | much about **Ohio**, but many (A20) | Please check your spelling |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC9 | school, like European football. We also | school, like **soccer** We also (A16) | Good choosing of your words |

*Punctuation* accounted for a relatively high number of changes, 10 out of 24; however, these were executed by four pupils only. Comments concerning sentence length (LC10) as well as the importance of quotation marks when including Swedish names (LC11) inspired revision changes; in this example the use of quotation marks could also be directly linked to the reviewed peer letter (LR16). The only other punctuation change which could be related to content regarded the use of comma after the greeting (LR17).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC10 | life in Usa, I have been in new York | life in U.S.A**.** I have been in New York (A12) | More dots maybe your sentasise were to long.<br>Good sentansist. |
| LC11/ LR16 | it's called Xskolan. What | it's called **"**Xskolan**"** and it is (A6) | She/he used quotations marks.<br>"Xskolan" (A2) |
| LR17 | Hi Debbie, Carlos Said and Tom! | Hi dear Debbie, Carlos Said and Tom**,** (A6) | Dear friends in America, (A2) |

Four of the fifteen students made revision changes which affected the grammar and could be linked to either comments or content. As regards the latter, one of the instances changed the form of a word in Swedish and the other concerned subject/verb agreement (LR18). Moreover, LR18 was linked to the comment "Some grama like…" (LC12), which could also be connected to changes made by other members of the same consensus group (LC13, LC14). Another example of a revision change prompted by the content of the reviewed letter is the change of preposition in LR19.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC12/ LR18/ | my plans for the future is that | My plans for the future **are** that (A3) | Some grama like…<br>My plans for the future are (A21) |
| LC13 | we stopped play because we got mad | we stopped **playing** because we got mad (A10) | Some grama like… |
| LC14 | And then comes the "högstadium" | And then **come** the "högstadium" (A16) | Some grama like… |
| LR19 | Hello friends of Ohio, | Hello friends **in** Ohio, (A16) | Dear friends in Columbus (A21) |

### 5.1.3 Summary of findings in Case A

With the exception of two comments, the number feedback comments produced in this case were related to the criteria for this task. There was varia-

tion between the consensus groups both in terms of quantity, i.e. number of written feedback comments, and quality, i.e. inclusion of formative information. Nearly half of the comments included formative information in the form of solutions, either expressed as general imperatives to fix the problem (e.g. FC19), or, in some cases more specific suggestions (e.g. FC22). Overall, there were few explanations of the nature of the problem; however, all of them concerned the recipients' potential problems or reactions (e.g. FC28).

The majority of the revision changes affected the macro-level of writing, and *Content and idea development* in particular (e.g. RC7). There were relatively few revision changes which concerned *Structure and rhetorical organisation*, but most of them could be linked to peer review (e.g. LR4). Moreover, with the exception of one, all the pupils made revision changes which affected the content and could be linked to either commenting or reading (e.g. LR7). These connections especially regarded the inclusions of new answers and questions directed to the recipients, and elaborations (e.g. LC6, LC5, LR10). On the whole, there were fewer links to peer review related to the alterations which affected the micro-level aspects of writing. Among these aspects, vocabulary represented the highest number of links (e.g. LC9).

## 5.2 Case B

### 5.2.1 Feedback comments

The students in Case B produced a total number of 86 feedback comments which were related to the task criteria. Only one of the comments was considered off-task (FC29). Consequently, this remark was omitted.

FC29 Check your third sentence

As shown in Table 5.8, the number of feedback comments produced in each group varied enormously, from six to twenty-three. The majority of the feedback comments (55 out of 86) identified good aspects of the reviewed peer letters. Most of the comments regarding weaknesses produced in this case, 25 out of 31, included some formative information in the form of suggestions and/or explanations. Table 5.8 provides an overview of the quality of the feedback comments produced in the consensus groups, where quality is defined as the inclusion of formative information. The four steps indicate an increase of quality, where steps 2–4 involve advice on how to solve the issue and/or description of the nature of the problem.

Table 5.8. *Categorisation of feedback comments in Case B*

| Consensus group | Good aspects[a] | Step 1[b] | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 8 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 1 | **16** |
| B | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | **6** |
| C | 17 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 | **23** |
| D | 14 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | **19** |
| E | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | **12** |
| F | 6 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | **10** |
| **Total** | **55** | **6** | **20** | **0** | **5** | **86** |

[a] "Good aspects" refers to the feedback comments which provided information about strengths. [b] The steps refer to the categorisation of the feedback comments which is presented in Section 4.4.1.

The comments which identified task-related problems in the reviewed letters, step 1, were mainly specific, i.e. referring the potential reader to specific parts of the texts (FC30, FC31).

FC30 Your flow is good on the answering part, but we feel that it lacks betwen the introduction and the answering.

FC31 your questions was a little bit strange. e.g. Do you have any brothers and sisters? if so what are there names?

More specific information entails that the potential receiver of the feedback can direct the attention to the relevant parts of the text, as opposed to a general comment (FC32), which lacks more useful information.

FC32 The text was sometimes hard to read.

Two thirds of the feedback comments denoting weaknesses comprised suggested solutions to the identified problems, step 2. The comments mainly identified specific problems; however, the suggested solutions were general in nature. Nearly half of the comments concerned *Micro-level aspects of writing*, such as *Grammar* (FC33) and *Spelling* (FC34), with the suggested general solution that the writer "check" this aspect. This request was also expressed in the criteria list (Appendix G) for this case: "Check your grammar", and "Check your spelling" respectively.

FC33 Pleas, check your grammar e.g. "we doesn't..."

FC34 but you may want to check the spelling [...] e.g. "I become weary strong."

There were also comments regarding *Content and idea development* (FC35) and *Structure and rhetorical organisation* (FC36), which could be solved if the writer "develop it more" or "work on" a specific aspect.

FC35 OK explanations, you can even develop it more

FC36 no introduction/acknowledging the write, so that you can work on

These examples can be contrasted with the specific solutions which, for example, included the correct spelling (FC37), and a suggested location for a paragraph break (FC38).

FC37 check some spelling, maybe read the text once or twice before handing it in so mistakes are left in the text e.g. form instead of from

FC38 Maybe you should consider to split up the answering part, e.g. "... grades from 7th grade. Split Young people

In this corpus, there were also some examples of feedback comments which included both parts of the formative element: explanation and suggestion, i.e. step 4. These referred to understanding (FC39, FC40), relations (FC41), and also rearrangement of a paragraph (FC42).

FC39 We didn't understand the last paragraph, can you maybe develop it?

FC40 Please try to explain your answeres so that you understand it better

FC41 Please, ask the recipients some questions, it shows that you are interested

FC42 It would be better for your organisation e.g. Sweden is a good place but sometimes like in the winter is it depressing (you put the sentence is the beging)

As already mentioned, there was much variation among the groups in terms of quantity, and this was also true about the quality of the feedback comments (Table 5.8). All of the groups had produced comments with formative information; however, there were very few explanations. Even the groups which did include some descriptions of the identified problems only did so in one or two of their comments. Since most of the peer-review groups only had one representative in the study, it was not possible to draw any conclusions regarding whether these differences in quantity and quality affected the subsequent individual revision changes.

### 5.2.2 Revision changes and links to peer review

The pupils in Case B made a total of 212 revision changes together, but there were huge individual differences: from one alteration up to forty-six. Moreover, the revision changes in Case B included both the micro- and the macro-level of writing, with a slight majority towards the latter. An overview of the various types of revision changes is presented in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9. *Distribution of revision changes in Case B*

| Aspect of writing | Type of revision change | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Structure and rhetorical organisation | Paragraphing | 4 | 7 |
| | Move | 3 | |
| Content and idea development | Addition | 78 | 113 |
| | Substitution | 22 | |
| | Deletion | 13 | |
| Micro-level aspects of writing | Grammar | 31 | 92 |
| | Rearrangement | 27 | |
| | Punctuation | 17 | |
| | Vocabulary | 17 | |
| | | **Total** | **212** |

The category of changes which affected the contents of the revised reply letters, *Addition*, *Deletion*, and *Substitution* included the majority of the revision changes (113 out of 212).

Table 5.10. *Distribution of revision changes in* Content and idea development *in Case B*

| Type of revision change | Number |
|---|---|
| Elaboration (Addition) | 48 |
| Substitution | 22 |
| Clarification (Addition) | 18 |
| Deletion | 13 |
| New answer (Addition) | 6 |
| New question (Addition) | 6 |
| **Total** | **113** |

As shown in Table 5.10, the in-depth exploration of these alterations revealed that most of them were *Elaborations*, i.e. expansions of answers and information from the first draft of the reply letters (RC23, RC24).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RC23 | it was nice to hear that you want to know more about Sweden. Well, I'm 14 years old | It was nice to hear that you want to know more about Sweden **because it feels like we're too small for you to se us.** // Well, I'm 14 years old (B7) |
| RC24 | But then it's called "6-års" and in English you could call it "6-years" or something like that. After "6-års" you go to year 1, | Then it's called "6-års", if you translate it straight to English it would be "6-years". […] **When I was in "6-års" we just made drawings or maybe learned to count.** After "6-års" you go to year 1, (B8) |

The second largest subset was *Substitution* which denoted an alteration which changed the meaning of a reply from the first draft (RC25). This cate-

gory was followed by *Clarification* (RC26), which included adding information to bridge potential communication problems.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RC25 | I go to judo every Monday | I go to karate every Monday (B15) |
| RC26 | In Sweden we're beginning the school at age 7, but some people starts earlier, | In Sweden we're beginning the school at age 7 **(in the first great),** but some people starts earlier, (B19) |

Changes which affected the micro-level of writing primarily regarded *Grammar*, such as subject/verb agreement and change of referents (RC27, RC28), and *Rearrangement*, for example restructuring of sentences (RC29, RC30).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RC27 | some is interested in football | some **are** interested in football (B4) |
| RC28 | Xskolan. I think it has about 700 students and unfortunately we don't have a football team | and I think **there are** about 1000 students studying here**.** Unfortunately we don't have a football team (B11) |
| RC29 | I think it would be special for you to start in Swedish school because we have a different school system. | **The Swedish school system is different from yours I think** , this is how our school system is build. (B1) |
| RC30 | Dear Colombian friends, | Dear **friends in Colombia**, (B12) |

There were relatively few revision changes which altered the generic structure of the informative reply letter, but they were spread over most of the reply letters, i.e. the majority of the students (7 out of 11) had adjusted either paragraphing (RC31) or included a new move (RC32).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RC31 | I'm glad you wrote to me, I hope I can help you. Sweden is a neutral country next too Finland | I'm not what you would call an expert of Sweden/Stockholm but I'll do my best. **//** Sweden is a neutral country next too Finland (B10) |
| RC32 | I love your country and would like to live there. // Keep in touch | I love your country and would like to live there in the future. // […] // **Hope you got all the answers, wish you good luck with your project!!** // Keep in touch (B19) |

Learning from giving feedback was operationalised as a revision change which could be linked to either a feedback comment or the content of reviewed peer letters. More than half of the revision changes (114 out of 212) could be traced back to influences from the peer-review activity. As present-

ed in Figure 5.3, there was some variation in the distribution of these links over the different categories of alterations.

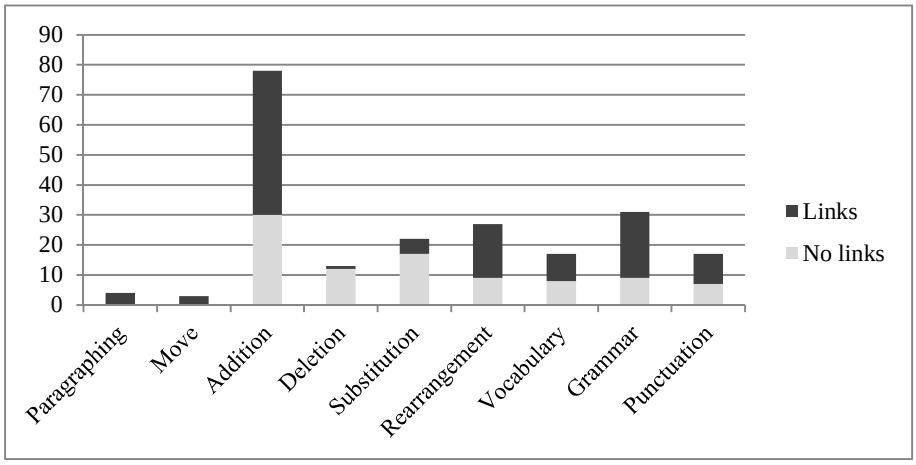


Figure 5.3. *Links between revision changes and peer review in Case B*

### 5.2.2.1 Structure and rhetorical organisation

Revision changes affecting the structure and rhetorical organisation of the informative reply letter corresponded to the categories of *Paragraphing* and *Moves*. Overall, these types of alterations were relatively few and carried out by a small number of informants (Table 5.11).

