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Communicative Learning in Teaching Materials: A Study of Speaking Tasks in Contemporary Grade-8 English Textbooks in China and Sweden

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English, Spring 2011
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Abstract

Currently, Communicative Language Teaching has been popular around the world and has a profound effect on second language acquisition since the 1970s. For Communicative Language Teaching to be successful, there is a need for appropriate teaching materials.

This paper analyzes speaking tasks in Chinese and Swedish textbooks for grade 8, *Go for it* and *Magic*. The analysis presents *content analysis*, providing a general overview of speaking tasks found in both textbooks. First, *task description* is analyzed, which provides the pupils with the topics of tasks in both textbooks. It will be seen if the topics are real-life. Second, *types of speaking, text type, cognitive processes, focus, classroom organization* are quantitatively analyzed to see if there are different approaches to Communicative Language Teaching between Chinese and Swedish textbooks.

Through comparison of these six aspects in different textbooks, there are three similar approaches to Communicative Language Teaching: First, they both have real-world topics under which there are many real-world speaking tasks. Second, the dialogues play a main role in both textbooks. Third, pair and group work have dominant position in these two books.

Also there are three different approaches to Communicative Language Teaching: First, the Chinese textbook is directed towards accuracy while the Swedish textbook is directed towards fluency. Second, the Chinese textbook focuses on form whereas the Swedish textbook focuses on meaning. Third, there is an information-gap approach in the Chinese textbook where tasks based on information gap are obviously labeled. However, it cannot be found in the Swedish textbook.

Key words: speaking tasks, content analysis, Communicative Language Teaching

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1. Introduction:

Millions of people all over the world nowadays want to improve their command of English. According to Richards (2011: 1), there is a need for “quality language teaching and language teaching materials and resources” in order to meet the world-wide demand for English. Communicative Language Teaching has played an important role in language teaching around the world since the 1970s and offers different approaches in second language acquisition (Richards, 2011). Communicative Language Teaching is different from the audio-lingual method of language teaching which is teacher-fronted. It makes pupils interact and it uses real-life situations which the pupils are likely to encounter in their life and it can also motivate pupils to communicate. However, for Communicative Language Teaching to be successful, there is a need for appropriate teaching material and resources.

Textbooks are integral elements of foreign language education. They have a strong influence on curriculum, instruction and achievement. To some extent, they also ensure that pupils have the same curricula and the same examinations. Furthermore, teachers perceive that pupils obtain a certain amount of security from the textbooks in their possession, because textbooks can provide assistance with either homework or revision activities.

Different textbooks, even at the same level, can lead to different teaching and learning processes (Zahoric, 1990). Although the Chinese and Swedish English-textbooks are both grade-8 level, their design is influenced by the different cultures and groups of pupils, which may result in different ways of teaching and learning. At this time, since English is the second language in both China and Sweden, there may exist similar teaching and learning processes.

I choose to focus on speaking tasks, since speaking is such an important part of human communication and thus also of the communicative language acquisition

approach both in Sweden and China. Furthermore, conversational skills are essential for effective communication in pupils' future careers and social lives in an ever more globalized world.

1.1 Aim

This study aims to compare speaking tasks in two grade 8 textbooks, *Magic* and *Go for it*, and find out if there are differences in speaking task design of grade-8 textbooks in Sweden and China that have an impact on the application of Communicative Language Teaching in schools. This study will also investigate whether the design of speaking tasks in the two textbooks indicates different approaches to Communicative Language Teaching.

1.2 Material

The essay will study two different textbooks: one is *Magic*, the most common textbook for grade 8 in Sweden and which has 6 chapters in total. The other is *Go for it*, the most common textbook for grade 8 in China, and which has a total of 22 units.

There are 22 units in the Chinese textbook. Each unit is given one topic but there are several speaking tasks in one topic. There are 6 chapters in the Swedish textbook, each chapter is given one topic. Besides this, one chapter includes three sections: WARM-UP, PASSAGE, EXTRA-READING in which WARM-UP and EXTRA-READING are relevant to PASSAGE according to theme expression. There are several speaking tasks in each section.

The textbooks are designed with different forms: the Swedish textbook is designed by chapter, the Chinese textbook by unit. Although the textbooks are designed in different forms, they both have many speaking tasks, which is why they are suitable for comparison. The reason why I choose grade-8 textbooks, that is, textbooks for pupils who are 15 years old, is that the speaking skill of grade-8 pupils usually is at the intermediate level. I choose to focus on speaking tasks because of the fact that

speaking – as stated above – will be essential for effective communication in pupils' future careers and social lives in an ever more globalized world.

1.3 Method

First, the speaking tasks were identified. Speaking tasks are explicitly marked as such by the authors of both textbooks. There are 52 speaking tasks in the Chinese textbook and 37 tasks in the Swedish textbooks.

Second, the tasks were labeled according to their different parts. The *content analysis* of speaking tasks can be categorized into six parts: *task description*, *types of speaking*, *text type*, *focus*, *cognitive processes* and *classroom organization*. In *types of speaking*, the tasks were analyzed and monologue or dialogue was labeled in each task. In *text type*, narration, description, instruction, information or discussion were marked in each task. In *focus*, function or form was labeled. In *cognitive processes*, open or closed, and productive or reproductive were marked. In *classroom organization*, single, pair or group were labeled.

Third, after labeling, I compared the tasks of each part, then found out different or similar approaches to Communicative Language Teaching.

2. Theoretical background:

Six approaches to Communicative Language Teaching, reflection, from reproduction to creation, and previous research will be presented in this section.

2.1 Approaches to Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching is described as a method of teaching; it sets the communicative aspect of language in focus. Richards (2011) points out that pupils learn a language through communicating in Communicative Language Teaching, in which dialogues are used. Classroom activities should be meaningful and involve real communication. Although it is not the starting point in Communicative Language

Teaching, it is an essential part. Different approaches to Communicative Language Teaching will be presented below.

2.1.1 Accuracy and fluency

It is “clear that fluency and accuracy are both important goals to pursue in Communicative Language Teaching” (Brown, 2001: 268). The activity may aim either at accuracy or fluency. An accuracy-oriented activity could be a pattern drill, which is used in the teaching of a new concept and “the primary purpose is to help pupils achieve accurate perception and production of a target item which can be a sound, a word, or a sentence structure” (*Accuracy and Fluency*, 2011). The accuracy-oriented activity can help pupils build up a good foundation of speaking. A fluency-oriented activity, on the other hand, aims to develop the pupil’s communication skills or repeat what they have already learned. As is stated in *Accuracy and Fluency* (2011), “[t]he primary purpose is to help pupils practice language in speaking activity to develop fluency in using the language in spontaneous communication”. During the process of developing fluency, the pupils can have an improvement of their speaking skills. Besides this, they also learn and use the language immediately.

