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Adjectives make a better text, don't they?

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Abstract

This is a study about what is considered to be a good text and if an element like many adjectives would have an impact on that fact. In order to find this out texts have been handed out to two teachers who were asked to grade them and also comment on why they had given the texts that particular grade. The aim of this study was to see if a text with many adjectives would be considered to be better than a text with few adjectives. The conclusion of this study is that if two texts are equally as good in every other area, when it comes to writing, the text with more adjectives would be considered to be better. It would then contain more depth and life. If however the text with most adjectives were full of spelling mistakes, grammatical errors and so on the amount of adjectives would not matter. Language correctness and fluency is considered to be more important than denseness of adjectives.

Key Words: good writing skills, grading texts, adjectives, fluency

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1. Introduction

According to researchers such as Yule (1996), Smith (1989) and Barber (2000) more than anything it is language that separates mankind from the rest of the animal world. There was a time when the definition of a human was a thinking animal. Furthermore, we have been described as the tool-making animal. Barber further suggests that language is by far the most complex tool. He says that in order to make many of the other tools possible you need human co-operation and a division of labour which is hardly possible without language. "Language, in fact, is the great machine-tool which makes human culture possible."(2000:1). Language is, Barber says, a multi-purpose instrument. You can change your use of the language all depending on what you want to convey. Of course other animals communicate with each other in various ways, non-verbally as well as verbally, using various cries, but the animal cries are not articulate in the way that human speech sounds are and their language lacks the structure which the human language has.

There is both spoken and written language. Barber states that a language is something that is spoken; you make vocal sounds which are produced by our speech organs. Barber further states that written language is "secondary and derivative" (2000:2). Speech is learned before writing in the human species as well as in the individual. There are primitive communities that have speech but no writing, but one has never come across a community that has writing but no speech (2000:2). This does however not make the written language less important or less interesting.

According to Yule in *The study of language* (1996) the phenomenon of writing is fairly recent. He states that writing that can be based on alphabetic script can only be traced back to around 3000 years ago. These forms of writing have been found on stone or tablets located in old ruined cities. These inscriptions allow us to understand what people who lived thousands of years ago thought and said. Before there was alphabetic script there were cave drawings which are also referred to as picture writing. It was formed in such a way that everyone should use a similar picture in order to convey a similar meaning, that a certain picture was universally agreed upon within the community to represent a certain phenomenon. The cave drawings later developed into a more symbolic form which means that the symbol for, for example, sun could also carry the meaning of heat or daytime. This is also called idea writing. When symbols are used to represent words in a language they are described as

examples of word writing or logograms. This element was used by the Sumerians in Mesopotamia about 5-6000 years ago. Sumerian Cuneiform (wedge shaped) inscriptions is the earliest known writing system.

About 3-4000 years ago came the Phoenician syllabic writing system, which are symbols that represent the pronunciation of syllables. This system developed into the alphabetic writing system which consists of a set of written symbols which each represent a single type of sound. Examples of this kind of languages are Arabic and Hebrew. This is the source of most other alphabets in the world. The Greeks took the alphabetizing process a stage further by also using separate symbols to represent the vowel sounds as distinct entities; therefore a remodelled alphabet was created to include these. This alphabet came to west Europe via the Romans and it underwent several modifications to fit the requirements of the spoken languages which it encountered (Yule,1996).

Frank Smith (1989:15) argues that writing can do everything that language in general can do. He gives examples such as language as a means to getting something and to express individuality. Smith also argues that writing is a form of language in its own right, it is not just speech written down, and he states further that the word "language" should not be made synonymous with speech. In addition, Smith talks about how written language separates our ideas from ourselves in a way that makes it easier for us to examine, explore and develop it (1989:15). To sum up, the written form of language is special and important. This stands in opposition to what Barber says earlier in the introduction (p. 5).