Table 5.11. *Links to revision changes in* Structure and rhetorical organisation *in Case B*

| **Type of revision change**[a] | **Total**[b] | **Number of links**[c] | **Students with links**[d] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Paragraphing | 4 | 4 (2/3) | 4 |
| Move | 3 | 3 (3/2) | 3 |

[a] See Table 4.7. [b] Number of revision changes in Case B. [c] Number of revision changes that could be linked to peer review (commenting/reading). [d] Number of students who had made revision changes that could be linked to peer review

Nonetheless, both commenting and reading seemed to have prompted all of these changes. For instance, the insertion of a paragraph break, indicating the treatment of different topics (LC15), seemed to be inspired by a feedback comment regarding organisation, and the deletion of a paragraph break between the two moves *Assuring* and *Signing off* (LR20), influenced a structure similar to the one in the peer-reviewed letter.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC15 | I think it's great to live in Sweden and there's a very fine nature here. The young people is interested in | The young people is interested in everything from sports to computer games. Just like they're | You have a good organistiation in your text. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | everything from sports to computer games. Here like you say most only people know US through media. But I would really like to know. In the future I wanna work with something that to music to do. | talking about everything you can imagine. Here like you say most only people know the US through media. But I would really like to know more. Please tell me about how it is to live in your county! // In the future I wanna work with (B12) | |
| LR20 | I hope you can write back to me // Best wishes, // X | I hope you can write back to me. Best wishes, // X (B4) | Hope you liked my answers, bye bye (B7) |

All the pupils who inserted new moves into their revised reply letters were apparently influenced by the peer-review activity; the inclusion of a new move *Acknowledging the writer*, could be linked to the same move in the two reviewed letters (LR21), as well as a comment focusing on the strength of the conclusion of one of these letters (LC16).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC16/ LR21/ | Hi, dear frinds in the US, // I'm a 14 year old girl | Hi, dear friends from the US, // **I'm really glad that you wrote to me, and I hope that you will find my answers helpful to your European project**. // I'm a 14 year old girl (B11) | Good start and good ending<br>How nice that you wrote to me, and fun that you would like to know more about us here in Sweden! (B3)<br>I hope this letter will answer your questions. (B12) |

### 5.2.3 Content and idea development

As shown above, most of the revision changes to the final version of the reply letter affected the content, and especially additions in the form of elaborations of ideas and answers introduced already in the first draft. In addition, the category *Content and idea development* accounted for the highest number of links to the peer-review activity. These links were spread across the class population (Table 5.12).

Table 5.12. *Links to revision changes in* Content and idea development *in Case B*

| **Type of revision change**[a] | **Total**[b] | **Number of links**[c] | **Students with links**[d] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Addition | 78 | 48 (39/33) | 9 |
| Deletion | 22 | 1 (1/0) | 1 |
| Substitution | 13 | 5 (1/5) | 2 |

[a] See Table 4.7. [b] Number of revision changes in Case B. [c] Number of revision changes that could be linked to peer review (commenting/reading). [d] Number of students who had made revision changes that could be linked to peer review

Even though *Elaborations* were the most common revision change, it was the additions in the form of *New answers* and *New questions* which mainly seemed to be affected by the peer-review activity, in terms of percentage of links to comments and content (Figure 5.4). All of these revision changes could be traced back to either feedback comments or content of the reviewed letters.

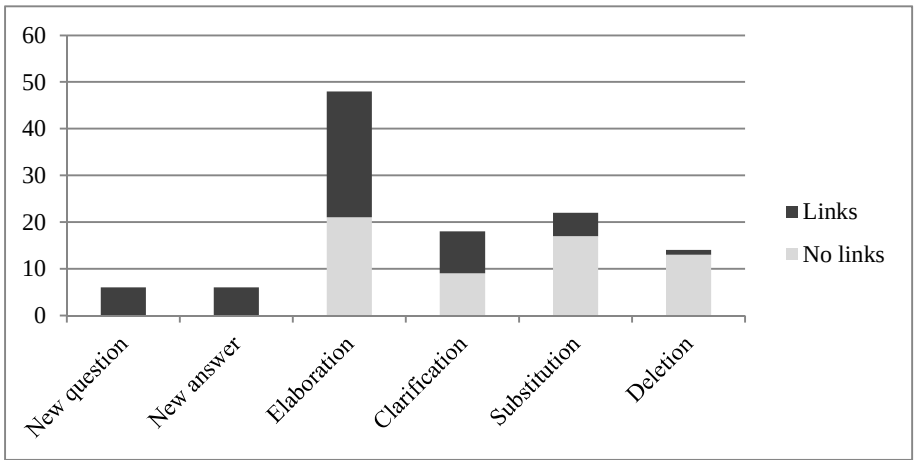


Figure 5.4. *Links between revision changes in* Content and idea development *and peer review in Case B*

The inclusion of new answers, i.e. the information that the recipients specifically asked for, could be the result of both the consensus group discussions (LC17), and transfer of content from the reviewed peer letter (LR22, LR23).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC17 | and what they think is important. What do people | and what they think is important. **I talk about different things whit my friends almost every day, it depends on how big the subject is.** What do people (B4) | It was good that you answered all the questions |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LR22 | computer games. Here like you say | computer games. **Just like they're talking about everything you can imagine.** Here like you say (B12) | they speak about almost everything. (B15) |
| LR23 | think is important. What do | think is important. **I talk about different things whit my friends almost every day, it depends on how big the subject is.** What do (B8) | Well, we talks about everything. (B7)<br>they speak about almost everything. (B15) |

All of the revision changes resulting in new questions for the three American teenagers were similar to questions or information found in the reviewed letters (LR24), and some of them could also be related to feedback comments (LC18/LR25, LC19/LR26).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LR24 | I love your country and would like to live there. // Keep in touch// X | I love your country and would like to live there in the future. // Finally, I wonder **what do you do on your spare time**, do you have any hobbies, and **tell me about your school system, how does it work**? // […] // Keep in touch// X (B19) | I have some questions for you guys; what do you do on your spare time? Do you have any brothers or sisters? If so, what are there names? And finally, what school do you go to? (B8) |
| LC18/ LR25 | history and nature. // In my high school | history and nature […] **Do you have any fun amusement parks in Ohio?** // In my high school (B7) | Please try to ask some questions.<br>a really nice amusement park called (B3) |
| LC19/ LR26 | like to know. In the future | to know more. **Please tell me about how it is to live in your county!** // In the future (B12) | It was good that you ask a question back.<br>I would love to hear more about the US. I don't know much how you live. (B15) |

Revision changes which elaborated or clarified content from the first draft also seemed to be categories influenced by the peer-review activity. This included the majority, 27 out of 48, of the changes resulting in the expansion of previously mentioned themes (LC20, LR27), as well as half of the alterations involving clarifications (LC21, LR28).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC20 | and maybe I want to be a lawyer, like my mother. | I might want to be a lawyer **in the future**, like my mother. **If I didn't become a lawyer I would want to move to Africa and become a doctor, because I 'm really into help people**. (B1) | The information was great, but you should try to make it longer. |
| LR27 | I´m a regular girl who going in | I´m a regular **14 years old** girl who goes in (B19) | and I'm 14 years old (B2) |
| LC21 | I live in Stockholm. | I live in Stockholm, **the capital of Sweden**. (B12) | Your explanations was really good e.g. Gröna lund. |
| LR28 | We start school when we're six years old and finished the obligatory school when we are sixteen years old. | We start school when we're six years old and finished the obligatory school when we are **around** sixteen years old. (B1) | We are 7 years old when we starts 1st grade and 15 (or 16) when we ends the 9th grade. (B7) |

Some revision changes entailed the deletion of information or substitution; however, there was only one student whose alteration could have been prompted by the peer-review activity. The writer deleted some of the information, thus, avoiding repetition (LC22).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC22 | and maybe I want to be a lawyer, like my mother. **My mother is a good lawyer and I would like to be like here if I was a lawyer** | I might want to be a lawyer in the future, like my mother. (B1) | It was really good that you didn't repaet your self |

#### 5.2.3.1 Micro-level aspects of writing

Micro-level aspects the reply letter in this study refer to surface changes, regarding *Vocabulary*, *Grammar*, *Punctuation* or *Rearrangements* which did not alter the meaning. In this sense, these types of changes do not affect the quality of the final version to the same extent as the macro-aspects which have been accounted for thus far in this section. Nonetheless, these aspects are important for the overall quality of a piece of writing.

Table 5.13. *Links to revision changes in* Micro-level aspects of writing *in Case B*

| **Type of revision change**[a] | **Total**[b] | **Number of links**[c] | **Students with links**[d] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Grammar | 31 | 22 (21/7) | 7 |
| Rearrangement | 27 | 18 (17/1) | 5 |
| Punctuation | 17 | 10 (10/0) | 4 |
| Vocabulary | 17 | 9 (9/4) | 5 |

[a] See Table 4.7. [b] Number of revision changes in Case B. [c] Number of revision changes that could be linked to peer review (commenting/reading). [d] Number of students who had made revision changes that could be linked to peer review

The subcategory *Grammar* represented a broad group of alterations (Table 5.13), encompassing for example corrections of possessive pronouns (LC23) and subject/verb agreements (LC24). This group had a large quantity of links to comments requesting the writer to "check" the grammar; moreover, all but one student who had made changes affecting grammatical aspects of writing (7 out of 8) seemed to be influenced by the peer-review activity. It is also worth noticing that not all revision changes led to improvements; however, these alterations could still have been prompted by the feedback discussion in the consensus groups (LC25).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC23 | not as cool as your I think | not as cool as **yours** I think (B15) | We think that you should check youre gramar e.g. "I'm a regular girl who is going in…" |
| LC24 | some is interested in music. | some **are** interested in music. (B4) | but you may want to check the spelling and gramma e.g. "on the summer is it…" "I become weary strong." |
| LC25 | I don't agree with them I think my school is good if you get good teachers. | I don't agree with them I think my school is good if you **got a** good teachers. (B1) | but you may want to check the spelling and gramma e.g. "on the summer is it…" "I become weary strong." |

There were alterations of grammatical structures which could be linked to the contents of the reviewed peer letters. Examples of these revision changes included the correction of the indefinite article (LR29), the inclusion of a definite article (LR30), and the substitution of *it is* for *there are* which could be linked to several instance of correct usage in the reviewed text (LR31).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LR29 | as a activity. In our | as **an** activity. But of (B15) | have an activity outside school (B18) |
| LR30 | lot of crime in US. I know too that most of | lot of crime in **the** US. I´ve also heard that | about the US (B2) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | most of (B19) | |
| LR31 | In Stockholm is it a lot of parks | In Stockholm **are there** a lot of parks (B15) | In my school there are about 700 students. I don't think there is any school team in our school. […] In Sweden there is no $10^{th}$, $11^{th}$ or $12^{th}$ grade (B18) |

In this case, *Rearrangements* contained a large quantity of links; two thirds of these revision changes could be linked to, above all, comments referring to a text's "flow" (LC26). In addition, there were a few examples where words were deleted; in example LC27 the writer omitted some instances of *well* placed initially in sentences. The content of the reviewed letters also influenced some changes, for example the greeting (LR32).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC26 | My plan for the future is right now just to do | My plan for the future **right now is** just to do (B11) | It was a good flow. |
| LC27 | bullied. **Well**, I don't know | bullied. I don't know (B7) | Please, don't repeat words. |
| | **Well**, I want to be | | No repeating. |
| | | I want to be (B7) | |
| LR32 | Dear Colombian friends, | Dear friends in Colombia (B12) | Dear friends in Columbus. (B15) |

Comments about the "flow" also contributed to the number of links for revision changes affecting *Punctuation* (LC28, LC29).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC28 | in whatever team you want to, but it's not connected to your school. | in whatever team you want to. But it's not connected to your school. (B8) | excellent flow (the text just went on and on<br>good flow |
| LC29 | I think it has about 700 students and unfortunately we don't have a football team | I think there are about 1000 students studying here. Unfortunately we don't have a football team (B11) | It was a good flow. |

On vocabulary level, some alterations of spelling were initiated by the feedback comment, or reminder, (LC30); moreover, a few pupils transferred spelling from the reviewed letter into their own final draft (LR33).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LC30 | any other fun finng like clubs | any other fun **things** like clubs (B15) | and had no misspellings |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LR33 | Hi, dear frinds in the US, | Hi, dear **friends** from the US, (B11) | Dear Colombian friends, (B12) |

### 5.2.4 Summary of findings in Case B

With the exception of one comment (FC29), the feedback produced by the pupils in this case was relevant to the task. The vast majority of the feedback comments regarded good aspects of writing. Moreover, most of the comments which identified weaknesses contained formative information, primarily suggestions in the form of requests (e.g. FC33). The explanations which were included in a small number of the comments addressed the readers and organisation (e.g. FC41, FC42).

On the whole, the revision changes mainly affected *Content and idea development* and *Micro-level aspects of writing* (e.g. RC22, RC26). There were very few revision changes regarding *Structure and rhetorical organisation*, but all of them could be linked to either commenting or reading (e.g. LC15). As concerns *Content and idea development*, most pupils had made revision changes which could be linked to peer review (e.g. LR22). All the new questions and answers seemed to have been prompted by reading or commenting; this also applied to a majority of the elaborations (e.g. LC20). Comments which requested the writer to check grammar contributed to a high number of links related to revision changes (e.g. LC23). Rearrangements also seemed affected by peer review (e.g. LC26).

## 5.3 Comparison and interpretation of Case A and Case B in light of classroom data and pupils' self-reports

This section links the findings presented in the previous sections to observation data and pupils' self-reports. The aim of this triangulation was to directly address the research questions and broaden the perspective. An overview of the themes identified in the pupils' self-reports (questionnaire and interview) is presented in Table 5.14. The outline of this section follows the first and second research questions, including the subqueries (Section 1.2).