2.1.2 Pair work and group work

Speaking tasks are often required to be performed in pairs or small groups. Richards (2011: 21) argues that “learners will obtain several benefits” when working in small units:

- a. They can learn from hearing the language used by other members of the group
- b. They will produce a greater amount of language than they would use in teacher-fronted activities
- c. Their motivational level is likely to increase
- d. They will have the chance to develop fluency

(Richards, 2011:21)

In other words, pair and group work offer the pupils a chance that they can learn from each other. The pupils can have their own ideas to the same speaking task, so everyone can produce and use a great deal of different language; Provided that the tasks are interesting for the pupils, they are more willing to speak and communicate in pair and group.

2.1.3 Real-world tasks

According to Richards, “[r]eal-world tasks are tasks that reflect real-world uses of language and which might be considered a rehearsal for real world tasks. A role-play in which pupils practice a job interview would be a task of this kind.” (Richards, 2011:32). Richards (2011) refers to another researcher in the field, Jane Willis, who suggested the following six kinds of tasks in 1996:

- 1. Listing tasks.** For example pupils might have to make up a list of things they would pack if they were going on a beach vacation.
- 2. Sorting and ordering.** Pupils work in pairs and make up a list of the most important characteristics of an ideal vacation.
- 3. Comparing.** Pupils compare ads for two different supermarkets.
- 4. Problem-solving.** Pupils read a letter to an advice columnist and suggest a solution to the writer’s problems.
- 5. Sharing personal experience.** Pupils discuss their reactions to an ethical or moral dilemma.
- 6. Creative tasks.** Pupils prepare plans for redecorating a house.

(Willis, 1996:67; quoted in Richards, 2011: 32-33)

The speaking tasks should be connected to the real world, since real-world communication is one of the important characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching. The six types of tasks can make us know further about real-world tasks.

2.1.4 Information-gap

Richards (2011) points out that information gap is an approach of Communicative Language Teaching:

Information gap refers to the fact that in real communication, people normally communicate in order to get information they do not possess. More authentic communication is likely to occur in the classroom if students [...] use their linguistic and communicative resource in order to obtain information. In so doing they will draw on available vocabulary, grammar and communication strategies to complete a task.

(Richards, 2011: 19)

In other words, information gap is an approach where some information is missing and there is a gap. The information should be shared with others in order to solve a problem or pupils simply have to gather the information to make their decisions. The information gap activities are highly motivational because of the participation and co-operation the speaking tasks require.

2.1.5 Role play

Role play is an approach of Communicative Language Teaching, which is widely used in English textbooks. Richards claims that role play is an activity in which “pupils are assigned roles and improvise a scene or exchange based on given information or clues.” (Richards, 2011:20). When the pupils are given the roles, they begin to imagine how to speak and communicate each other. Assigning the different roles to the pupils not only can stimulate their imagination and improve their speaking skills, but also it can develop their social skills.

2.2 Reflection

Nunan (2004) puts forward that learners should have the opportunity to reflect upon what they are doing:

Becoming a reflective learner is part of learner training where the focus shifts from

language content to learning processes. [...] Research suggests that learners who are aware of the strategies driving their learning will be better learners, since adding a reflective element to teaching can help learners see the rationale. (Nunan, 2004: 37)

A question worth asking is if tasks actually ask the learner to reflect. Reflection is also a goal to strive towards in the Swedish syllabus for English, which sets forth that pupils should “develop their ability to reflect over and take responsibility for their own language learning and consciously use learning methods that gain their language learning” (Tietge, 2011:26). Reflection, used as a learning strategy, can make the pupils produce an amount of language because they can reflect on the same speaking task over and over again.

2.3 From reproduction to creation

Reproduction tasks ask pupils to imitate language models provided by teachers and textbooks, and are designed to give learners mastery of form, meaning and function. However, creation tasks ask pupils to recombine these familiar items in new ways (Tietge, 2011:25). The reproductive task provides the foundation for learners to use language in creative or productive tasks. From a cognitive perspective, learning portrays a progression from simpler to harder items. If learners do not have more chances to learn language items in reproductive tasks, they might lack knowledge of form and meaning needed to use language items in productive tasks (Lundahl, 2009:56). Reproductive tasks lay the foundation for productive tasks.

2.4 Previous research

I consider Tietge’s (2011) *content analysis* as the basic analysis of speaking tasks in this paper, which contains six parts: types of speaking, text type, task description, focus, cognitive operations and classroom organization.

2.4.1 Content analysis

About the content analysis, Littlejohn (1998) presents a three-step framework for it.

The first step is to analyze what is there (Littlejohn, 1998: 195), taking a very basic look at the purely physical aspects like form, components, or the access into the material itself. The second step consists of investigating what is required of learners and what objectives the tasks pursue (Littlejohn, 1998: 201). The focus lies on what learners are expected to do. The third step is then to draw conclusions from the information gathered in the previous two steps. In *Analyzing speaking tasks in contemporary English textbooks for Swedish compulsory schools*, Tietge combines two steps of Littlejohn with his frame (six parts): types of speaking, text type, task description, focus, cognitive operations, and classroom organization.

2.4.2 Types of speaking

What kind of speaking does the task require of the learner? Does the task require the learner to produce output on his or her own, or in cooperation with others? In other words, is the communication required one-way or two-way? One-way communication implies that there is only one speaker who presents a topic verbally to one or more listeners in the form of monologue. Two-way communication-dialogue is a conversation between two or more participants designed to illustrate and practice one or more language points (Nunan, 2004: 213). This implies that two or more speakers must communicate verbally to reach the goal set forth by the task, for example, debate, discuss a Topic, or perform a dialogue together. As mentioned above, the task types requiring one-way communication are labeled monologue. Two-way communication is labeled dialogue. Types of speaking thus denote how the pupils are to engage in the task, alone or together.

2.4.3 Text types

Text types refer to the five text types that pupils have to produce as the task outcome, namely narration, description, instruction, information, and discussion/argumentation (Tietge, 2011). Narration refers to telling a story or retelling the content of a text. Description refers to describing something, for example, an object, feeling, experience or opinion in a non-argumentative manner. Instruction refers to, for example, giving

directions or telling somebody how to do something. Information refers to, for example, providing facts or messages from a text or answer to a specific question. Discussion/argumentation is asked of pupils in tasks where they are required presenting an opinion or idea and comparing and contrasting it to others or justifying their standpoint.