In order to be able to write a text you need words. All the words in our language are divided into word classes, such as, for example nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns and others. The words are divided into word classes depending on what quality the words possess and what function they have. On a more abstract level one might say that there are two major types of words, lexical words and grammatical words. Nouns, verbs and adjectives, to mention some central types of word classes, belong among the lexical words, while for instance pronouns and determiners are grammatical words. Lexical words can have new words added to them, while the grammatical words are groups of words that never or seldom get new words added to them (Barber, 2000). Lexical words are words such as: *walkman*, *internet* and *SUV* and grammatical words are words such as *the*, *he* and *they*.

As mentioned briefly above, one of the frequently encountered word classes is the adjective. Yule offers quite a straightforward definition of an adjective: “Adjectives are words used typically with nouns to provide more information about the ‘things’ referred to (happy people, large objects, cute creatures, stupid ideas).” (1996:88). Svartvik and Sager also provide a definition of what adjectives are, they say that an adjective describes a quality such as *clever* (2002:278), a character, for example *fat* (2002:278) or a condition like *unconscious* (2002: 278).

Adjectives are most commonly encountered in written texts, such as fiction. The adjectives in written texts help to describe what the characters are like and also what they look like. Adjectives are used to describe the surroundings and are also used to set the mood on the book, for example if it is romantic, scary or sad. A genre of fiction which tends to contain a lot of adjectives is the fantasy-genre; one of the characteristics for the fantasy-genre is their detailed descriptions of the nature and surroundings in which the story takes place. (<http://susning.nu/fantasy>)

1.1 Aim and scope

Due to the fact that I have always had a great interest in language in all its forms it was natural that this study was to look at some kind of language use. As a teacher it seemed pertinent to look at how pupils use their language. The design of the study came about during the group tutorials for this essay and the method of adding and removing adjectives were used in order to have something to measure and to be able to compare the different texts.

The aim of this study is to try to investigate whether the number of adjectives in a text has an influence on how the text is perceived by a teacher and the grade given the text by this teacher and if so how. This study is carried out in order to try to establish if a text with many adjectives is considered, by the teacher grading it, to be a better text than a text with fewer adjectives (for a discussion of “good” and “less good” texts, see sections 3.3). The specific research questions are:

- Does a text with many adjectives get a higher grade than a text with fewer adjectives?
- Is a text with many adjectives considered to be a better text by the teacher grading it?

1.2 Material in short

This study is based on the Swedish national test essays written by pupils taking English in year nine. Four texts have been singled out from 86 original texts. The four texts have been edited by the researcher, in that they have had either adjectives added to them or removed from them.

When these changes had been made there were four original texts and four altered ones. These eight texts were sent out to two teachers who were asked to grade the texts and comment on why they had given the texts the grade they had.

Later on interviews with two teachers included in the study were carried out in order to give additional comments to their written contributions.

A full-length description of the material is given in section 4.1

1.3 Method in short

Adjectives were added to or removed from the texts, by the current researcher, in such a way that the texts still might be taken for being written by pupils in year nine and not altered by a researcher. The adjectives which were added to the texts were chosen to match the adjectives already provided by the writer of the texts, in order for them to blend in as much as possible.

The teachers included in the study graded the texts and wrote comments giving the reasons why they thought the grades they had given were fair.

The interviews with the teachers were then carried out in a casual setting and were recorded and subsequently transcribed.

A full-length description of the method part is given in section 4.2.

2. A categorisation of adjectives

This section will provide a description of English adjectives and the functions they have. Primarily, *Collins Cobuild* has been used for the categorisation and detailed analysis of the adjectives. Further grammar books whose descriptions of adjectives are somewhat differently designed, have in addition been consulted. These grammar

books are: *Engelsk universitetsgrammatik* by Svartvik and Sager and *A communicative grammar of English* by Leech and Svartvik.

This section of the study is included to shed a light on the adjective and its complexity and wide range of use. This section will show that the adjective has much to offer a text with its ability to provide depth to a text and the adjective does also help the reader to paint a picture in his/ her mind so he/she can perhaps easier relate to the text in question.

The present section of the study is divided into two main parts with subcategories. Firstly the main types of adjectives are discussed and clarified with examples. Secondly a clarification of the main structures of the adjective has been carried out.