Table 5.14. *Overview of themes identified in the pupils' self-reports*

| **Question from questionnaire (Q)[a] or interview (I)[b]** | **Themes in responses (in descending order)** |
|---|---|
| Q: *How did you use the criteria when you wrote your own texts?* | A: checklist (10), didn't use them (3), improve text (2), organisation of letter (1), idea development (1), don't know (1)<br>B: checklist (9), organisation of letter (3), introduction (1) |
| Q: *What did you learn about organisation/structure?* | A: paragraphing (7), nothing/not much (5), organisation (3), genre (2), no answer (1)<br>B: paragraphing (4), organisation (3), nothing/not much (3), develop ideas for coherence (1) |
| Q: *What did you learn about content?* | A: no answer (5), nothing/not much (5), reply to questions (2), assess (1), don't repeat info (1), genre (1), good ideas (1), it's important (1), include personal info (1), ask questions (1)<br>B: no answer (3), elaborate (3), good ideas (2), not much (1), include personal info (1), fun to read (1), be polite (1) |
| Q: *What did you learn about phrases/expressions/vocabulary?* | A: nothing/not much (6), some words (5), spelling (3), no answer (1), register (1)<br>B: nothing/not much (4), some words (4), variation (2), no answer (1) |
| Q: *What did you learn about grammar?* | A: nothing/not much (8), punctuation (2), s/v agreement (2), spot mistakes (1), it's important (1), no answer (1)<br>B: no answer (4), nothing/not much (3), spot mistakes (3), better grammar (1) |
| Q: *What did you learn about other things?* | *The answers from this question were merged with the questions regarding organisation, content, phrases/expressions/vocabulary, and grammar.* |
| I: *What was the aim of this teaching unit? What were you supposed to learn?* | A: improve writing (3), write letter (2), read letters (2), assess/give feedback (2), make other people understand (1), spelling (1)<br>B: improve writing (3), write letter (2), respond to letter (2), make other people understand (1), grammar (1) |
| I: *How do you know that you have learnt something?* | A: difference/doing something new (3), know the answer (1), study (1)<br>B: difference/doing something new (1), know the answer (1), spot mistakes (1), give explanations (1), more fun (1), easier (1) |
| I: *What was the purpose of this task [giving feedback]? Why did [teacher's name] want you to do this?* | A: learn/improve writing (3), spot mistakes (2), self-assess (1)<br>B: self-assess (3), spot mistakes (2), learn (1), understand a text (1), teacher thinking (1) |
| I: *Why do you think you did this [negotiated criteria list]?* | A: checklist (2), organisation of letter (2), grammar and language (1)<br>B: checklist (3) |

[a] Case A (n=16) and Case B (n=11). Some of the pupils mentioned several things.

[b] Three groups of pupils were interviewed in each case.

### 5.3.1 The pupils' response to the feedback training

#### 5.3.1.1 Task understanding

The results regarding the quality of the feedback comments produced in the two cases show that the pupils were able to identify both weaknesses and strengths related to the success criteria, which further indicates that the pupils had understood the aim of the teaching unit. In addition, pupil responses from the post-teaching unit questionnaire supported this finding since almost all the students (22 out of 27) reported that they had recognised the aim of the instruction almost completely or completely. Moreover, the interviewed pupils mainly described the aims in terms of improving writing (PR1[6], PR2) and writing a reply letter (PR3, PR4).

PR1 I think it was sort of to learn to write better, and then make others understand what sort of or understand things you write so they can well so that you are understood (A16)

PR2 writing to someone who might not know Swedish but knows English (B18)

PR3 be able to understand sort of you should what's it called read another to answer so I think it was both reading and be able to write a letter (A3)

PR4 be able to write a letter (A9)

Apart from providing the pupils with clear focus for the peer-review activity, the criteria also provided useful guidelines for the pupils' own writing. Most of the students used the criteria as a checklist (PR5, PR6, PR7):

PR5 I used them to try to get the best possible letter. First I answered the questions in the letter and then I double-checked that I had included as many of the bullet points as possible (A1)

PR6 I tried to adapt my text by regularly browsing through the criteria (B12)

PR7 I followed the model and wrote a rather fluent text with all the contents (B10)

Thus, the fact that the feedback comments were relevant and related to the written task was supported by the pupils' own perception of the value of the list of success criteria.

In both classes, the pupils produced feedback comments which focused on both good aspects and areas which could be improved. The ratio of comments which denoted strengths and weaknesses respectively differed on both class and group level. In Case B, 5 out of the 6 consensus groups had a higher proportion of comments focusing strengths. During a classroom discus-

[6] Both questionnaires and interviews were carried out in Swedish, so these are my translations.

sion of the importance of including both types of feedback, there was consensus among the pupils as regards this ratio, which led the teacher to conclude that: “Maybe if we find two good things, we can find one thing for improvement and so on. That is a very good rule I think” (CR1). Conversely, a similar discussion in Case A revealed that the pupils views diverged on this account (CR2, CR3), which was true also for the feedback comments. Hence, the pattern (or lack of pattern) could be traced back to the classroom interaction.

CR2 I think more positive than negative (pupil, Case A)

CR3 she [the fictitious writer] needs to know what to improve to be better (pupil, Case A) [said in response to the fact that there were more “negative” than “positive” feedback on the whiteboard]

#### 5.3.1.2 Formative information in the feedback comments

As mentioned above, the feedback was based on the list of criteria; however, the findings also suggested that the inclusion of formative information in the form of suggested solutions and explanations was a challenge for the pupils. During the feedback training the pupils were asked to provide feedback comments based on a sample text, and the teacher used questions to scaffold them to include the steps suggested by Min (2005) (Section 4.2.2). The feedback comments jointly produced and listed on the whiteboard included formative information, but few of them involved all the steps (CR4). Most of them focused on the solution (CR5, CR6, CR7), which was also the case with the comments produced by the pupils during the peer review.

CR4 It would be easier to read your text if you divided the sentence beginning with “For my...” (whiteboard, Case B)

CR5 Ending, please write something like “It has been a joy to...” (whiteboard, Case A)

CR6 When you rewrite the letter next time you could try to answer the question about American music (whiteboard, Case A)

CR7 Please, check your spelling e.g. hav. Healtcar. Wery, communal, example (whiteboard, Case B)

Thus, even if the oral and written instructions included this information, the pupils seemed to have adopted the formulation of feedback presented during class where explanations, in terms of why a particular issue was problematic, were not addressed.

Moreover, although the feedback training was framed as an exercise to help Linda (the fictitious writer) improve her letter, it was, in addition, made clear to the pupils that the purpose was to help them enhance their own reply letter (CR8, CR9).

CR8 Picture your letter, are there things you could improve? Are they perfect? Try when we're back, think about your own letter good and things to improve (Teacher, Case B)

CR9 No next time you'll read someone else's letter and then you think for yourself and then you improve your version which is the one I'm going to read (Teacher, Case A)

Likewise, the pupils' understanding of the purpose of giving feedback during this teaching unit was expressed in terms of their own possible benefits (PR8, PR9, PR10).

PR8 find out when you have made mistakes (A9)

PR9 it makes it easier to assess your own text if you have someone else's text to assess, sort of (B12)

PR10 to be able to assess our own texts in the same way (A17)

It is therefore possible that the pupils had their own writing in mind when providing feedback, rather than the writer's. Consequently, they may not have considered the inclusion of explicit formative information important, since the purpose was to help themselves rather than someone else.

Possible reasons for the quantitative and qualitative differences of the feedback comments produced in the consensus groups are outside the scope of this study, since the group discussions were not observed as part of this study.

### 5.3.2 The pupils' learning about writing from giving feedback

After the teaching unit, the pupils were asked to respond to a statement regarding their perception of learning from their peers' work: I have learnt something by looking at my classmates' reply letters. Most of the pupils in both cases (22 out of 27) agreed to some extent or almost completely with this statement. Pupil responses (PR) in this section represent the pupils' questionnaire and interview responses.

#### 5.3.2.1 Learning about structure and rhetorical organisation

The small number of revision changes regarding structure and organisation was not surprising since most informants had grasped the generic structure of the informative reply letter already in their first draft; nonetheless, a large number of these alterations seemed to have been triggered by reading and/or commenting on peers' texts. This finding was supported by pupils' responses in the post-teaching unit questionnaire: Many of the pupils in both classes mentioned paragraphing and organisation as personal learning outcomes

(PR11, PR12, PR13). The second most comment answer was “nothing” or “not much”.

PR11 I learnt more about dividing the text and organise it (A15)

PR12 Important with paragraphs and so to make it easier to read etc. (A8)

PR13 Divide into better paragraphs (B7)

#### 5.3.2.2 Learning about content and idea development

In both classes, revision changes which involved the content of the reply letters constituted the majority of the alterations, and to a high extent these seemed to be prompted to the peer-review activity. This was an expected result since this part is the most important of the reply letter; even if the pupils’ choice of information was subjective, many of the responses regarded things such as the school system and being a teenager in Sweden. Already at the beginning of the teaching unit, the pupils agreed that their task was to provide answers (CR10, CR11).

CR10 find info and answer those questions (pupil, Case A)

CR11 they want answers (pupil, Case B)

However, despite the high number of links to reading and commenting on peers’ letters, especially *New questions*, *New answers* and *Elaborations*, relatively few pupils acknowledged that they had indeed learnt anything about content from peer review. Those who did express that they had improved their content thanks to reading peers’ letters, referred to content as a source for inspiration (PR14, PR15) or as reinforcement of the criteria in terms of the importance of replying (PR16).

PR14 Good to read other because then you got ideas how to write your own letter (B1)

PR15 I saw several different answers and learned a good ‘mixture’ of how to write a reply letter (B8)

PR16 To answer all the questions to tell something about myself and to pose questions myself (A17)

In addition, by placing themselves in the reader role, some pupils expressed that they had considered the recipients’ understanding (PR17), purpose of the genre (PR18), upholding the readers’ interest (PR19), and stressing politeness (PR20).

PR17 You could see that it maybe wasn’t that easy to understand if you didn’t express what you meant in the letter and therefore you could see in your own letter if you had expressed something badly (B11)

PR18 if someone asks anything then you'll answer and perhaps tell them about yourself in case it's someone you don't know that well (B4)

PR19 it should be fun to read (B7)

PR20 the importance of being polite (B10)

It is possible that the pupils were not aware of their borrowings, or, perhaps more likely, that they would not consider them learning. Most pupils who were interviewed discussed learning in terms of doing things differently but unconsciously (PR21, PR22), being able to verbalise differences (PR23), or explicitly studying something (PR24).

PR21 if you are going to write a new letter then you might organize it in a good way without thinking so that it is a good letter sort of subconsciously (A16)

PR22 like when you do different things that you like remember (B7)

PR23 when I can compare two texts and tell which one is better, then I think that I've learnt the subject […] not just say that this is bad but say that it is bad because and this is good because (B10)

PR24 well you study (A9)

Thus, even if the cross-referencing of revision changes regarding content and reading and commenting on peers' letters showed transfer of ideas and inspiration, most of the pupils seemed unaware of these influences.

#### 5.3.2.3 Learning about micro-level aspects of writing

Revision changes on the micro-level of writing, such as *Grammar*, *Vocabulary* and *Punctuation*, constituted around four out of ten alterations in both Case A and Case B. However, there were some differences between the cases pertaining to the distribution between the subcategories. In Case A, changes affecting vocabulary were performed by 7 out of 15 pupils; moreover, approximately one third of these (13 out of 38) could be linked to peer reviewing, in particular to the content of the reviewed letters. Conversely, *Grammar* was the largest subcategory in Case B, and seven out of the eleven pupils had carried out these alterations. Furthermore, two thirds of these changes could be connected to reading and commenting on peers' letter, especially the latter. However, in both cases a high number of these links could be traced to individuals; thus, the differences in these two categories could be attributed to specific pupils, rather than dissimilarities on group level.

On the other hand, the differences regarding *Rearrangements* could be attributed to group differences, more specifically to the notion of text flow. In Case B, where two thirds of the revision changes in *Rearrangement* could be linked to comments, there was a criterion which said "Find a flow in your

text", and the comments which contributed to the number of connections all mentioned flow.

When asked about their learning about grammar from giving feedback, some of the pupils self-reported that assessing peers' letters facilitated their own editing (PR25, PR26).

PR25 When you had corrected someone else's grammar it became easier to correct one's own (B11)

PR26 I became better at discovering grammatical errors (B10)

Consequently, they did not believe that they learnt anything new; instead, they improved their proofreading skills. Likewise, some pupils self-reported enhanced self-assessment skills in relation to spelling (PR27) and general assessment of the overall quality of their own letter (PR28, PR29).

PR27 To read the text and look for spelling errors (A3)

PR28 It also gave me an idea of how good or bad my own letter was (A6)

PR29 I saw what I could improve and what errors I had made myself (A19)

Concerning vocabulary learning, a few students expressed that they had been inspired to include new words from peer reviewing (PR30); however, most students stated that they did not believe that they acquired any new words or phrases from the peer review.

PR30 I guess I took some words (B19)

Still, some of those who claimed not to have acquired new vocabulary mentioned that they learned expressions pertaining to specific moves of the reply letter (PR31, PR32).