2.4.4 Task description

The task description provides pupils with topics of tasks. This is part of Littlejohn's framework-"what is there". For middle school pupils, reading newspapers including films and sports, school, family are all their real life (Labros, 2004:42). It will check if the topics are about real-life.

2.4.5 Focus (form / function)

Focus means what aspect of language the task draws upon. According to Littlejohn, focus refers to, for example, whether the learners are asked to focus on the meaning of the words, their form (Littlejohn, 1998: 199). Littlewood states that a focus on the form of the language consists of drawing the learner's attention to the linguistic features of the language. A focus on meaning, on the other hand, excludes attention to the formal elements of the language (Littlewood, 1981: 88). Thus a focus-on-form approach would allow for the learner of the second language to concentrate on the grammatical rules and constructs of the language. A focus on meaning approach, on the other hand, would be concerned with getting the learner of a second language to concentrate on understanding the message being conveyed.

2.4.6 Cognitive processes

The cognitive processes touch upon the demand the task makes in terms of learner output, and in which way the output is made. The first cognitive aspect is whether the task is a closed or open one. Nunan (2004) defines closed tasks as tasks in which there is only one correct answer (Nunan, 2004:98). This would be the case in questions which ask the learner to retell facts from a text correctly (Lundahl, 2009). They are

often quite restricted from a linguistic viewpoint.

Open tasks, on the other hand, are such in which there is no single correct answer (Nunan, 2004:103). They often pave the way for a more free language use, since there are several possibilities of answering in an open task and there is no definite answer (Lundahl, 2009). Open tasks often come in the form of discussions or arguments in which pupils express their own opinions. Closed and opened tasks thus draw upon different language skills. Productive skills, for instance, are in much higher demand in open than in closed tasks, where the answers often can simply be given straight from a text without any modification.

The second cognitive aspect is whether the requested output should be in reproductive or productive language. Reproductive language is language produced by learners in imitation of models provided by a teacher or by pedagogical materials (Nunan, 2004: 217). Tasks that require reproductive output require the learner to stick closely to the language used in the input text. The audio-lingual method which relies heavily on language drills which are to shield learners from making mistakes would present an extreme of reproductive language use (Harmer, 2001:50). Tasks that demand productive language use, on the other hand, require the learner to use language freely. Production is sometimes referred to as immediate creativity (Harmer, 2001:81). This is when pupils are asked to use new language in sentences of their own. Group discussions would fall into the category of productive tasks. Lundahl (2009) confirms that tasks that are discussed in groups often lead to a freer use of language.

2.4.7 Classroom organization

Classroom organization describes the “with whom” –part of the task (Littlejohn, 1998:195). It is fairly straightforward and defines if the pupils are to produce the outcome alone or in cooperation. The three alternatives are: individual work; pair work; group work. These three kinds of classroom organization are fairly clear because the instructions explicitly tell the pupils how to organize themselves. The

individual work is a basis of pair and group work. About the benefits of pair and group work can be seen in section 2.1.2 pair work and group work.

3. Analysis

As Littlejohn (1998) points out the first step is to analyze “what is there”, in other words, take a very basic look at the access into the material itself. This can be seen in task description. The second step consists of investigating what is required of learners and what objectives the tasks pursue. In other words, the focus lies on what precisely learners are expected to do. According to this, types of speaking, text type, cognitive processes, focus and classroom organization will be presented.

3.1 Task description

As mentioned under 2.4.4 above, the task description provides the pupils with the topics of tasks. There are 22 units in the Chinese textbook, and every unit has one topic. Table 1 presents these topics.

Table 1: The topics of speaking tasks in the Chinese textbook.

| The topics of speaking tasks in the Chinese textbook | |
|--|---|
| 1. How often do you exercise? | 12. What is the best radio station? |
| 2. What is the matter? | 13. Will people have robots? |
| 3. What are you doing for vacation? | 14. What should I do? |
| 4. How do you get to school? | 15. What were you doing when the UFO arrived? |
| 5. Can you come to my party? | 16. He said I was hard-working |
| 6. I'm more outgoing than my sister | 17. If you go to the party, you'll have a great time. |
| 7. How do you make banana milk shake? | 18. How long have you been collecting shells? |

| | |
|--|--|
| 8. How was your school trip? | 19. Would you mind turning down the music? |
| 9. When was he born? | 20. Why don't you get her a scarf? |
| 10. I am going to be a basketball player | 21. Have you ever been to an amusement park? |
| 11. Could you please clean your room? | 22. It's a nice day, isn't it? |

“Real-world tasks are tasks that reflect real-world uses of language” (Richards, 2011:32). All the middle-school-pupils’ real life contains three aspects: reading newspapers including films and sports; school; and family. (Labros, 2004:42). According to table 1 above, grade-8 pupils are not only familiar with nouns, like *exercise, vocation, school, school trip, part, milk shake, room, radio station, robots, UFO, music, scarf, park*, but also they often encounter these situations in their daily life, like requesting the date of birth of somebody (topic 9), talking about their dreams (topic 10), hobbies (topic 18), the weather (topic 22), quoting someone’s talking (topic 16). These topics are communicative for the grade-8 pupils because they involve real communication.

In the Swedish textbook, there are 6 chapters; each chapter also has one topic. The topics are as follows:

Table 2: The topics of speaking tasks in the Swedish textbook

| The topics of speaking tasks in the Swedish textbook |
|--|
| 1. Forrest Gump |
| 2. Notting Hill |
| 3. The Interpreter |
| 4. The Full Monty |
| 5. Nicholas Nickleby |
| 6. The talented Mr Ripley |

As Labros (2004) says, talking about films is part of real life for middle school pupils. According to table 2, all of these 6 topics are classic and famous films through which the pupils get to know different persons, like *Forrest Gump*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Mr Ripley*, and tell pupils what kinds of person they are; for example, the *Full Monty* tells pupils that everything is possible if they make a great effort. All this can inspire pupils to talk.

Real-world-task is an approach to Communicative Language Teaching. Through the topics of tasks presented above, both the Chinese and Swedish textbook reflect a real-world use of language. In order to look further at real-world speaking tasks, examples will be given. Willis (1996) proposes six types of real-world tasks, listing tasks, sorting and ordering, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experience and creative tasks. 4 examples are taken from the two textbooks to represent these six types of real-world tasks as below.

Example 1.

The speaking task: VACATION DREAMS.