According to *Collins Cobuild* there are two main forms of adjectives, qualitative adjectives and classifying adjectives. These, as well as any subcategories will be further explained in the following. The labels of each type of adjectives are taken from *Collins Cobuild*.

Each type of adjective is further explained with the help of examples in which the adjectives themselves have been underlined. The examples have either been taken from *Collins Cobuild's English Grammar* or Marilyn Anderson's *Keys to successful writing*. Some further examples are the current researcher's own creation. The examples created by the latter do not have a source given, whereas the other ones do; references to the source are given in each case.

2.1 Qualitative adjectives

The adjectives that show what quality someone or something has are called qualitative adjectives. For example: a good meal, a cheap sweater, a boring movie, a handsome prince.

Qualitative adjectives are gradable. This means that the object referred to by the adjective can be compared to other things. For example: *The man is happy but the woman is happier than him and the child is the happiest of them all.* As this example shows it is the adjective in itself that gives whatever is referred to more or less of a certain quality, in this case there are three people who are being compared to each other on the grounds of how happy they are.

2.1.1 Colour adjectives

Colour adjectives are used when you need to clarify which colour something has. For example: a blue sky, red lips. When you want to be more specific about the colour it

is possible to use a submodifier, which in turn modifies the adjective when you want to say something more about the quality that the adjective describes (see also section 2.1.6 for more about submodifiers) such as: *dark, pale, bright*. These submodifiers are placed in front of the adjectives. For example: *A light blue sky, deep devil red lips*

There are some colours which may be somewhat hard to define, and then you can use either a colour adjective with *-ish* added as a suffix – *greenish glass*(1990:68) or you can combine two colour adjectives and then you most of the times add *-ish* or *-y* as a suffix - *greenish-white flowers, a greeny-blue line*(1990:68).

On certain occasions colour adjectives can be graded, meaning they take the comparative suffix *-er* or the superlative suffix *-est*. For example: *His face was redder than usual. ...some of the greenest scenery in America.* (1990:69)

2.1. 2 Emphasizing adjectives

By putting adjectives such as *complete, absolute* and *utter* in front of a noun one can emphasize ones feelings about that noun. For example: *feel like a complete idiot, pure bliss and utter despair*, where *idiot, bliss, and despair* are the nouns (1990:69). These adjectives are called emphasizing adjectives because they are used to show strong emotion, to emphasize something.

In informal English there is also a slightly different type of adjectives that is emphasizing. These adjectives are generally used to show disapproval and contempt. For example: *The flaming car's locked* (1990:69). These adjectives are often used with one particular noun such as *blithering idiot, raving lunatic, freezing cold and scalding hot* (1990:69). This type of adjective differs from the other one described in this section in that it is only used in informal English while the other one mostly occurs in formal English.

Very can at times be used as an emphasize, despite the fact that it normally is a submodifier. *Very* is used to emphasize a noun in expressions like: *the very end, the very top* (1990:70).

2.1.3 *-ing* adjectives as qualitative adjectives

A large number of adjectives appear in an *-ing* form. Most of these adjectives are related in form to the present participles of verbs, such as in for example – *an amusing fellow* (1990:76) and *a staggering pile of books*.

There are some different groups of *-ing* adjectives. The first group will be explained here, as it belongs to the qualitative adjectives, see section 2.1, and the other will be explained under section 2.2.1.

The first group gives a description of the effect that something has on one's feelings and ideas. For example: *A surprising number of men stay bachelors* (1990:76).

The *-ing* adjectives are normally qualitative adjectives, which means that they can be used with a submodifier and have comparative and superlative forms. These adjectives can be used in either the attributive or the predicative position.

2.1.4 *-ed* adjectives as qualitative adjectives

There are many English adjectives that have an *-ed* suffix. These adjectives often have the same form as the past participle of a verb.

Some of these adjectives are formed just by adding *-ed* to a noun, whereas some are not closely related to any other words.

-...*a disappointed man*.

-...*a bearded man*.

-...*sophisticated electronic devices*. (1990:79).