PR31 different greetings (B8)

PR32 Best regards, etc (B1)

Indeed, apart from learning directly related to their own writing, there were signs that some pupils picked up the terminology used in class to denote the different parts of the informative reply letter (PR33, PR34).

PR33 you should tell them that you well that it was fun that they wrote and that you'd be happy to help them (A17) – like this acknowledging the writer (A3) (Emphasis added)

PR34 not forget it like greeting and stuff (A7) (Emphasis added)

In brief, influences from peer review on micro-level aspects of writing seemed related to proofreading and editing, rather than increasing vocabulary or learning new grammatical constructs.

### 5.3.3 Summary of comparison and interpretation of findings in Case A and Case B

Pupil responses to the questionnaire supported the finding that the pupils had, indeed, understood the task and the intended learning outcomes. Moreover, the pupils' self-reports described that the criteria had functioned as a checklist when they wrote their informative reply letters. Also, the different ratios of feedback comments concerning strengths and weaknesses could in both cases be traced back to classroom discussion.

The lack of formative information in the feedback comments also seemed related to teaching; most sample comments jointly produced in class lacked explanations. It was also made clear that the purpose of giving feedback in this teaching unit was to promote the pupils', i.e. the givers', own learning.

Many pupils in both cases self-reported that they had learnt about organisation and paragraphing from acting as readers and peer reviewers. This supports the findings which identified a large number of links between revision changes affecting structures and moves and reading or commenting on peers' letters.

Most of the revision changes concerned *Content and idea development*, and many of these alterations seemed to have been prompted by peer review. However, few pupils acknowledged that they had learnt anything about content in reply letters from giving feedback. Those who believed that they had learnt something described borrowing ideas or reflecting on the readers' response to their writing.

In both cases, a smaller number of pupils contributed to the links between *Micro-level revision changes* and peer review. The divergence related to *Rearrangements*, where Case A did not have any links, could be traced to a difference in the criteria lists, and, consequently, the feedback comments: the notion of flow. In terms of learning, some pupils self-reported that peer review facilitated their own proofreading, and others believed they had picked up some new words, including terminology to denote the different parts of the informative reply letter.

# 6 Discussion

With the notion of assessment as learning as a starting point, the present study has described how young learners' engagement in group assessment activities, specifically peer review, can affect subsequent revision changes and form part of the learning process. Learning was operationalised in this study as a revision change made to the first draft which could be linked to the peer-review activity, i.e. either the content of the peer-reviewed letters or a feedback comment (Section 2.1). These learning activities were implemented in genre-based writing instruction, which provided a communicative aim, and the pupils worked with the task to write an informative reply letter through the use of sample texts, modelling and scaffolding. The following research questions have guided the data analysis:

1. How do pupils respond to the feedback training?
    a. How do the pupils understand the task and learning outcomes?
    b. To what extent do the pupils include formative information in the feedback comments?
2. What do pupils learn about writing from giving feedback?
    a. What do the pupils learn about writing in terms of structure and rhetorical organisation; content and idea development; and micro-level aspects of writing?
3. How can these findings be understood in light of the classroom activities and the pupils' perception of learning?

The Discussion section broadly follows the research questions and is divided into two parts. First, the findings regarding the pupils as peer reviewers are discussed in terms of understanding of task and criteria, and providing formative feedback. Second, learning about writing from giving feedback is addressed. These findings are discussed in relation to macro- and micro-levels of writing respectively. In addition, this section discusses transferable skills, in other words, the connection between peer and self-assessment.

## 6.1 Pupils as peer reviewers

### 6.1.1 Task understanding and shared criteria

My findings show that the pupils understood the aims and intended learning outcomes of the teaching unit which indicates that intersubjectivity in relation to the success criteria was attained. In their self-reports the pupils expressed the aims as writing a letter in response to a received letter and enhancing language use in general. Moreover, this finding was supported by the fact that the lion's share of the feedback comments pertained to task-specific aspects as expressed in the criteria list for each class. Similarly, the pupils in my study based their feedback comments on the criteria, which implies that the peer-reviewed letters were evaluated in light of the criteria list.

A shared understanding of aims and standards constitute the starting point for successful peer and self-review in the classroom (Hedge, 2000; Thompson & Wiliam, 2007; Lundahl, 2010), thus, my finding is significant in relation to the understanding of pupils as peer reviewers. Even though the importance of criteria and understanding of standards as a foundation for student-centred assessment has been emphasised in previous studies (e.g. Paulus, 1999; Althauser & Darnall, 2001; Min, 2005; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009), there is little information about how the criteria were presented, implemented and used by the students. The genre-based approach to writing instruction adopted in my study (Hyland, 2004), provided a useful framework for the classroom discussions about criteria and aims which contributed to this shared understanding.

Shared understanding, however, does not necessarily imply that the criteria are valid. In a school setting, conformity to the aims as described in the syllabus is a requirement. Previous studies have studied validity as the correlation between summative teacher and peer feedback respectively (e.g. Cheng & Warren, 2005; Cho et al. 2006), i.e. grades or scores. However, this perspective reduces the students' contribution to classroom assessment, by placing them in the teacher role, and it is unclear whether this summative evaluation promotes any learning. In my study, validity in terms of alignment was successfully achieved through the use of selected sample texts and teacher scaffolding to support the pupils' discussions. This approach, based on genre-based writing instruction (GBWI), further provided the pupils with a comprehensive context and purpose for their writing, as well as emphasized specific building blocks to realise the communicative aim (c.f. Sadler, 1989, 2009; Hamp-Lyons, 1991). These aspects were, to a large extent, selected by the pupils while negotiating the list of success criteria.

Orsmond et al. (2000) proposed that student-derived criteria do not stretch the students' thinking, since the negotiations are based on the students' pre-

knowledge. In other words, criteria stemming from pupils are based on their actual development rather than their potential development (c.f. Vygotsky, 1978; Gipps, 1999). Likewise, some of the criteria developed and used by the pupils in this study, especially those pertaining to language use in general rather than the informative reply letter, would suggest that this concern, voiced by Orsmond et al. (2000), applies to these pupils as well. For instance, the imperatives to check or think about grammar and spelling are vague; they do not link these aspects to the communicative purpose of the informative reply letter, in the same sense as the criteria regarding the moves or the content do.

It is clear that the pupils in my study developed a shared understanding of the aims and criteria in this teaching unit. Similarly, Thompson & Wiliam (2007) suggest that this intersubjectivity forms a starting point for the use of student-centred learning activities in the classroom, and it is, thus, a necessity for successful peer review.

### 6.1.2 Formative information in the feedback comments

Even though this study focused on the peer reviewers' own learning from giving feedback, it is equally important that the pupils are able to provide useful feedback if peer assessment should be used to its full potential in the classroom. Most of the feedback comments produced in the two classes comprised some formative information, i.e. information intended to help the reader improve their writing. However, the provided suggestions were mainly general; rather than giving the writer clear advice, the peer reviewers suggested that the reader, for instance, could "write shorter sentences" (FC45) or "explain more" (FC46). Specific suggestions are a key feature of useful feedback comments (Min, 2005); consequently, this lack entails that receivers who do not know how to execute these operations, will not be given enough scaffolding to be able to reduce the gap, which is the main purpose of feedback (Ramaprasad, 1983; Sadler, 1989; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In this case, there are a number of possible explanations for this absence which I will now discuss.

First, previous studies have stressed the importance of lengthy training (e.g. Stanley, 1992; Berg, 1999), and Min (2005) showed that purposeful feedback training significantly increased the number of feedback comments which included formative information. Obviously, the one-hour training that the pupils in this study received cannot qualify as comprehensive; however, it is worth emphasising that the type of training proposed in studies on university level, which, for instance, include individual teacher-student conferences, normally would not be feasible within the context of Swedish secondary school. In the school where this study took place, the pupils have a total of 120 minutes of English each week, and there are around 25 pupils in each class. Despite these conditions, my findings suggest that it is still worthwhile

to engage secondary school pupils in peer reviewing; this teaching unit was the pupils' first encounter with organised peer feedback, and they managed to identify weaknesses and include some formative elements.

Moreover, it is possible that the absence of an authentic receiver in this study can form part of the understanding of this result. The research design only comprised providing feedback; the pupils did not receive any feedback. Indeed, the pupils' own understanding of the purpose of giving feedback clearly showed that they had their own learning in mind and not the fictional receivers' learning. Accordingly, the pupils might have been less motivated to include formative information intended to help someone else. As Lundstrom & Baker (2009) suggest, peer reviewers are more likely to target their own ZPD than their receiving peers' ZPD since they decide which aspects of writing their feedback should focus on and how to formulate their feedback.

The fact that the written mode was used for communicating the feedback, might also play a role; even if it has been suggested that EFL learners' peer review would be facilitated by the use of the written mode (Min, 2005), others claim that oral negotiation is a key to successful peer review (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al. 2006). Furthermore, mutual scaffolding, where the peers scaffold each other (Donato, 1994), is easier to obtain using the oral mode.

The pupils identified problems and provided some formative information, but it is uncertain whether this information would, in fact, help the potential receivers improve their writing. In terms of improving the quality of the revised reply letter, these general suggestions, or imperatives can still be effective, if they function as reminders of the assessment criteria. Thus, if the receivers already know how to perform the suggested operations, the comments can still be useful and potentially contribute to revisions increasing the text quality.

## 6.2 Pupils' learning about writing from giving feedback

### 6.2.1 Learning about the macro-level of writing

My findings show that reviewing peers' informative reply letters inspired many revision changes on the macro-level of writing, that is, organisation and content. Even if there were relatively few alterations which affected the rhetorical organisation, i.e. the moves, or the paragraphing, almost all of these revision changes were influenced by either commenting on or reading peers' letters. This finding was supported by the pupils' self-reports, in which paragraphing especially was mentioned as personal learning out-

comes, for example “Important with paragraphs and so to make it easier to read etc.” (A8).

Moreover, most of the pupils borrowed inspiration from the reviewed letters when they developed their replies to the American teenagers. This transfer resulted in, for example, the alteration of facts, the addition of personal information, and the inclusion of completely new answers. In other words, the content of peers’ letters was a significant source for idea development, a finding which was confirmed by interview responses: “Good to read other because then you got ideas how to write your own letter” (B1). Furthermore, feedback comments which evaluated the writers’ responses seemed to have prompted many revision changes which affected content.

These findings suggest that the pupils’ audience awareness was raised by engaging in peer-review activities, which is also corroborated by the fact that the majority of the explanations included in the feedback comments concerned issues related to the potential receivers of the reply letter, in other words, the readers. Likewise, previous studies with students at university level have concluded that peer review increases the students’ awareness of the importance of global aspects of writing and also contributes to an enhanced awareness of audience (e.g. Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al. 2006; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). These findings have been explained by the students’ switch of perspective from writers to readers (Berg, 1999; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al. 2006), which is a relevant interpretation in relation to my study as well.

This change of role, from writer to reader, is significant for the understanding of learning about writing from giving feedback. Audience awareness is considered key to successful writing (Hedge, 2000; Cho & MacArthur, 2011). Indeed, it is recognised that identification with the reader is a trait of experienced writers (Skibniewski & Skibniewska, 1986; Cho & MacArthur, 2011), which makes this finding especially salient for the pupil population in my study. This notion of audience raises some pedagogical issues: James (1981) states that student writers deserve a reader, thus, criticising writing instruction in school for neglecting a vital part of text production, the interaction. It is probably safe to say that this is true for many Swedish EFL classrooms as well. Most texts written in school are read only by a teacher whose aim is to assess the quality against a list of criteria. The purpose of the peer review, as organised in my study, was also to evaluate the informative reply letters, but this evaluation entailed reading the letters from the recipients’ perspective. Hence, by engaging in peer review the student writers gain a readership, and at the same time, these readers/reviewers can improve their own writing, by adopting a reader perspective towards their own writing.

It should also be noted that the genre-based instruction which was adopted in this study probably contributed to this raised awareness. Recognising the importance of the recipient and acknowledging that writing entails adapt-

ing texts in order to comply with social practices constitute the pillars of genre theory (Hyland, 2004, 2009). The list of success criteria which the pupils in my study used to guide their writing were derived from the reading and discussion of sample texts, so already before engaging with peer review *per se*, the pupils were introduced to the notion of context, purpose and recipient as important factors of successful writing. Nonetheless, it is clear that the peer-review activity contributed to the raised audience awareness by functioning as reinforcement of the success criteria (c.f. Althauser & Darnall, 2001; Cho & Cho, 2011).

Another interesting finding was that peer reviewing also resulted in transfer of content and ideas from the reviewed letters to the reviewers' own letters. Similar results were self-reported by students in previous studies (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Min, 2005; Yang et al. 2006), and in my study these findings were further supported by empirical evidence, which made it possible to study these borrowings more in-depth. Influences, from both reading and commenting on peers' reply letters, prompted the inclusion of new answers and questions for the recipients, elaborations of previously mentioned topics and even the substitution of information to ideas expressed in the reviewed letter. In addition, there were examples of borrowings which resulted in the addition of new moves or alteration of grammatical forms. In sociocultural theories, imitation is significant for development (Lantolf, 2005; Strandberg, 2006). However, imitation from a sociocultural perspective refers to adoption of models and techniques (Strandberg, 2006). The transfer of moves, such as the addition of *Assuring* or *Acknowledging the writer* would probably qualify as imitation according to this definition, as would the imitation of grammatical patterns (see below).