Imagin your dream vacation. On a piece of paper, write what you are doing for vacation, when you are going and how long you are going. Put your paper in a bag. Then take another paper from the bag, find the student who has your paper through conversation.

(Go for it, Unit 3:15)

Obviously, vacation is a part of pupils' life. Through this real-world use of language, it is easy to get the pupils involved in this communication. According to the task above, the pupils have to list things on their paper about their vacation, like what they are doing, when they are going and how long they are going. Then they put the paper in a bag and take another paper. Finally, through this conversation, they will find the student who has their paper. This task is the performance of a listing task.

Example 2

The speaking task: What are you good at?

Which of the following are you good at? Number them 1-5.

1. Sport 2. English 3. Dancing 4. Cooking 5. Technical things 6. Drawing
7. Music 8. Using computers 9. Talking to people 10. Photography

Now form groups, compare and discuss your answers.

(Magic, Chapter 1: 6)

The 10 items listed above are things pupils face in their daily life. The pupils have to sort and order the degree of what they are good at: “I am very good at”/ “I am quite good at”/ “I am average good at”/ “I am not very good at”/ “I am no good at”. Through communication, they compare their answers. This speaking task is based on sorting and ordering; it also shows the ability to make comparisons.

Example 3

The speaking task: Who is Dr Know?

Choose a problem of 9 from the list below, then ask classmates for advice.

The student who gives the best advice is “Dr Know”.

- a. I have a toothache b. I'm stressed out c. I can't sleep
d. I'm hungry e. I have a sore back f. I have a cold
g. I have a sore throat h. I'm tired. I. I have a headache

(Go for it, Unit 2: 11)

In daily life, the pupils can encounter the situation that they do not feel good. The task above lists 9 problems; the pupils need to choose one of them. They can begin with the sentence “*what is the matter with you?*” to continue their talking. At last the pupil who gives the best advice is “Dr Know”. This task, on the one hand, will show the ability of speaking communication. On the other hand, it will also show the ability of solving problems faced in pupils’ daily life. In addition, the task offers them a chance to show their experience of life, so it is a performance of the problem-solving task and

sharing personal experience task.

Example 4

The speaking task: Discussion

What do you think is going to happen? What will her sister say?

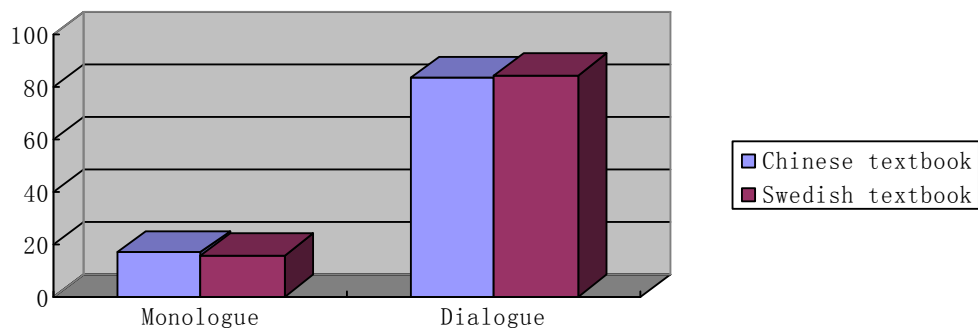
(Magic, chapter 1: 19)

Creativity has come to mean “divergent thinking” (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2006: 13). The pupils are asked to speculate on the basis of the extra reading, *Bend it like Beckham*, in chapter 1. The protagonist in the passage, Jess, wants to be a football player like Beckham, but her mother hopes that she can settle down, study for law school and learn to cook. She lies to her mother to do a job outside. Actually, she plays football with others everyday. Once her sister went to her workplace and found nobody. What is going to happen when her sister meets Jess? About this discussion topic, every pupil can have divergent thoughts, which is a performance of creativity.

3.2 Types of speaking

Type of speaking shows how the pupils are to engage in the task, alone or together. Communication can be either one-way or two-way. The Chinese and Swedish textbooks were compared regarding monologue and dialogue.

Chart 1: Comparison of the Chinese and Swedish textbooks regarding types of speaking task



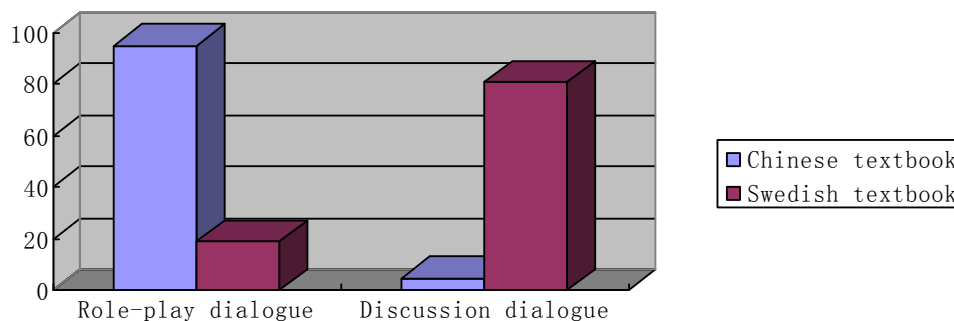
One-way communication implies that there is only one speaker who retells the story

or presents a topic verbally to one or more listeners in the form of monologue. Chart 1 shows that a total of 6 of 37 (about 16%) speaking tasks in the Swedish textbook provides monologue and a total of 9 of 52 (about 17%) speaking tasks in the Chinese textbook requires monologue.

Two-way communication, or dialogue, is a conversation between two or more participants designed to illustrate and practice one or more language points (Nunan, 2004: 213). This implies that two or more speakers must communicate verbally to reach the goal set forth by the task; a total of 31 of 37 (about 84%) in the Swedish textbook requires dialogue, and a total of 43 of 52 (about 83%) in the Chinese textbook provides dialogue.

Monologue seeks to transmit information, while dialogue can cultivate knowledge and transform understandings through interaction (Nystrand, 1997: 26). Dialogue is far more frequent than monologue in both textbooks. As Richards (2007) points out, Communicative Language Teaching has served a major source of influence on language teaching in second language teaching. Through dialogue, the pupils can learn how to practice and use the language. Looking further into the dialogues in the two textbooks, there are differences: role-play dialogue and discussion dialogue, as is demonstrated in Chart 2 below.