Adjectives that have the same form as the irregular past participle not ending with *-ed* still count as an *-ed* adjective, such as *–a broken bone, a torn ligament* (1990:79).

Most *-ed* adjectives are related to a transitive verb and have a passive meaning. They thus indicate that something has occurred or that something is happening to the thing that is described, for example: *a frightened person or a known criminal*.

There are however a few *-ed* adjectives that are related to the past participle of intransitive verbs with a passive meaning, for example: *an escaped prisoner*. (1990:81)

There are some *-ed* adjectives that refer to a person's mental health or emotional reaction to something, in general considered qualitative adjectives, that is because they like other qualitative adjectives can be submodified with *very* and *extremely*

(1990:79). For example: *He invited me out to a very expensive restaurant.* and *Though the sky was clouded it was still rather hot.*

The *-ed* adjectives, like other adjectives referring to feelings, are used to describe the expression, voice or manner of the person affected instead of referring directly to that person.

- *her frightened eyes*

- *his agitated voice* (1990:79).

2.1.5 Compound adjectives as qualitative adjectives

A compound adjective is made up of two words or more, often with a hyphen between them (*air-conditioned* (1990:83)). There are however some different ways of constructing compound adjectives. The three most commonly used are: “adjective or number plus noun plus *-ed*, adjective or adverb plus past participle or adjective, adverb or noun plus present participle.” (Collins Cobuild, 1990:83). Examples of these three patterns of constructing of compound adjectives are: *grey-haired, low-paid and long-lasting* (1990:83).

Compound adjectives can be used as both qualitative and classifying adjectives (for a closer description of the latter type, see section 2.2). Compound adjectives that are considered to be qualitative are for example: *absent-minded, big-headed, short-tempered and well-known* (1990:83).

2.1.6 Submodifiers

A submodifier is used when you want to say something more about the quality that an adjective describes, such as *very* and *rather*. The submodifier is used in order to indicate the amount of the quality or to intensify it and also in some cases to diminish the effect of the qualitative adjectives. Submodifiers are most commonly used with qualitative adjectives, because these adjectives are gradable. Examples of phrases including an adjective and a submodifier are: *a highly successful company.* (1990:93)

Submodifiers can, however, in some cases be used with classifying adjectives and can also be used together with the superlative form of an adjective. Submodifiers can express one's opinion about something as well as express the intensity of something. For example: *incredibly boring,*

Submodifiers such as *almost, fully* and *mainly* (1990:95) are used to show the extent of the quality which you are describing. For example: When using comparative adjectives and wanting to say that something has much more or much

less of a quality than something else a submodifier can be added: *There are far worse dangers.* (1990:97) A submodifier can be used to indicate that something had more or less of something earlier: *He had become much more mature.* (1990:98)

2.1.7 Comparatives

The comparatives can be used as modifiers in front of a noun and also as complements to a link verb. The comparative form is used to indicate that something has more of a quality than something else. Usually it is only the qualitative adjectives that have the comparative form.

The normal form of the comparative is to use the positive form of the adjective and add *-er* as the suffix, e.g. *sadder, happier, stronger*. Another way of constructing the comparative is to put *more* in front of the adjective, e.g. *more interesting, more advanced*. Anderson gives in her book some examples that show what happens when you use *more* in an incorrect way: "This book is more light than that one." (Anderson, 1999:444). This is the incorrect way because the word *light* only contains one syllable and therefore the correct way to compare this adjectives would be: "This books is lighter than that one" (Anderson, 1999:444). You add *-er* at the end when you use an adjective with one syllable. *More* is more commonly used with adjectives that have two syllables or more, for example: *respectable- more respectable*.

2.1.8 Superlatives

The superlative form is the highest grade of comparison and can be constructed by adding the suffix *-est* to the end of the adjective and by putting *the* in front of it. Some adjectives get *the most* put in front of them to construct the superlative form. For example: *the tallest man, the youngest woman and the bluest sky*. Examples of the construction with *the most* are: *the most intriguing story and the most incredible view*.