As regards borrowings of content and ideas, it is perhaps more relevant to refer to the type of imitation which Strandberg (2006) discusses in terms of memorising answers. Many of the links between reading and revision changes in my study showed that the pupils directly transferred questions, answers, facts, and information from their peers' reply letters. This finding was especially remarkable in the instances of substitution of content, which resulted in completely transformed responses. It can be discussed whether this type of transfer, as opposed to transfer related to patterns, qualifies as learning operationalised as a change of performance. The question, I argue, is what caused the pupils to introduce these ideas. Did the pupils believe that their peers' responses were better than their own, or did they decide to include these ideas because they believed that it would improve the overall quality of the informative reply letter? Data collected in my study does not provide an answer, but this finding is still significant from a pedagogical point of view; it can be discussed whether this type of transfer of content is cheating.

In light of the findings which show that pupils transfer ideas and content directly from peers' reply letters and that the subsequent increase in audience awareness contributes to learning, it could be argued that reading alone is

enough for development of writing skills. Cho & MacArthur (2011) studied the effects of reading only in comparison with the combination of reading and commenting on the improvement of students' subsequent drafts. It was concluded that the two activities combined had a larger impact on revisions. This finding was explicated by the higher cognitive processes involved in peer review, that is the evaluation and production of feedback comments. Similarly, the consensus groups in my study used the criteria list as guidance for their assessment and negotiation of written feedback. Thus, even though reading alone seems to contribute to pupils' learning, the active engagement and discussions emanating from the reading and resulting in feedback comments should not be neglected.

### 6.2.2 Learning about the micro-level of writing

My findings indicate that the micro-level of writing was not affected by giving feedback to the same extent as the macro-level. There were some differences between the classes, but overall there were fewer links between the pupils' revision changes affecting the micro-level and reading or commenting. Moreover, a small number of pupils contributed to these links. This result is in line with findings in other studies on the effect of peer review (e.g. Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al. 2006; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009).

Nonetheless, it is worth noticing that some pupils transferred words and grammatical patterns from the peer-reviewed letters. This transfer entailed, for example, synonyms and spelling, as well as subject/verb agreements and prepositions. As discussed previously, this type of transfer is in line with learning as defined in sociocultural theories and in this study (Lantolf, 2005; Strandberg, 2006). Thus, my findings might indicate that some pupils were able to identify patterns in their peers' writing and, subsequently, adopt the same structure in their own writing. However, adopting and imitating language features is usually a subconscious process; using a certain element does not necessarily imply understanding (Lantolf, 2000), but in line with the operationalization of learning in my study, this transfer is a sign of learning.

Many of the pupils self-reported that peer reviewing had enhanced their ability to detect grammar and spelling mistakes in their own writing. The feedback comments concerning the micro-level of writing were mainly formulated as general requests to "check" grammar or spelling, and even if the pupils did not learn any new grammatical structures, it is clear that they took these requests to heart. Hence, the peer-review activity strengthened the pupils' editing skills which could contribute to the overall quality of their piece of writing.

To some extent, this was an expected result since the teaching focused on the macro-level of writing. The only explicit references to the micro-level of writing regarded punctuation: the comma after the greeting, followed by a

capital letter. The pupils were also encouraged to use the spell and grammar check in *Word*, which could have affected the result. Another possible explanation is that the pupils found it difficult to talk about the micro-level of writing in their consensus groups. In order to be able to describe why a specific item or part of writing needs to be revised, the students need metaknowledge and -language, i.e. the ability and terminology to talk about language (Sommers, 1980; Topping & Ehly, 2001). It is obvious, both from the teaching and the feedback comments, that these pupils were not used to talk about language. For example, the pupils tended to use the umbrella term "grammar" for most issues and aspects of writing which related to accuracy, and the teacher introduced the notion of feedback etiquette by showing examples of suggestions, rather than explicitly explaining that the pupils could use modal verbs.

### 6.2.3 Developing transferable skills

So far, my discussion has revolved around the research questions which focus on learning from giving feedback in relation to specific aspects of writing. In this section, learning is expanded to entail the transfer of skills. In the five subsequent strategies presented by Thompson & Wiliam (2007, p. 7), steps 4 and 5, "Activating students as instructional resources for one another", and "Activating students as the owners of their own learning" respectively, are linked by the assumption that pupils who engage in peer reviewing develop transferable skills. The findings in my study indicate that the pupils' engagement in peer review contributed to a better ability to assess and improve their own writing. For example, pupils expressed that they found it easier to identify weaknesses in their own writing after engaging in peer review. Moreover, some of the pupils used the reviewed letters as standards towards which they could compare their own reply letters. Likewise, students in the study by Min (2005) self-reported improvement of their self-assessment skills from giving feedback, and the development of transferable skills, metacognition and self-monitoring have been emphasised as benefits derived from the use of student-centred learning activities (Topping & Ehly, 2001; Topping, 2005, 2009; Cho & MacArthur, 2010; Earl, 2013).

One of the differences between acting as a peer reviewer and self-reviewer is that the former entails the ability to be able to explain and suggest, in other words, provide formative information. As discussed above, this aspect of giving feedback proved somewhat difficult for the pupils. In order to be able to talk about language and language use, a certain extent of shared terminology, or meta-language, is needed; thus, the pupils need declarative knowledge. In my study, there were indications that the initial genre-based discussion resulted in some shared vocabulary; the different moves of the informative reply letter, as identified and labelled during the discussion were

referred to in the pupils' feedback comments, and also mentioned in the questionnaires and interviews.

## 6.3 Pedagogical implications

My study has investigated the implementation of peer review as a means for developing teenage pupils' L2 writing. In brief, my findings suggest that the pupils' writing were affected by reading peers' texts and providing feedback, since these activities prompted many of the revision changes. In terms of learning, it appears that especially the macro-level of writing was affected, i.e. structure, rhetorical organisation and content. These results correspond on the whole with findings in studies carried out in tertiary level education, such as the increased focus on global aspects of writing, the raised genre awareness and the transfer of ideas (e.g. Tsui & Ng, 2000; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). There were also indications that the pupils developed their ability to proofread and evaluate their own texts, i.e. that they developed transferable skills through giving feedback. Micro-level aspects of writing were less influenced by the peer-review activity; overall, few pupils had made revision changes which could be connected to reading or commenting on peers' texts. In their role as peer reviewers, the pupils were able to identify task-relevant strengths and weaknesses in the reply letters; however, most of the feedback comments lacked specific suggestions on how to solve potential problems, or explanations describing the problem. This section discusses these findings from a pedagogical perspective by highlighting teaching as a significant factor for successful outcomes of peer review.

The definition of useful feedback adopted in this study entailed that comments should include identified problems, explanation of the nature of the problem, and suggested solutions (Min, 2005). This information should also be specific; in other words, the receivers should be able to use the formative feedback comment to improve their writing. In addition, the weaknesses (and strengths) should be relevant and related to the task. Thus, it is essential that the pupils understand the aims, intended learning outcomes and criteria. In my study, this intersubjectivity was successfully achieved. This can be attributed to the genre-based approach to teaching which included the use of sample texts, discussions about strengths and weaknesses, and jointly formulated success criteria. Advantages with this approach is that the pupils take an active part in their own learning from the beginning by drawing on their own pre-knowledge and understanding of the genre; however, it is also possible that student-derived criteria do not expand the pupils' thinking (Orsmond et al. 2000), and that the pupils' suggestions are not in line with the curriculum. Therefore, the selection of sample texts and the scaffolding provided by the teacher are two key components to success.

Furthermore, my findings show that the pupils found it challenging to include formative information in their feedback; in fact, most of the feedback functioned more like reminders of the criteria than as useful tools to promote learning. From a pedagogical perspective, reinforcement of the criteria can still result in improved writing, but it might not be as useful in terms of learning new things. The list of criteria jointly produced in class worked well as a checklist for the pupils, but it did not offer any guidance in terms of qualitatively distinct ways of obtaining the aims, that is, progression. Different standards were orally discussed in class, but it is possible that a rubric-type representation of the criteria would help the pupils formulate more specific suggestions.

As regards describing the nature of the problem, the pupils in my study were able to include explanations related to the readers' response to the reply letter, which is a significant part of successful writing. However, in relation to problems pertaining to language use in general, in particular the micro-level of writing, no explanations were offered. In the previous section, I discussed whether this was due to the pupils' lack of metalanguage, an issue which could be addressed by introducing more technical vocabulary to talk about language in the teaching.

The fact that there was no authentic receiver of the feedback probably contributed to this lack of formative information. Since my study aimed to study possible benefits for the provider of feedback, it was necessary that the pupils did not receive any feedback. Integrating peer assessment as a learning activity in school, though, would normally entail that the pupils both give and receive feedback, which might prompt the pupils to include more formative information. For the pupils in my study, it was clear that the purpose of giving feedback was to improve their own writing, which might also have resulted in the paucity of specific suggestions and explanations. Thus, it might also be fruitful to clarify the purpose of student-centred assessment activities.

In terms of learning about writing, my findings show that by engaging the pupils in peer review, and perhaps especially offering them the opportunity to act as readers, their own writing was affected. By adopting a reader perspective, many of the pupils self-reported a raised awareness of paragraphing, and they found the different moves of the informative reply letter, as derived from the sample texts, useful for the organisation of the letters. Moreover, many of the pupils transferred ideas and content directly from the reviewed letters into their own reply letter. This is a finding which deserves some attention from a pedagogical point of view. These borrowings helped improve the overall quality of the final version of the informative reply letter by elaborating the content, replying to more questions, and enhancing the relationship to the recipients by asking them questions. However, it can be discussed to what extent it is considered acceptable to borrow ideas from peers in school.

From a sociocultural perspective on learning, imitation is a natural part of development (Lantolf, 2005; Strandberg, 2006); however, in schools, copying classmates' texts can be considered cheating. In relation to the informative reply letter, which in my study concerned information about Sweden, Stockholm and teenagers' lives in general, it is likely that the pupils will write about the same things. As regards other genres, like opinion-based argumentative essays, this type of borrowing might be more problematic. This is an issue which needs to be considered by teachers who integrate peer assessment as part of their teaching.

The pupils in my study did not learn much about micro-level aspects of language from giving feedback. There were some examples of transfer of words and grammatical patterns, but these were carried out by a small share of the participants. Nevertheless, the pupils self-reported improved ability to identify and edit micro-level problems in their own writing, which suggests that they had developed transferrable skills from peer reviewing. Thus, although the pupils did not develop their language use *per se*, they were able to improve the quality of their writing by correcting mistakes on sentence- and word-level.

It was noted earlier that it might be relevant to separate learning about language and learning about writing. With this distinction, it is possible to argue that the pupils in my study learned about writing but not about language from giving feedback. Yasuda (2012) proposed that a fusion of genre- and task-based approaches to teaching could bridge this difference. It is also possible that teacher feedback could complement peer feedback. Whereas the students can address issues related to the reader perspective and the social context of writing, the teacher can attend to more formal language-related problems.

# 7 Summary of the main findings and my contribution to research

The purpose of my study was to contribute to the understanding of pupils' learning from giving feedback, by aiming to describe the young learners as peer reviewers, and explore potential benefits of giving feedback. The starting point was sprung from both practical and theoretical interests: Teachers are concerned with the implementation and efficacy of student-centred approaches to assessment (e.g. Rollinson, 2005; Oscarson & Apelgren, 2011), and research on peer reviewing and especially the reviewer role has mainly been carried out in tertiary education. In addition, teenagers' exposure to extra-mural English implies that they are, in fact, partly in charge of their own language learning, and could take a more active role as a learner in the classroom as well.

## 7.1 Conclusion

My main findings suggest that pupils can learn about writing from giving feedback. By adopting a reader perspective, the pupils in my study raised their genre and audience awareness. This entailed, for example, that they attended to issues regarding understanding and politeness in their feedback, and, subsequently, in their own writing. Moreover, the peer-reviewed texts served as inspiration both in terms of transfer of structure, such as the moves of the informative reply letter, and ideas and content. Self-reports indicated that the pupils enhanced their ability to self-assess and edit their own writing, which suggests that transferable skills were developed as a result of peer review. As regards micro-level aspects of writing, reading and commenting on peers' reply letters seemed to influence a smaller number of pupils to transfer patterns and spelling, but it was also self-reported that the pupils' self-assessment skills within this areas were improved. In their role as peer reviewers, the pupils successfully identified strengths and weaknesses, but the feedback did not include much specific formative information.

In conclusion, I argue that peer-review activities can be implemented in school, despite the challenges in terms of dense curricula and limited time; moreover, it is clear that teenage students' L2 writing can benefit from giving feedback. Specifically, acting as peer reviewers seems to provide the

student writers with an additional perspective on their writing, and thus reinforce their audience awareness, which is a key feature of writing as social practice (Hyland, 2009). Conversely, they need more support in order to develop their general language proficiency, so from that perspective teacher feedback is equally important. It is suggested that peer review cannot replace teacher feedback; instead, peer and teacher feedback can complement each other. Whereas the pupils can address issues related to the reader perspective and the social context of writing, the teacher can attend to more formal language-related problems, i.e. language learning. The pupils in my study were relatively few, but as many teenagers today they grow up surrounded by English. Nowadays, exposure to English outside the classroom implies that students are contributing to their own language learning; thus it makes sense that they contribute also to the assessment for learning in school.