Chart 2: The comparison of dialogues in Chinese and Swedish textbooks



Role-play dialogue is the dialogue which happens in context through role-play. A total

of 41 of 43 (about 95%) dialogues provide role-play dialogues in the Chinese textbook. From the table 1, it can be seen that there are 22 topics in the Chinese book, so the dialogues happen in various contexts. Through role-play, the pupils can know the topic well, and learn how to express the appropriate sentences and grammar. For example, in topic 22 (“talking about weather”) in table 1, the pupils play the roles of two strangers at a bus stop, and use sentences like “what is the weather like” to begin their talking. Compared to the Chinese textbook, there is less role-play dialogue in the Swedish textbooks; only 6 of 31 (about 19%) dialogues require role-play dialogues. The pupils play roles to learn how to book train tickets, order a meal, make arrangements, buy a CD, and talk about a film or a holiday using the second language.

Discussion dialogue is a dialogue which needs discussion and presents pupils’ own opinions.

Example 5

The speaking task: Discuss

1. *About the film “Forest Gump”, what do you think of it? What is your particular scene from the film.*
2. *What important message does the story have, do you think?*

(Magic, Chapter 1: 8)

There are more discussion dialogues in the Swedish textbook than in the Chinese textbook: a total of 25 of 31 (81%) dialogues demands discussion, while only 5% in the Chinese textbook.

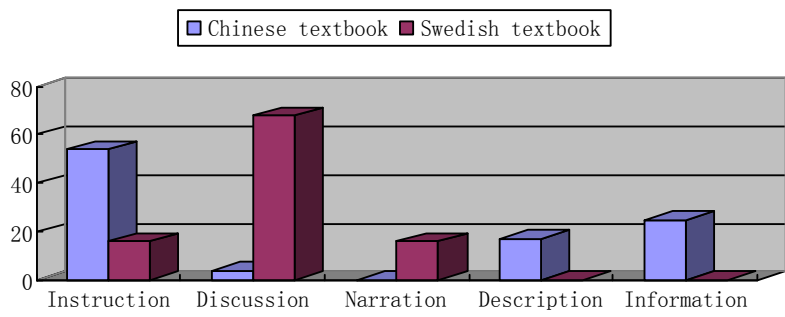
According to the analysis of types of speaking above, both the Chinese and Swedish textbook have the same percentage of monologues and dialogues. However, in the Chinese and the Swedish textbook, their respective dialogues are more numerous than the monologues, which is what the Communication Language Teaching demands. Through dialogues, the pupils can interact and use language. Dialogues can be

categorized into two kinds: role-play and discussion dialogues. However, there is a difference about dialogues. Role-play dialogues in Chinese textbooks are far more frequent than the ones in the Swedish textbooks, while the number of discussion dialogues in the Chinese textbooks is far lower than the number of discussion dialogues in the Swedish textbooks. The reason for these differences will be presented in section 3.3.1 Accuracy and fluency.

3.3 Text type

Text types refer to the five text types that pupils have to produce as the task outcome, namely narration, description, instruction, information, and discussion/argumentation (Tietge, 2011). I will compare the Chinese and Swedish textbook concerning these five text types.

Chart 3: Comparison between the Chinese and Swedish textbook concerning text types



Instruction refers to, for example, giving directions or telling somebody how to do something. A total of 28 of 52 (about 54%) speaking tasks demands instruction in the Chinese textbook, while 6 of 37 (about 16%) tasks require instruction in the Swedish textbook. Discussion is asked of pupils by the task where they are required to present an opinion or idea and comparing and contrasting it to others or justifying their standpoint. A total of 2 of 52 speaking tasks (about 4%) asks for discussion in the Chinese textbook, while 25 of 37 tasks (about 68%) demand discussion in the Swedish textbook. Instruction and discussion will be further discussed in section 3.3.1

Accuracy and Fluency.

Narration refers to retelling the content of a text or engages in telling a story. There is no narration in the Chinese textbook, whereas a total of 6 of 37 (about 16%) speaking tasks asks for narration in the Swedish textbook. In every chapter of the Swedish textbook, there is a task called “Retell a story”. This task is composed of six different pictures in order. The pupils see the pictures and tell the story.

Description refers to describing something, for example, an object, a feeling, an experience or opinion in a non-argumentative manner. A total of 9 of 52 (about 17%) speaking tasks requires description in the Chinese textbook while none can be found in Swedish textbook.

Example 6

The speaking task: The same and different

Describe things that are the same and different between you and a member of your family or a friend.

(Go for it, Unit 6: 33)

Through conversation, the pupils learn to describe personal traits. The pupils describe the same things between them and a member of their family or a friend. They can learn sentence patterns such as “... is as...as ...”. Meanwhile, through describing the difference, they can learn sentences like “...is more than...”.

Information refers to, for example, providing facts or messages from a text or answer a specific question. A total of 13 of 52 (about 25%) speaking tasks in the Chinese textbook asks the pupils to give information, while there are no “information”-type tasks in the Swedish textbook.

Example 7

The speaking task: Who's the best English student?

Ask your classmates the two questions: what can you do to improve your English? How often do you do it? Then find the best English student.

(Go for it, Unit1: 3)

Information or messages about what to improve in their English and how often they do it, can be got from pupils through ask-and-answer. After collecting all the information, they compare the answers and find the best English student. By means of this task, the pupils can learn daily expressions, like, “what can you do...?” and “how often...?”

According to this analysis of text types, the discussion text type in the Swedish textbook is 64% more common than in the Chinese textbook, while the instruction text type in the Swedish textbook is 38% lower than the one in the Chinese textbook. The proportion of the narration text type is 16% in the Swedish textbook; however, there is no narration in the Chinese textbook. The description and information text type are 17% and 25% respectively, while they cannot be found in the Swedish textbook.

3.3.1 Accuracy and fluency

Accuracy and fluency are important approaches to Communicative Language Teaching. As Brown (2001) points out, “accuracy and fluency are both important goals to pursue in Communicative Language Teaching” (Brown, 2001:68). The activity may aim either at accuracy or fluency. According to chart 2 and chart 3, the Chinese textbook and Swedish textbook are directed towards different means to Communicative Language Teaching. The Chinese textbook emphasizes more on accuracy, while the Swedish textbook emphasizes more on fluency.

3.3.1.1 Accuracy

As is stated in *Accuracy and Fluency* (2011), “[t]he primary purpose of accuracy is to help pupils achieve accurate perception and production of a target item which can be a sound, a word, or a sentence structure”. An accuracy oriented activity could be a pattern drill, which is used in the teaching of new concepts in the Chinese textbook.

Example 8

The speaking task: Role play.