The superlative form is used in order to show that something has more of a quality than anything else. For example: *A fast car, a faster car and the superlative form: the fastest car*.

By making an utterance like: "This is one of the greater efforts of filmmaking we've ever seen" (Anderson, 1999:444), you use the adjective incorrectly because the comparative form is used instead of the superlative. The correct utterance would be:

“This is one of the greatest efforts of filmmaking we’ve ever seen.”(Anderson, 1999:444).

2.2 Classifying adjectives

Classifying adjectives are the other main form of adjectives, qualitative adjectives being the first one. The classifying adjectives are used to tell which class something belongs to. “For example, if you say ‘financial help’, you are using the adjective ‘financial’ to classify the noun ‘help’.” (Collins Cobuild, 1990:66). Classifying adjectives helps you to know what kind of help you are talking about or what kind of pain you are in.

Adjectives that tell you about the nationality something has also belongs to this category. For example: A French bulldog and an English football player.

Because these adjectives put things in a class they are not gradable in the same way as a qualitative adjective is. “Things are either in a particular class or not in it.”(Collins Cobuild, 1990:67). Thus these adjectives do not have superlatives and comparatives and are not used with submodifiers such as *rather* and *very*.

If by chance you feel very strongly about something it is absolutely possible to use *absolutely* as a submodifier together with a classifying adjective, as is done earlier in this sentence (*absolutely possible*) (1990:67).

2.2.1 *-ing* adjectives as classifying adjectives

The other main group of the *-ing*-adjectives, the first one discussed earlier in section 2.1.3, is used to describe a process or a state that continues over a period of time, for example: *Oil and gas drillers are doing a booming business* (1990:77). These adjectives are classifying adjectives, which mean that they are not used with submodifiers. These adjectives can, however, be submodified with the help of adverbs which describe with what speed the event at hand is progressing, as can be seen for instance in: - ...a fast diminishing degree of personal freedom (1990:77).

The *-ing* form of most English intransitive verbs can be used attributively to tell what someone or something is doing. -...a walking figure.(1990:78)

2.2.2 –ed adjectives as classifying adjectives

The –ed adjectives used in order to classify something are, like other classifying adjectives, not gradable. Most of the adjectives which refer to physical distinction are classifying adjectives.

Further classifying –ed adjectives can not be submodified with the ordinary submodifiers. They can, however, be submodified with an adverb of manner or with an adverb of degree, for example: a well-known novelist. (1990:80)

There are also some –ed adjectives that do not make sense on their own but need an adverb to make a phrase complete, for example: ...impeccably dressed man (1990:81).

2.2.3 Compound adjectives as classifying adjectives

The criterion for what a compound adjective is has been discussed earlier in section 2.1.5 and therefore only examples of the classifying compound adjectives will be given here. They are for example: *full-grown, home-made, off-guard and single-handed* (1990:84).

2.3 Adjectives which can be both qualitative and classifying

There are some adjectives that can be both a qualitative adjective as well as a classifying adjective. The belonging depends on what you want to convey.

For example, in ‘an emotional person’, ‘emotional’ is a qualitative adjective meaning ‘feeling or expressing strong emotions’; it has a comparative and a superlative and it can be used with submodifiers. Thus a person can be ‘very emotional’, ‘rather emotional’, or ‘more emotional’ than someone else. However in ‘the emotional needs of children’, ‘emotional’ is a classifying adjective meaning ‘relating to a person’s emotions’, and so it cannot be submodified. (Collins Cobuild, 1990:67)

Here are some adjectives which can be used as either a qualitative or a classifying adjective: *academic, conscious, dry, educational, effective, emotional, extreme, and late* (1990:68).

2.4 The functions of adjectives

The adjective seems to have two major functions, namely the attributive function and the predicative function.

The attributive adjective modifies a noun group, i.e. the adjective give more information about the noun, as can be seen in for example: *He wore a ragged old suit*, where the word *suit* is the noun.

The predicative adjective on the other hand is used as a complement after link verbs. When an adjective is placed after a link verb the focus is put on the adjective, as opposed to the attributive where the focus is on the noun. An illustration: *His suit was old and ragged*.