My findings contribute to research on L2 writing and peer feedback by showing that also younger learners can benefit from giving feedback. This is significant since previous research has mainly been carried out at university and college level, which entails different conditions in comparison to secondary school (e.g. Min, 2005; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). In addition, by combining text analyses, classroom observation and pupils' self-reports, my study offers a more comprehensive understanding of peer review, than is possible from experimental studies or self-reports only. This inclusive approach also included a description of the implementation of a teaching unit where peer review was interated as a learning activity, which could serve as inspiration for teachers concerned with the use of student-centred assessment.

## 7.2 Possible limitations of the study and further research

The findings and conclusions drawn from this empirical study should be considered tentative since they are based on evidence from two specific cases, with relatively few participants. My findings are connected to these particular pupils and their context, but in line with the pluralist view on generalisation suggested by Larsson (2008), in that they can be generalised by recognizing similarities in context or patterns. He explains that "[i]t is the audience that is often in the best position to judge the similarity of a context with the one portrayed in the research work" (2008, p. 33). Nevertheless, more studies involving younger learners and the use of peer assessment as learning activity in the classroom are needed in order to cover more contexts and perspectives.

Other factors which can be considered limitations are the attrition rate, length of study and choice of genre. The attrition rate in the study reported

here is relatively high. Even if this is to be expected in classroom research (Dörnyei, 2007), it may affect the findings if there is a higher drop-out rate among certain categories of pupils. It should also be noted that this study was carried out during one teaching unit only, over a total of four weeks. This means that the peer review as implemented in this study was only evaluated in relation to the task of writing an informative reply letter. It is possible that the use of a different genre would have yielded other findings. For example, the informative reply letter offers relatively little space for creativity. Both these issues could be addressed via longitudinal studies, which would render it possible to study both the development of the skills needed to be a proficient peer reviewer over time, and the effect of peer review on different types of tasks and genres.

In order to balance the aims of the researcher and the students, some compromises had to be made: Since the overarching research question pertained to benefits for the reviewers, the pupils never received any feedback. This limitation also entailed that the feedback comments that the pupils produced did not have an authentic receiver. All things considered, these choices influenced the ecological validity of the study.

The tools for analysis used to study learning from giving feedback in my study also present some limitations. It was assumed that all pupils actively engaged in the consensus groups' discussions leading to the written feedback comments. Hence, these comments were treated as a joint outcome of an evaluation based on the criteria. In addition, the analysis of the links between the peer-review activity and the revision changes, i.e. the signs of learning from giving feedback, are examples of so called high-inference analysis (Long, 1980). However, this analysis made it possible to empirically study the revision changes and connecting them to feedback comments or the content of the peer-reviewed letters.

The findings from my study were interpreted and discussed in relation to the cases, and in terms of what is possible to learn about writing from giving feedback. Individual differences were recognised, but lie outside the scope of this study. Therefore, there is a need for further studies focusing on the peer reviewer which take into account individual differences, such as level of language proficiency, task engagement, and motivation.

To conclude, my study has contributed to the body of knowledge about potential benefits of giving peer feedback by showing how revision changes can be linked to peer review. This highlights how different aspects of writing can be affected by providing feedback. The population of younger language learners is still underrepresented in studies on peer review. By showing that teenagers can benefit from providing feedback, it is hoped that this study will inspire more teachers to integrate student-centred assessment activities in the classroom.

# Summary in Swedish / Sammanfattning

**Bakgrund**

Ungdomar i stora delar av Europa möter engelska både i och utanför skolan i hög utsträckning (Berns, de Bot & Hasebrink, 2007). Detta innefattar även svenska tonåringar som på sin fritid ägnar sig åt att spela dataspel, lyssna på musik, se på TV och filmer, surfa på Internet och därmed möter det engelska språket (Sundqvist, 2009). Följaktligen är deras färdighetsnivå relativt hög, speciellt de receptiva förmågorna lyssna och läsa (Skolverket, 2012b). Detta innebär att engelskundervisningen i skolan behöver anpassas till tonåringarnas behov, exempelvis genom att fokusera mer på de produktiva förmågorna så att eleverna utvecklar en allsidig kommunikativ kompetens. Genom att dessutom involvera eleverna i bedömningen av varandras och sina egna förmågor kan de bidra till undervisningen och ta en aktiv roll i sitt eget lärande.

Att involvera eleverna i bedömningsaktiviter innebär att mål och kriterier blir gemensamma och att lärare och elever tillsammans bidrar till slutresultatet; syftet med bedömningen är således att främja lärandet genom att eleverna själva tar en aktiv roll (Lundahl, 2010; Earl, 2013). Trots att olika former av kamrat[7]- och självbedömning har fokuserats i en stor mängd studier (t.ex. Stanley, 1992; Paulus, 1999; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006) uttrycker vissa lärare osäkerhet beträffande implementering och effektivitet (Bullock, 2011; Cho & MacArthur, 2011). I svenska högstadieskolor och gymnasier används kamrat- och självbedömning i ganska liten utsträckning (Oscarson & Apelgren, 2011).

Den största delen av de studier som behandlat kamratbedömning i andraspråksundervisning har genomförts på högskolor och universitet och har främst undersökt hur feedback från klasskamrater överensstämmer med lärarens bedömning (t.ex. Matsuno, 2009) och hur klasskamraters feedback används av mottagarna (t.ex. Min, 2006). Detta innebär att det behövs studier som fokuserar på yngre elever samt på de som ger feedback, det vill säga kamratbedömarna. Syftet med min studie, som genomfördes i två klasser i årskurs åtta, är att bidra till förståelsen av vad elever kan lära sig genom att ge feedback på klasskamraters texter, och målen är att beskriva

[7] *Peer assessment* översätts vanligen som kamratbedömning, även om *peer* (eng.) och *kamrat* (sv.) inte riktigt har samma betydelse.

eleverna som kamratbedömare, samt att undersöka potentiella fördelar med att ge feedback. Följande forskningsfrågor var vägledande:

1. Hur svarar elever på undervisning om att ge feedback?
    a. Hur förstår eleverna uppgiften, kriterierna och målen?
    b. I vilken utsträckning inkluderar eleverna formativ information i sin feedback?
2. Vad lär sig elever om skrivande genom att ge feedback?
    a. Vad lär sig eleverna om skrivande beträffande struktur och disposition, innehåll och idéutveckling samt mikronivå?
3. Hur kan svaren på ovanstående frågor förstås i förhållande till klassrumsaktiviteterna och elevernas uppfattningar av lärande?

Ett teoretiskt ramverk som bestod av sociokulturella teorier, speciellt begrepp som stöttning och den proximala utvecklingszonen, genre-baserad undervisning, andraspråksskrivande och klassrumsbedömning bidrog till både studiens utformning samt tolkning av resultat.

**Metod**

Studien genomfördes i två klasser i årskurs åtta i en svensk högstadieskola. Klasserna genomförde ett arbetsområde vars mål var att kunna skriva ett svarsbrev, *How to write a reply letter*, och undervisningen omfattade sammanlagt sex lektioner. Inledningsvis användes exempeltexter för att diskutera hur man skriver ett bra svarsbrev. Dessa diskussioner resulterade i en gemensam kriterielista som eleverna använde för att skriva sina svarsbrev, samt för att ge feedback på sina kamraters brev. När eleverna hade skrivit ett första utkast fick de först öva i klass på att ge feedback, för att senare i grupp läsa och skriftligen kommentera brev skrivna av klasskamrater. Därefter reviderade eleverna sina egna utkast. Eleverna fick ingen feedback från vare sig andra elever eller lärare innan de slutförde sina egna texter.

Under arbetsområdet samlades material in i form av de texter som eleverna producerade samt via video- och ljudupptagningar i klassrummet. Dessutom svarade eleverna på frågor om sin uppfattning om arbetsområdet och sitt eget lärande via enkäter och intervjuer. Syftet med att samla in material från flera källor var att kunna anta ett undersökande förhållningssätt till materialet vilket är kännetecknande för kvalitativa studier, samt att kunna triangulera resultaten för att inkludera flera perspektiv och nå ökad förståelse.

De kommentarer som eleverna tillsammans formulerade i skrift i sina feedbackgrupper analyserades i syfte att identifiera formativ information (forskningsfråga 1). Med formativ information avsågs information som kunde bidra till att främja mottagarens lärande genom att identifiera problem, förklara problemets natur, samt föreslå lösning. För att besvara forskningsfråga 2 kategoriserades inledningsvis de ändringar som eleverna

gjort då de bearbetade sitt första utkast. Därefter jämfördes ändringarna med innehållet i de texter som respektive elev hade läst i sin feedbackgrupp, samt med de kommentarer som gruppen gemensamt hade skrivit. De fall där ändringen kunde kopplas till innehåll och/eller kommentar tolkades som tecken på att eleven hade lärt sig något genom att ge feedback. Slutligen jämfördes resultaten från ovanstående analyser mellan de båda klasserna, och relaterades till undervisningen och elevernas uppfattningar av lärande (forskningsfråga 3).

**Resultat**

De flesta eleverna uttryckte att de förstod målet med arbetsområdet och i intervjuerna framgick att de uppfattade uppgiften som att de skulle förbättra sitt skrivande och lära sig att skriva ett svarsbrev. Vidare ansåg de att kriterierna hjälpte dem att skriva ett bra svarsbrev genom att fungera som checklistor. Ytterligare ett tecken på att elevernas förståelse för uppgiften var god var att kommentarerna de producerade i feedbackgrupperna var baserade på kriterierna.

De kommentarer som eleverna skrev fokuserade både på styrkor och svagheter. I sin roll som kamratbedömare visade eleverna att de kunde identifiera problem, men att det var en utmaning att inkludera specifik formativ information. Många av de föreslagna lösningarna var uppmaningar att ”check the spelling” eller ”explain”. Den typen av lösningar är generella och fungerar mer som förstärkning av kriterierna än som hjälp i syfte att främja någons lärande. Det fåtal kommentarer i båda klasserna som innehöll förklaringar fokuserade främst på eventuella problem i förhållande till mottagaren, som missförstånd och artighet. När eleverna övade på att ge feedback ingick få exempel på kommentarer som innehöll förklaringar, vilket kan ha bidragit till detta resultat. Dessutom framgick det att eleverna uppfattade att uppgiftens syfte var att främja deras eget lärande, inte den tilltänkta mottagarens, vilket också kan förklara bristen på formativ information.

Beträffande elevernas eget lärande från att ge feedback var det främst makronivån av skrivande som gynnades. Även om antalet ändringar som påverkade struktur och styckeindelning var få, kunde de flesta av dem kopplas till antingen innehållet i de bedömda breven eller till kommentarerna. Eleverna uttryckte också själva att de lärt sig mycket om styckeindelning och disposition genom att läsa och bedöma sina kamraters texter.

Många elever inspirerades av sina kamraters texter när de skulle svara på frågorna i sina egna brev. Detta visade sig till exempel genom att information ändrades, personliga uppgifter utvecklades och helt nya svar inkluderades. Trots att textanalysen visade att många av ändringarna som eleverna gjorde när de bearbetade sina texter kunde relateras till arbetet i feedbackgruppen var det endast ett fåtal elever som uppgav att de ansåg att

de lärt sig något om innehåll genom att läsa och kommentera sina klasskamraters texter.

Även om ganska många av ändringarna på mikronivå kunde kopplas till att ge feedback, var det ett mindre antal elever i båda klasserna som bidrog till siffrorna. Ändringarna som gjordes inkluderade bland annat överföring av grammatiska strukturer, substitution av ord och infogande av skiljetecken. Även om textanalysen indikerade att mikronivån inte gynnades av att ge feedback i samma utsträckning som makronivån, så uttryckte flera elever att de förbättrade sin förmåga att upptäcka misstag i sin egen text genom att läsa och kommentera andras texter. Några elever rapporterade också att de lärt sig några nya ord, vilket inkluderade de termer som användes för att prata om svarsbrevets olika delar.

**Diskussion och didaktiska implikationer**

Eleverna i min studie förstod syftet med arbetsområdet *How to write a reply letter*, vilket är en viktig utgångspunkt för effektiv kamrat- och självbedömning (Thompson & Wiliam, 2007; Lundahl, 2010). Det är troligt att den genre-baserade undervisningen (Hyland, 2004), som bland annat inkluderade diskussioner om en gemensam kriterielista med utgångspunkt i exempeltexter, kan förklara det här resultatet. En del av kriterierna var dock ganska generella, exempelvis ”Think about grammar”, vilket kan bero på att kriterier som härrör från elevdiskussioner tenderar att spegla elevernas nuvarande kunskapsnivå, snarare än utmana dem (Orsmond et al. 2000). Med andra ord kan lärarens stöttning och val av exempeltexter spela en viktig roll i den här fasen av undervisningen.