Student A, you are the reporter. Student B, you are the boy. Role play the conversation.

| |
|---|
| <p><i>A: Hello, I'm a reporter, can I ask you some questions?</i></p> <p><i>B: Sure</i></p> <p><i>A: What's the best clothing store in town?</i></p> <p><i>B: I think Jason's is the best.</i></p> <p><i>A: Why do you think so?</i></p> <p><i>B: Jason's has</i></p> |
|---|

(Go for it, Unit 12: 72)

First, the speaking task is not only a role-play dialogue between the reporter and the boy, but also an instruction text type which gives direction to the pupils. The italicized words *clothing store*, *Jason's* are alternatives, for example, *restaurant* or *cinema* can be instead of *clothing store*. Through these alternative words, the pupils role-play the dialogue again and again. They make comparison in English and learn the comparative and superlative forms of the word “good”, as well as the sentence structure “what is the best....?”.

As can be seen in chart 2 and chart 3, role-play dialogue and instruction text type in the Chinese textbook are both more than the respective ones in the Swedish textbook because the Chinese textbook is directed towards accuracy. Through role-play

dialogue and instruction, the pupils can improve accuracy of vocabulary and sentence structure.

3.3.1.2 Fluency

According to *Accuracy and Fluency* (2011), “The primary purpose of fluency is to help pupils practice language in speaking activity to develop fluency in using the language in spontaneous communication”. A fluency oriented activity could be a discussion which presents ideas and develops pupils’ communication skills in the Swedish textbook.

Example 9

The speaking task: Discussion

1. *About the film “Notting Hill”, what do you think of it? What was your favorite scene?*
2. *What would you wear to make an impression on somebody?*
3. *Who is your favorite actor and actress? Why do you like them?*

(Magic, Chapter 2: 25)

About the same question, “what do you think of the film *Notting Hill*?”, the pupils can present different ideas or opinions. Furthermore, four more questions are given: “What was your favorite scene?”, “What would you wear to make an impression on somebody?”, “Who is your favorite actor and actress?” and “Why do you like them?”. As to these questions, different pupils also have different ideas. Interactive discussion can elicit relatively sustained responses from pupils and help pupils weave various bits and pieces of information into coherent webs of meaning (Nystrand, 1997:28). In other words, discussion can create different ideas in pupils and different information on film into coherent webs of meaning. Through this communication, the pupils can develop their fluency.

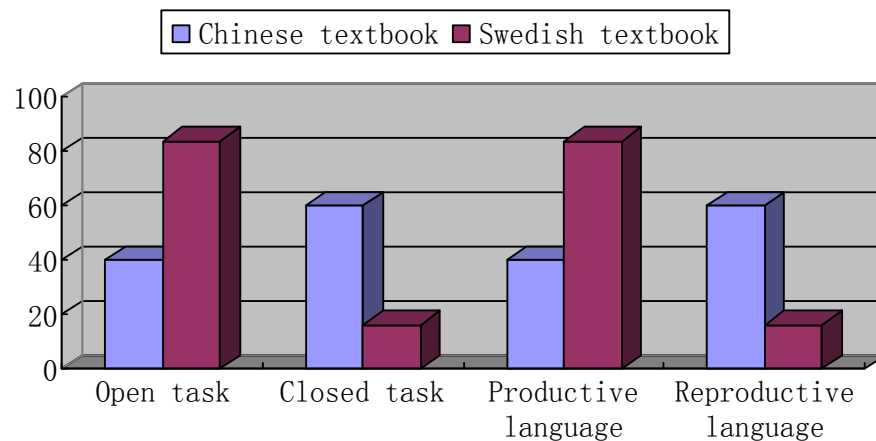
As is seen from chart 2 and chart 3, discussion dialogue and discussion text type in

the Swedish textbook are both more frequent than the respective ones in the Chinese textbook, because the Swedish textbook is directed towards fluency. Through discussion, the pupils can develop fluency and use of the second language.

3.4 Cognitive processes

The cognitive processes touch upon the demand the task makes in terms of learner output, and in which way the output is made. The first cognitive aspect is whether the task is a closed or open one. The second cognitive aspect is whether the requested output should be in reproductive or productive language. A comparison was made between the Chinese and Swedish textbook regarding the two cognitive aspects. The result of the comparison is shown in Chart 4:

Chart 4: Comparison of the Chinese and Swedish textbook regarding the two cognitive aspects



Open tasks are such in which there is no single correct answer (Nunan, 2004). They often pave the way for a more free language use, since there are several possibilities of answering to an open task. As seen in chart 4, a total of 31 of 37 (about 84%) speaking tasks in the Swedish textbook demands open tasks, while a total of 21 of 52 (about 40%) speaking tasks in the Chinese textbook requires open tasks.

Closed tasks, on the other hand, are such in which there is only one correct answer.

Totally 31 of 52 (about 60%) speaking tasks are closed tasks in the Chinese textbook. However, 6 of 37 (about 16%) ask for closed tasks in the Swedish textbook.

Productive language is the language which requires the learner to use language freely. Production is sometimes referred to as immediate creativity (Harmer, 2001: 81). A total of 31 of 37 (about 84%) speaking tasks in the Swedish textbook demands productive language, but a total of 21 of 52 (about 40%) speaking tasks in the Chinese textbook asks for productive language.

Reproductive language, on the other hand, is the language which is produced by learners in imitation of models provided by a teacher or by pedagogical materials (Nunan, 2004: 217). A total of 31 of 52 (about 60%) speaking tasks demands reproductive language in the Chinese textbook, while 6 of 37 (16%) speaking tasks ask for that in the Swedish textbook.

Closed and open tasks thus draw upon different language skills. Productive skills are in much higher demand in open than in closed tasks, while reproductive skills, on the other hand, are in much higher demand in closed tasks. As seen in chart 4, this is why the proportion of productive language and open tasks are the same and reproductive language and closed tasks are also the same. The proportion of productive language and open tasks in the Swedish textbook are both 84%, while they are both 40% in the Chinese textbook. The proportion of reproductive language and closed tasks in the Chinese textbook are both 60%, however, they are both 16% in the Swedish textbook. Why is productive language use in the Swedish textbook more than the one in the Chinese textbook and why is reproductive language in the Chinese textbook more than the one in the Swedish textbook? I will give the explanation in section 3.5.1 and 3.5.2, respectively.

3.4.1 Reflection

Nunan (2004) points out that learners should have the opportunity to reflect upon

what they are doing.

Example 10

The speaking task: Discussion

What do you think of the way Rowena's classmates treat her? Can this happen in real-life? If so, why is that?

Rowena can't speak. Discuss how difficult this could be?

(Magic, chapter 3: 61)

The task sets many questions, such as, “What do you think?”, “Why is that?”, and “How difficult could this be?” These questions give pupils a chance to reflect upon what they are doing. Through presenting their ideas, the pupils can use language freely to express themselves. As Nunan writes, “becoming a reflective learner is part of learner training where the focus shifts from language content to learning processes” (Nunan, 2004: 37). Here, “learning processes” refer to the process in which the pupils use productive language to present their ideas. The Swedish textbook sets a goal which lets the pupils achieve reflection, during which the pupils should focus on the learning process, so productive language use in the Swedish textbook is more than the one in the Chinese textbook.

3.4.2 From reproduction to creation

From a cognitive perspective, learning portrays a progression from simpler to harder items. If learners do not have more chance of encountering language in reproductive tasks, they might lack knowledge of form, meaning or function needed to use language items in productive tasks (Lundahl, 2009:56). Reproductive tasks offer a basis for productive tasks.

During the process from simpler to harder items, there are more speaking tasks in the Chinese textbook designed on simpler items. Those tasks have a tendency to lay the pupils' foundation so that they can have enough knowledge of form, meaning to use

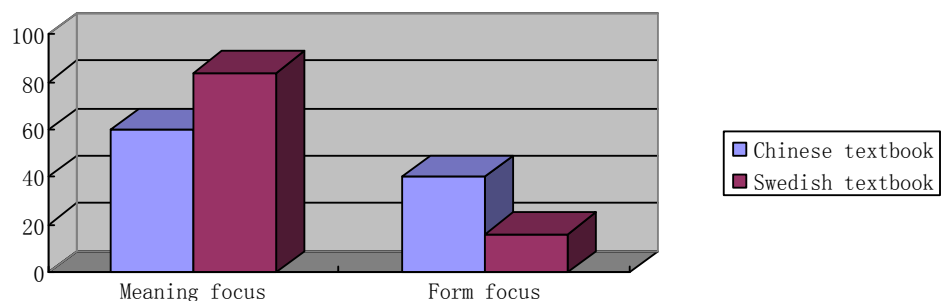
language items in productive tasks. This can be seen in chart 3. The instruction text type indicates direction to practice words or sentences for pupils, like role-play conversation. The instruction in the Chinese textbook is more frequent than the one in the Swedish textbook. This is why the Chinese reproductive language use is more frequent than the Swedish one.

Besides Lundahl's point to support why the Chinese reproduction tasks are more frequent than the Swedish ones, there is one other reason. The Chinese education is intensely test-oriented (Lu, Jia&Heisey, 2002: 232). This requires pupils to learn more reproductive language, so that it can meet the demand of tests. The education favors competition and stress over creativity.

3.5 Focus

Focus means what aspect of language the task draws upon. According to Littlejohn, focus refers to, for example, whether the learners are asked to focus on the meaning of the language, on the form (Littlejohn, 1998: 199). I will compare meaning focus and form focus in the Chinese and the Swedish textbook.

Chart 5: Comparison of the Chinese and Swedish textbook regarding meaning and form focus



Totally 22 of 52 (about 40%) speaking tasks focus on meaning in the Chinese textbook, while 31 of 37 (about 84%) speaking tasks focus on meaning. Meaning focus in the Chinese textbook is less than the one in the Swedish textbook.

Totally 30 of 52 (about 60%) speaking tasks focus on form in the Chinese textbook, however, 6 of 37 (about 16%) speaking tasks focus on form in the Swedish textbook. Form focus in the Chinese textbook is more than the one in the Swedish textbook.

3.5.1 Focus on form and focus on meaning.

Focus on form and focus on meaning are both important approaches to Communicative Language Teaching. They are different input to the second language learners.

3.5.1.1 Focus on form

Littlewood (1981) states that focus on form approach would allow for the learner of the second language to concentrate on the grammatical rules and constructs of the language.

Example 11

The speaking task: interview

How old were you when you started doing the things below? Interview your classmate.

1. learned to ride bicycle 2. started learning English 3. started playing a sport 4. first went to a movie 5. first had a party

(Go for it, Unit 9: 55)

Through this speaking task, pupils are required to learn the new sentence structure, like “when you started doing...” As the Chinese textbook in unit 9 writes: “the grammar focus: when was he/she born, how long did he/she do..., and when did he/she start...” (*Go for it*, Unit 9: 54). Every unit has its grammar focus. Although the Chinese textbook focuses on form, it does not mean that meaning focus is not important. Meaning focus is also an integral part in the Chinese textbook which holds 40% of speaking tasks.

3.5.1.2 Focus on meaning

Littlewood (1981) claims that focus on meaning approach, on the other hand, would be concerned with getting the learner of the second language to concentrate on understanding the message being conveyed.

Example 12

The speaking task: Discuss

1. *What kind of person is Ralph Nickleby?*
2. *Is he a common type of character in books and films?*
3. *What other characters like him have you seen in films?*
4. *What can happen to really bad characters in books or films?*
5. *If you were to invent an evil character---what would he or she be like?*
6. *What would happen to that character?*
7. *In what kind of environment would we find that person?*

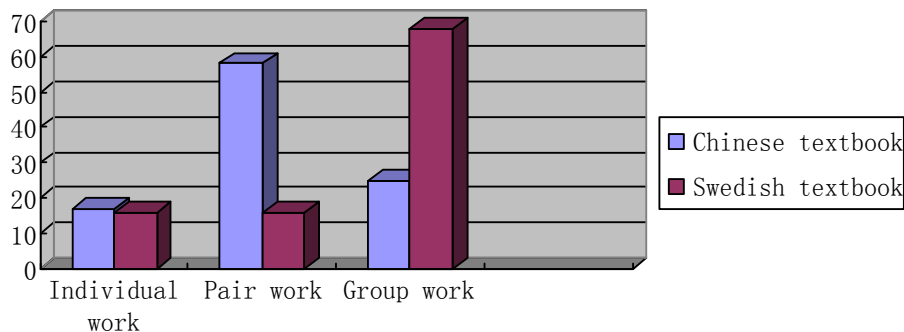
(Magic, chapter 5: 89)

The seven different questions all talk about Ralph Nickleby, making the pupils concentrate on understanding the information being conveyed. Grammar still plays an essential role in Communicative Language Teaching (Littlewood, 1981:93). Although the Swedish textbook focuses on meaning, it does not mean that grammar can be ignored.

3.6 Classroom organization

Classroom organization is fairly straightforward and defines if the pupils are to produce the outcome alone or in cooperation. The three alternatives are: individual work; pair work; group work. The Chinese and the Swedish textbooks were compared to one another concerning the occurrence of individual work, pair work and group work.