Den feedback som eleverna gemensamt producerade var relevant i relation till kriterierna och identifierade både styrkor och svagheter i de bedömda texterna. Den formativa informationen däremot var i de flesta kommentarerna ganska generell och innehöll få förklaringar. Detta kan förklaras av den korta förberedelsen som eleverna fick. Tidigare studier har vissat att effektiv kamratbedömning gynnas av omfattande träning (Stanley, 1992; Berg, 1999; Min, 2005) som till exempel har inkluderar individuella möten mellan lärare och elev. Den typen av stöttning kan vara svår att organisera eftersom undervisningstiden på högstadiet är begränsad och det är många moment som ska genomföras inom ramen för kursplanen. Det är möjligt att tydligare exempel på feedback som innehåller både lösningar och förklaringar kan underlätta för eleverna. Dessutom saknade eleverna i min studie en autentisk mottagare för sina kommentarer, vilket kan ha påverkat den formativa informationen.

Genom att läsa och kommentera andras texter utvecklade eleverna sitt läsarperspektiv, vilket är en viktig del av den skriftliga förmågan (Hedge, 2000; Cho & MacArthur, 2011). Eleverna upplevde att deras medvetenhet om vikten av styckeindelning och tydlig struktur förbättrades och många lånade idéer från sina klasskamraters brev för att utveckla innehållet i sina

egna texter. Det är viktigt att elever får agera både skribenter och läsare (James, 1981), men från ett didaktiskt perspektiv kan det vara problematiskt att innehåll överförs från en text till en annan. Inom genrer som bygger på utveckling av idéer och åsikter, som till exempel en argumenterande uppsats, är det möjligt att lån av innehåll kan tolkas som fusk.

Resultaten i min studie indikerar att det är främst makronivån av skrivande som gynnas av att elever ger feedback, vilket också har visats i tidigare studier (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). Mer formella aspekter av skrivande, som stavning och grammatik, verkar inte gynnas i samma utsträckning av att ge feedback, vilket kan bero på att elever inte har gemensamt vokabulär för att tala om språk. Emellertid uttryckte flera elever att det blev lättare att upptäcka misstag i sin egen text efter att ha läst och kommenterat kamraters texter vilket indikerar att de utvecklade sin förmåga att självbedöma sin text.

Det är tydligt att elevers eget skrivande kan utvecklas genom att de får agera läsare och bedömare av sina klasskamraters texter. Som nämndes inledningsvis uttrycker en del lärare en osäkerhet beträffande användning av kamrat- och självbedömning i språkundervisning, men resultaten i min studie visar att det kan både vara effektivt och genomförbart trots begränsningar i form av tid. För att ytterligare förbättra vår förståelse av hur elever kan gynnas av att få ta ett större ansvar för sitt eget lärande behövs det longitudinella studier som kan följa utvecklingen av överförbara färdigheter över tid. Dessutom kan studier som fokuserar på individuella skillnader bidra till att undervisningen kan anpassas till enskilda elevers behov.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Genre analysis of the informative reply letter

The genre analysis, based on Bronia's framework (2005, p. 70), is presented in three parts. The first part focuses on the contextual analysis. The next part consists of the structural analysis of the rhetorical moves, focusing on communicative purpose and function, as well as the results of the lexico-grammatical analysis for some of the moves, since they were rather specific. Hence, the lexico-grammatical analysis which follows is mainly based on the most diverse move, *Replying*.

A. Contextual analysis

**Genre type**: This is a reply letter containing informative text. The letters include descriptive elements as well as comparisons.

**Mode**: Discourse written as a school assignment. The language is informal (but still "school appropriate").

**Tenor**: The letter is a response to a letter written by three (fictitious) British teenagers planning a school trip to Stockholm. These girls also constitute the fictitious readers of the reply letter, and they are the same age as the writers. The actual readers are classmates (peer reviewers) and the teacher as assessor. The latter relationship may be considered unequal since the teacher is in charge of the final grading.

**Field**: The texts deal with information about Stockholm, Swedish school, sports and Swedes' view of Great Britain.

**Communicative purpose**: To give information as requested in the letter received (the writing prompt) and to establish a contact.

**The institutional practice**: The practice of the institution, a Swedish lower secondary school, weighs heavily on the execution of this task. Even though writing the reply letter is supposed to mimic a real-world task, it is also designed to function in a heterogeneous classroom. The subject matter as presented in the writing prompt ranges from tourist sites, gender issues, clothing, sports, TV and music. The texts were produced during class which means that there was a time limit. The pupils' preparation consisted of joint deconstruction and reading of two sample texts, resulting in a criteria list which included the generic structure of the genre. The texts are written on computer. The institutional constraints naturally impose on both the organi-

sation and the language of the letter. However, the pupils' voices and ideas were integrated in the instruction.

B. Structural analysis

A total of seven rhetorical patterns were identified in the informative reply letters. Five of the moves were found in the vast majority of the texts and were thus considered more or less established. The remaining two moves (indented in the writing frame presented below) were only found in a few of the texts, but may nevertheless be regarded as possible structural sections. The order in which these rhetorical moves were introduced was similar in all the texts, apart from a) and b) which were intertwined with moves 2 and 3 respectively.

**1. Greeting**

The purpose is to establish contact and recognise the reader, and this move only consists of one line. In most texts introduced by *Dear [name of the recipients]/friends*.

**2. Acknowledging the received letter**

The purpose of this move is to establish a rapport between the writer and the readers/recipients and also to indicate the objective of this reply letter, e.g. *Thank you for your letter* and *I would love to help you*!

**a) Presenting oneself**

This part includes information about the writer.

**3. Replying**

The purpose of this section is to give the recipients the information they asked for, hence replying to their direct questions. This is the main part of these letters, usually containing several paragraphs in order to organise the information.

**b) Asking questions**

This part is present in four of the twelve texts. It consists of direct questions to the readers, such as *I don't understand why you should go to a school with only girls?* or *What about you?*

**4. Assuring**

The function of this move is to assure that the writer's intention is to be helpful and that the given information is useful. For example*: I really hope my letter will help you* and *I am happy to help you*.

**5. Signing off**

The purpose is to indicate that this is the end of the letter; *Best wishes*, *Lots of love*, *Yours truly*.

C. Lexico-grammatical analysis

The pronouns *I* and *you* are among the top four most frequent words in the corpus, which indicates a high level of interpersonal relations throughout the text. Some of the pronouns *you* are used in the general sense when referring

to “you British people”. The same function can be identified for *we*, referring mainly to different groups to which the writer belongs (*we teenagers, we pupils at Xskolan, we in Sweden*), but also a few *w*e referring to the writer and the reader in general.

The verbs are predominantly in the present tense and relational verbs such as *be* and *have* are by far the most common. Mental or private verbs, in particular the verb *thin*k, are also quite frequent. This underlines the personal tone of the letter, as well as the fact that the given information is subjective and somewhat tentative since the writer and readers do not know each other personally. This uncertainty is also expressed by the frequent use of modals:

*Otherwise you can go to one of the many cafés…*
*Then you could experience for yourselves…*
*Something else you might want to see is…*
*…where you should go to meet people…*

The coherence between the questions in the received letter and the answers is vital since the communicative purpose of this genre is to provide responses. The most common strategy seems to be to copy part of the direct question and adding it to an introductory phrase, preferably including the conditional *if*:

*If you are interested in...*
*If you’d like to...*
*If you want to...*
*If you’re looking for...*
*You also wanted to know...*
*You wondered if...*
*Like you said...*
*It’s a bit hard to say...*

The different types of connectives used for cohesion in the texts are relatively few, and the vast majority of them are coordinating conjunctions, e.g *and, or, but*. Subordinating conjunction include *because* and *since*. *For example* is used for exemplification.

Explanations are above all used in connection to the suggested ‘famous places’ recommended by the writer. They are executed in a variety of ways:

a) a description followed by called
   - *an amusement park called Gröna Lund”*
b) as a relative clause
   - *Globen which is a big round house*
c) as an explanatory subordinate clause
   - *Gröna Lund, Stockholm’s amusement park...*
d) as a complement
   - *Globen is a big, white building, shaped like a golf ball*
e) as a main clause containing a subjective pronoun
   - *... Skansen. It´s like a zoo.*

**Appendix B: Informed consent**[8]

Stockholm 2011-05-04

*Till vårdnadshavare med barn i [klasser och skola]*

**Information om deltagande i forskarstudie om skriftlig produktion i engelska, hösttermin 2011**

Jag heter Jessica Berggren och är licentiand i engelska vid Stockholms universitet. Jag går en forskarskola i ämnesdidaktik, med inriktning på praxisnära forskning, vilket innebär att man förlägger forskningen i skolan för att vara närmare den verksamhet man hoppas kunna förbättra med studiens resultat. Forskarskolan finansieras av utbildningsförvaltningen, Stockholm Stad, som del av deras forsknings- och utvecklingsprogram.

Syfte: Studien handlar om hur man kan utveckla elevers skriftliga förmåga och syftet är att undersöka hur ett visst undervisningssätt och innehåll kan bidra till förbättrad skriftlig färdighet. För att samla in data till min undersökning kommer jag att följa några klasser när de arbetar med skriftlig produktion. Samtliga lektioner genomförs av ordinarie lärare i engelska, [lärares namn], och från elevernas perspektiv kommer det att likna den undervisning som de är vana vid.

Deltagande: Att delta i studien är frivilligt och innebär att man tillåter att jag samlar in data i form av de uppgifter och texter som man producerar under arbetsområdet. För kompletterande information kommer eleverna också att svara på en enkät som främst rör deras relation till skolämnet engelska och några av eleverna kommer att intervjuas i grupp vid arbetsområdets slut. [Lärares namn] presentationer kommer att videofilmas med fokus på just henne, och hon kommer att bära en mikrofon för ljudinspelning under lektionerna. Syftet med dessa aktiviteter är att få en så bred grund som möjligt för att undersöka hur och vad eleverna lär sig. Arbetsområdet beräknas ta tre veckor med start i september 2011. Oavsett om man väljer att medverka i studien eller inte, deltar man i undervisningen som vanligt.

Sekretess: Studien följer noga de etiska föreskrifter som gäller för god forskningssed. Allt insamlat material behandlas med största aktsamhet och förvaras på ett säkert sätt. Samtliga medverkande elever och lärare, samt skola, kommer att vara anonyma i efterföljande publikationer och presentationer. Eleverna avidentifieras innan analys påbörjas, vilket innebär att deras namn ersätts med en kod.

Om ni har frågor eller önskar mer information är ni välkomna att kontakta mig på mejl [mejladress] alternativt telefon [telefonnummer].

Medgivande: Genom att kryssa för ”Ja” och skriva under detta dokument ger vårdnadshavare och elev sina medgivanden till att delta i forskarstudie

[8] The material presented in the appendices have been formatted to comply with the format of this thesis, and to save space. The content, however, has not been altered.

enligt ovanstående beskrivning. Ett ”Nej” innebär att eleven inte deltar i studien.

☐ Ja, jag tillåter att mitt barn deltar i ”Forskarstudie om skriftlig produktion i engelska”

☐ Nej, jag tillåter inte att mitt barn deltar i ”Forskarstudie om skriftlig produktion i engelska”

_____ _____

Elevens namn Klass

_____

Elevens underskrift

_____

Målsmans underskrift

_____ _____

Målsmans namnförtydligande Ort och datum

Inlämnas till lärare i engelska, [lärares namn]

**Appendix C: Writing prompt, letter from American teenagers**

## Write a reply letter

**NB! This is a "test situation". You are not allowed to ask your friends for help. The time limit is 60 minutes.**

Hi Ohio!
*Students at Montgomery High School in Columbus, Ohio, are doing a project about countries in Europe. Read this letter from the Sweden Project Group and write a letter in reply.*

Dear friends in Sweden,

We're working on a European project and we've discovered that we don't know very much about your country and the way you live. Please write back and tell us. And of course we are curious about YOU—who are you and where are you from?

Our high school has about 1,000 students and we have a great football team, a big band and lots of after-school activities. What about your school? And what about the Swedish school system? Tell us what it's like! Some more questions that we have are:

What is it like to live in your country? What are young people interested in? What do people talk about and what do they think is important? We think that a lot of people get the wrong impression of our country through TV and other media. So we wonder what you know about life in the US. Finally, what are your plans for the future?

Hope to hear from you soon!
Debbie, Carlos, Said and Tom

*During the following classes some of your classmates are going to read your text. Don't write your name in the letter and avoid information that you believe is too personal.*

- Use Times New Roman, 12 points. (Start > Tecken)
- Spacing 1.5. (Start > Stycke)
- Use the spell and grammar check. (Granska > Språkkontroll> Engelska Storbritannien el. USA)
- Save the document at least every ten minutes.

Please e-mail the document as an attachment to [researcher's e-mail address]

**Appendix D: Writing prompt, letter from British teenagers**

*These three girls would like your help to plan their school trip to Stockholm. Read the letter and write a letter in reply.*

Dear Swedish friends,

We go to secondary school in London and later this spring we are planning a school trip to Sweden. Among other things we're going to spend three days in Stockholm. We'd like to visit some famous places and perhaps museums, as well as cafés or other places where teenagers hang out. What would you recommend that a tourist see in Stockholm? And where can we meet and talk to people our age? Perhaps we could visit your school? Please write back and tell us.

Our school is in the northwest of London and it is a Catholic school for girls. We've heard that you don't have any schools for boys or girls only in Sweden. What's it like going to a mixed school? Do you wear school uniforms? We wear purple skirts, white blouses, purple ties and grey cardigans. Make up and jewellery are not allowed.

We like sports a lot and practice volleyball three times a week. Are Swedish people interested in sports? Do you have like a "national sport"? Ours is definitely football. Do you practice any sports?

Finally, we'd like you to answer these questions about our country: What do Swedes in general think of Great Britain? What do you know about life in Great Britain and London? Do you watch any British TV-shows? Or listen to British music?

Thank you so much for helping us. We're looking forward to coming to Stockholm and hopefully meet you!
Lots of love!
Keira, Nora & Felicity

**Appendix E: Plan for pupils**

## Write a reply letter

How do you write a letter in English? What different types of letters are there? Why do you write a letter? How do you decide what to write about? Why is it important to know who the recipient of your letter is? There are many different things to consider when you write a letter, and during the following weeks we are going to focus on how to write a reply letter. Among other things, we are going to talk about the context, the purpose and the recipient, and how they affect the way you write.

**In class...**

- we read samples of reply letters
- we discuss how to write a good reply letter and write a criteria list
- we practise giving feedback on our classmates' texts

**The aims are that you should...**

- improve your ability to express yourself and communicate in writing
  (utveckla din förmåga att formulera dig och kommunicera i skrift, Lgr 11)
- improve your ability to adapt the language depending on context, recipient and purpose
  (utveckla din förmåga att anpassa språket efter sammanhang, mottagare och syfte, Lgr 11)

**How do you demonstrate what you have learnt and how is it assessed?**
You show your skills by writing a reply letter following the criteria you have agreed upon in class.

**Appendix F: Criteria list Case A**

## Criteria list, class A

Try to keep these things in mind when you write your reply letter:

Content and organization

- Greeting
- Acknowledging the writer
- Answer all the questions
- Ending
- Signing off

- Give correct facts and answers
- Be specific
- Tell the recipient about yourself
- Ask questions

Language

- Think about grammar
- Be polite
- Divide the texts into paragraphs
- Don’t repeat too much
- Read through the text before you hand it in
- Don’t write too long sentences, use full stops.
- Use quotations marks “ “ where necessary

**Appendix G: Criteria list Case B**

**Criteria list, class B**

Try to keep these things in mind when you write your reply letter:

Content and organization

- Greeting
- Introduction/Acknowledging the writer
- Answering/Replying to the questions
- Ending
- Signing off

- Think about the organization
- Tell the recipient about yourself
- Ask questions
- Give good explanations

Language

- Sentences shouldn't be too long or too short
- Divide the texts into paragraphs
- Check your grammar
- Check your spelling
- Be polite
- Don't repeat yourself, vary the vocabulary

**Appendix H: Feedback form**

*Group members* _____
*Feedback on essay number* _____

**Feedback form**

- Read the full text first.
- Comment on the things that are good in the text.
- Do you understand what the writer means with everything in the text? If not, include this in your comments and try to explain why you don't understand.
- Comment on other problems or things that could be improved. Try to be specific and explain why it is a problem. Also, give suggestions on how to solve the problem.
- Remember that the writer has done his or her best. Try to formulate your feedback in a nice way.

**Appendix I: Examples of sample texts**

Dear friends in London,

I am so glad you wrote to me, and I really hope we can meet when you come to Sweden! In Sweden there's really not very many places were teenagers hang out, besides cafés and the shopping areas. We often go to each other's homes instead, and hang out there!

If you are interested in art and culture, I think you should visit the museum of photographic and "Kaknesstornet" which is a tall tower were you can sometimes eat and look at the beautiful vhew. Other places I think you should visit is the "old town" which is the oldest part of Stockholm. "Djurgården" is a large green area, with lots of forests, cafes, gardens and places to visit! Some examples is "Skansen" where you can look at all kinds of Swedish animals, and eat Swedish candy. "Gröna Lund", Stockholm's amusement park and "Rosendal" a great garden, with many kinds of flowers and trees and a big café and restaurant. Otherwise you can go to one of the many cafes or go shopping!

My school is called "Flodskolan" and there are both girls and boys studying here, I think it's good that we have mixed schools here in Sweden. We don't were school uniforms in Sweden, and we are allowed to wear both makeup and jewelry's! I think that i´ts good, and bad! There is great to be able to wear what you want, but in the same time, some people I think can't afford the "cool" cloths and then feel a lot of pressure. You are very welcome to come visit our school when you visit Stockholm

In Sweden many teenagers have some kind of activity after school, and I think it is mostly different kinds of sports, I don't think we have any national sports, like you do. I don't do any sports for the moment, which is bad, be-cause I would like to have something to do with my time!

I don't think a teenager in Sweden knows very much about Great Britain, apart from what is seen in movies, at least I don't. I listen to lots music, some from your country, but from other parts of the world too.

I really hope my letter will help you and I hope that you will have a great stay here in Sweden! Please contact me when you are coming so that we can meet!

Best wishes,
Mirja

Greeting, English friends

Greeting, Keira, Nora and Felicity. I´m going in ``Flodskolan´´ we don´t wear any school uniforms and we are allowed to wear makeup and jewelry, I don´t know how it fell´s to be in a school where it just are boys or girls but I like the fact that we are mixed, how is it too be in a school where it´s just girls?

I would recommend a tourist to go to a Tivoli that are called ``Gröna Lund´´ it`s a where nice Tivoli with a lot of attractions and on the night they got concerts with a lot of famous stars. I would also recommend the national history museum and the nature museum at the history museum you can learn a bit about Sweden and at the nature museum it´s about animals and history and a lot more. And if you would like to learn more about Sweden you can go to ``Skansen ´´ it´s like a zoo but it got old Swedish history to.

I don´t really know where you can meet peoples in your own age so I can´t really help you with that, sorry. Our national sport would perhaps be soccer. We are changing sport at our sport lessons in the school. I'm training two times in the weak and I often have a match in the week. I'm going to start running soon in the morning. I would say that we think that your country has a lot of things to see like for example the eye but your climate is pretty much like ours with the winters and the summers. Infect I have never been in Great Britain, but I would love to know stuff about it. Could you tell that in your next letter? Well I do watch master chef but I think that's all. Do you see a lot of British TV? I don´t listen to any British music at all. Can you tell me any British songs that are famous?

I hope that you will have fun.

BYE, BYE
Tyra

**Appendix J: Questionnaire**[9]

Namn: _____
Klass: _____
Nummer: _____

Hej!
Frågorna i den här enkäten handlar främst om det arbetsområde som ni har jobbat med i fyra veckor, ***How to write a reply letter***. Var snäll och svara så ärligt som möjligt och **titta inte på dina kompisars svar.** Din lärare kommer inte att få titta på dina svar. När jag får era enkäter kommer jag att klippa bort hörnet med ditt namn och i stället skriva ett nummer.
Än en gång, tack för hjälpen!
//Jessica Berggren

Under de två första lektionerna så arbetade ni med att göra en lista med kriterier för hur man skriver ett riktigt bra svarsbrev. Ni läste svarsbrev som andra elever hade skrivit till Keira, Felicity och Nora som bodde i London, och skrev upp kriterier på tavlan.

*Läs frågorna noggrant och skriv så utförliga svar som möjligt. Ge gärna exempel.*

- **Hur använde du kriterierna när du skrev dina egna texter?**

Innan du skrev det andra utkastet av ditt svarsbrev så hade ni två lektioner när ni läste och gav feedback på brev som andra elever hade skrivit till ungdomarna i Ohio. Ni diskuterade ett par brev i grupp och fyllde i feedback forms.

*Läs frågorna noggrant och skriv så utförliga svar som möjligt. Ge gärna exempel.*

- **Vad lärde du dig genom att ge feedback på texterna som andra elever har skrivit?**
  - Organisation/Struktur *(Organization/Structure)*
  - Innehåll *(Content*)
  - Fraser/Uttryck *(Phrases/Expressions)*
  - Ord *(Vocabulary)*
  - Grammatik *(Grammar)*
  - Annat

[9] The questionnaire was given in Swedish. A translated version is included (after the Swedish one).

Den här delen består av ett antal påståenden som handlar om arbetsområdet ***How to write a reply letter.*** *Du ska fylla i om du tycker att det stämmer in på dig eller inte. Det finns fyra alternativ, och du väljer det som passar bäst.*

*Exempel:*

| | Stämmer inte alls | Stämmer delvis | Stämmer nästan helt | Stämmer helt |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jag tycker om läxor | □ | □ | □ | □ |

| | Stämmer inte alls | Stämmer delvis | Stämmer nästan helt | Stämmer helt |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jag kan bedöma kvaliteten på mitt eget brev | □ | □ | □ | □ |
| Jag vet vad målet för undervisningen var | □ | □ | □ | □ |
| Jag har lärt mig något genom att titta på mina klasskamraters svarsbrev | □ | □ | □ | □ |
| Jag tycker att kriterierna hjälpte mig att skriva ett bra svarsbrev | □ | □ | □ | □ |

Till sist några frågor om dig själv. *Skriv ditt svar på raden under frågan.*

1. **Hur gammal är du?**
2. **I vilken årskurs började du att läsa engelska?**
3. **Vilket är ditt modersmål (= ditt första språk)?**

- **Har du några övriga kommentarer om arbetsområdet eller enkäten?**

Name: _____
Class: _____
Number: _____

Hi,
The questions in this questionnaire mainly deal with the teaching unit that you've worked with during four weeks, ***How to write a reply letter***. Please respond as honestly as possible and **don't look at your friends' answers.** Your teacher is not going to look at your answers. When I receive your questionnaires I'm going to remove the corner with your name and replace this with a number.
Once again, thank you for your help.
//Jessica Berggren

During the first two lessons, you made a list of criteria for writing a really good reply letter. You read reply letters to Keira, Felicity and Nora who lived in London, written by other pupils, and wrote criteria on the whiteboard.

*Read the questions carefully and write as detailed answers as possible. You can also include examples.*

- **How did you use the criteria when you wrote your own texts?**

Before you wrote the second draft of your reply letter, you had two lessons during which you read and gave feedback on letters to the teenagers in Ohio, written by other pupils. You discussed a couple of letters in group and filled in feedback forms.

*Read the questions carefully and write as detailed answers as possible. You can also include examples.*

- **What did you learn by giving feedback on the texts written by other pupils?**
  - Organization/Structure
  - Content
  - Phrases/Expressions
  - Vocabulary
  - Grammar
  - Other

This part consists of a number of statements about the teaching unit ***How to write a reply letter.*** *You should decide whether you think they apply to you or not. There are four alternatives and you choose the best one for you.*

*Example:*

| | Do not agree | Agree to some extent | Agree almost com-pletely | Agree com-pletely |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I like homework | □ | □ | □ | □ |

| | Do not agree | Agree to some extent | Agree almost com-pletely | Agree com-pletely |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I can self-assess the quality of my own letter | □ | □ | □ | □ |
| I know the aim of this teaching unit | □ | □ | □ | □ |
| I've learnt something by looking at my peers' reply letters | □ | □ | □ | □ |
| I found the criteria useful | □ | □ | □ | □ |

Last, some questions about yourself. *Write your answer on the line under the question.*

1. **How old are you?**
2. **In which grade did you start studying English?**
3. **What is your first language?**

- **Do you have any other comments about this teaching unit or questionnaire?**

## Appendix K: Interview guide[10]

### Intervjuguide

Som jag berättade för er tidigare så gör jag en intervju för att jag vill förstå mer om hur ni tänker om arbetsområdet *How to write a reply letter* och få med elevernas perspektiv. Jag kommer att ställa några frågor och ni svarar. Det är bra om alla svarar, men ni kan naturligtvis välja att inte svara. Jag har två diktafoner som spelar in ljud. Är det något som ni undrar innan vi börjar?

- Vad var målet med det här arbetsområdet? Vad var det meningen att ni skulle lära er?
- Nu har jag ställt några frågor om att lära sig något och i enkäten så var det med flera frågor om vad du lärde dig genom att ge feedback på dina kamraters texter. Hur vet du att du har lärt dig något?
- En av uppgifterna ni fick var att läsa era klasskamraters texter i grupp och fylla i ett sådant här feedback form. Vad tror ni vad syftet med den uppgiften? Varför ville [lärares namn] att ni skulle göra den?
- Sen har jag en fråga som handlar om det ni gjorde allra först nämligen de här kriterielistorna. Varför tror ni att ni gjorde det?

Då tackar jag så mycket för att ni ställde upp och delade med er av era tankar. Det var jättebra. Innan vi avslutar undrar jag bara om ni undrar något eller vill kommentera intervjun till exempel?

[10] The interview was given in Swedish. A translated version is included (after the Swedish one).

**Interview guide**

As I told you earlier, I'm doing this interview because I want to get a better understanding of what you think about the teaching unit *How to write a reply letter* and include the pupils' perspective. I'm going to pose some questions and you'll answer. It's good if all of you answer, but you can of course choose not to answer. I have two dictaphones for audio-recording. Do you have any questions before we start?

- What was the aim of this teaching unit? What were you supposed to learn?
- Now I've asked some questions about learning and in the questionnaire there were several questions about what you learnt by giving feedback on your friends' texts. How do you know that you've learnt something?
- One of the tasks you were given was to read your classmates' texts in group and fill in one of these feedback forms. What do you think was the purpose of this task? Why did [teacher's name] want you to do this?
- Then I have a question about what you did at the very beginning: these criteria lists. Why do you think you did this?

Thank you so much for taking part and sharing your ideas. It was really good. Before we finish I just wonder if you have any questions or if you want to comment on the interview for example?