Chart 6: Comparison of the Chinese and Swedish textbook concerning classroom organization



A total of 9 of 52 (about 17%) speaking tasks demands individual work in the Chinese textbook, and 6 of 37 (about 16%) speaking tasks ask for that in the Swedish textbook. They are almost the same proportion.

A total of 30 of 52 (about 58%) speaking tasks requires pair work in the Chinese textbook, while 6 of 37 (about 16%) speaking tasks need pair work in the Swedish textbook. A total of 13 of 52 (about 25%) speaking tasks meets group work in the Chinese textbook, however, 25 of 37 (about 68%) require group work in the Swedish textbook. Classroom organization depends on different kinds of dialogue. As seen in chart 2, the role-play dialogues in the Chinese textbook are more frequent than the ones in the Swedish textbook. The role-play dialogues are generally carried out by two pupils, so pair work in the Chinese textbook is more frequent than in the Swedish book. The discussion dialogues in the Swedish textbook are more than the ones in the Chinese textbook. The discussion dialogues are generally completed by three or more pupils, so group work in the Swedish textbook is more frequent than in Chinese textbook.

Pair work and group work play important roles in the two textbooks, which both serve as positive influences to Communicative Language Teaching. There are 83% and 84% respectively in the Chinese textbook and the Swedish textbook. Richards (2011) puts

forward that “they[the pupils]will produce a greater amount of language than they would use in teacher-fronted activities and the pupils’ motivational levels are likely to increase.” (Richards, 2011:21). In other words, pair work and group work can arouse the pupils’ interest and make them willingly take part in speaking. Also, pair work and group activities can activate the pupils to speak a great deal, and thus make them express their own ideas.

3.6.1 Information gap and role-play activities

Richards (2011) notes that “an important aspect of Communication Language Teaching is the notion of information gap through which the pupils normally communicate in order to get information they do not possess.” (Richards, 2011:19). It can be found in the Chinese textbook; however, there are no tasks based on information gap in the Swedish textbook.

Example 13

The speaking task: information gap

Work with two other pupils. Student A, look at this page (P.21). Student B, look at page 82. Student C, look at page 83. Ask the other pupils questions and complete the table.

| <i>Who</i> | <i>How</i> | <i>How long</i> | <i>How far</i> |
|---------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <i>Maria</i> | <i>bus</i> | | |
| <i>John</i> | | <i>10 minutes</i> | |
| <i>LinPei</i> | | | <i>8 miles</i> |

Table 3: Student A looks on page 21

| <i>Who</i> | <i>How</i> | <i>How long</i> | <i>How far</i> |
|--------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <i>Maria</i> | | <i>20 minutes</i> | |
| <i>John</i> | | | <i>6 miles</i> |

| | | | |
|---------------|---------------|--|--|
| <i>LinPei</i> | <i>subway</i> | | |
|---------------|---------------|--|--|

Table 4: Student B looks on page 82

| <i>Who</i> | <i>How</i> | <i>How long</i> | <i>How far</i> |
|---------------|-------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <i>Maria</i> | | | <i>5 miles</i> |
| <i>John</i> | <i>bike</i> | | |
| <i>LinPei</i> | | <i>15 minutes</i> | |

Table 5: Student C looks on page 83

(Go for it, Unit 4: 21)

The three tables are separated, that is, they are on different pages. Through the speaking task, one student can get the information that she/he does not possess from the other two pupils. As seen in table 3, 4 and 5, student A can get what he/she wants by asking student B and student C the same three questions: “How do you get to school?”, “How long does it take you to get from home to school?”, “How far is it from home to school?”. Then student B can ask the other two pupils the three questions and also student C can do that. For example, about how to get school, student A can get information that LiuPei gets to school by subway from student B, and get the message that John gets to school by bike from student C. The information gap makes pupils form groups, interact and cooperate with each other. By engaging in these activities, the pupils can learn the three question sentences.

Role play is an activity in which “pupils are assigned roles and improvise a scene or exchange based on given information or clues” (Richards, 2011: 20). Example 8 is the performance of role-play activity, an exchange of words between a reporter and a boy based on a given dialogue. As seen from chart 3, the Chinese and Swedish textbook both have role-play activities.

4. Conclusion

The speaking tasks in Swedish and Chinese textbooks are analyzed from six aspects: task description, types of speaking, text type, cognitive processes, focus, and classroom organization. Through comparison of these six aspects in different textbooks, there are three similar approaches to Communicative Language Teaching:

First, seen from table 1 and table 2 in the task description, the textbooks both have real-world topics under which there are many real-world speaking tasks. Six different real-world tasks are presented. Second, chart 1 (see 3.2 Types of speaking) shows that dialogues play a main role in both textbooks. Third, pair and group work have dominant positions in both books, as is analyzed in chart 6 (see 3.6 Classroom organization).

However, the two textbooks for grade-8 reflect that the English level of pupils is different. The Chinese textbook is sentence-based. Through communication, the pupils are required to learn different sentences that they will use in real-life. It can be seen from examples 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 13. The Swedish textbook is film-based. Passages are mainly extracted from famous films in which the pupils discuss the different characters in the films. This influences three different approaches to Communicative Language Teaching.

First, the Chinese textbook is directed towards accuracy while the Swedish textbook is directed towards fluency. Second, the Chinese textbook focuses on form whereas the Swedish textbook focuses on meaning. Grammar is not the starting point in Communicative Language Teaching, but compared with the speaking tasks in the Swedish textbook, there are more grammar uses in the Chinese tasks.

The reason for these differences are, according to Lundahl's point, that during the process from reproduction to creation, if there is no more chance of learning reproductive tasks, the pupils will lack knowledge of forms needed in creative tasks (Lundahl, 2009:56). So the speaking tasks in the Chinese textbook are directed

towards accuracy and focus on form. Through this, the pupils can practice more reproductive or grammatical tasks so that they can lay their foundation to creative tasks. Besides this, Chinese education is test-oriented which requires pupils learn more grammar. However, the speaking tasks in the Swedish textbook are more reflective. Reflection is a goal to strive towards in the Swedish syllabus for English. The speaking tasks present many questions for pupils to discuss, so the pupils need focus-on-meaning communication. The speaking tasks in the Swedish textbook are directed towards fluency and focus on meaning.

Third, there is an information-gap approach in the Chinese textbook where tasks based on information gap are obviously labeled. However, it cannot be found in the Swedish textbook.

In a word, there are three similar and three different approaches to Communicative Language Teaching in Swedish and Chinese textbooks. Knowing the differences, the teachers realize how to choose materials.

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