2.4.1 Attributive function

These adjectives are almost inconclusively used in front of a noun and are hardly ever used as a complement to a link-verb. Collins Cobuild uses *atomic* and *outdoor* as examples. You do not say *the explosion was atomic*, but you do say *an atomic explosion*; you never say *their pursuits are outdoors* but you do say *their outdoor pursuits*(1990:71).

There are some qualitative adjectives that occur only as attributive adjectives, however most adjectives that are used attributively are classifying adjectives.

2.4.2 Predicative function

The adjectives that are used as a complement to a link-verb are called predicative adjective. "...you can say '*She felt glad.*' but you do not normally talk about '*a glad woman.*'" (1990:72).

In order to create a full meaning of some predicative adjectives one needs to add a *to*-clause. The utterance *he is unable* does not really make sense until one puts *to do it* after it.

Adjectives that are used predicatively and refer to someone's beliefs or feelings are followed by a *that*-clause, for example: *She was sure that he meant it* (1990:74).

2.4.3 Adjectives that need a prepositional phrase

The predicative adjectives do not need a prepositional phrase, but there are other adjectives that do. They need such a phrase because otherwise their meaning would be unclear or incomplete.

There are some adjectives that need the preposition *to* such as *allergic*, *close*, and *similar* (1990:72), whereas some adjectives are followed by the preposition *of*, for instance *aware*, *full*, and *incapable* (1990:72).

Other adjectives take prepositions such as *with*, for example: *compatible*, *filled*. (1990:73) There are also cases of adjectives that can take two different prepositions: *connected to* or *connected with*, *immune from* or *immune to*(1990:73).

3. Theoretical framework

The previous work section of the essay will discuss different text types, grading in school and what is considered to be good writing skills. These different areas are chosen because they bring up different angles of the aim of this study, which is to see if a text with many adjectives receives a higher grade than one with few adjectives. Further this essay will also discuss the various reasons to why the teachers graded the texts the way they have. Therefore it is of interest to see if previous research is in concord with what the teachers in this study think is a good text.

3.1 Text types

A writer of a text can have different intentions for the text; it can for instance be informative or instructive. The writer might want to increase the reader's knowledge in a certain area. There can however be other ways to approach the reader than just to inform; you may wish to affect the readers in a certain way, to make them change their mind and attitude towards something and to try to make them act accordingly. To write a text that is supposed to affect someone's emotions you must know something about your reader, you need to know about the rules, norms and attitudes that the reader lives by and affect the reader's way to think. This is especially important for those working in public relations and also for journalists (Löfqvist, 1988:40).

In school there are also demands on the pupils on how their written texts should be designed. Letters should, for instance, be shaped with the addressee in mind. Style and tone of voice must also be adjusted depending on both the subject and the addressee. Löfqvist says that being aware of what controls the reader is called

possessing social competence (1988:40). You have to be aware of the norms and adapt your text after those norms and the recipient.

Lundstedt (2002) says that we look differently on texts depending on which genre they belong to; if they are a detective story, a criminal novel, a news article or an essay, to mention only a few genres. Each genre has its own characteristics and Lundstedt says further that we read each genre in different ways and that we have different expectations of a text because of its genre; a news article should be quite informative while a ghost story should be fairly scary. Lundstedt also says that if the reader does not understand which genre the text belongs to the text can easily be misinterpreted.

3.2 Grading in school

Nilsson (1977) gives a fairly general description of what a grade does and how everyone judge each other based on different criteria. Though this is a quite old source, its general idea can be said to be valid even today as grades and other ways of judging each other occurs daily in our society. A grade is according to him something that indicates whether you are intelligent or stupid or good or bad. He talks about how we all grade each other, but that most of all we get graded in school. He says that you can not grade someone without having something to lean on, such as different kinds of criteria. Further Nilsson says that there are three types of criteria in school: the curriculum, practice and educational materials. He means that these three criterions are what pupils are getting graded on when they are in school.

One does of course have to be aware that these three criterions might not be the only ones that the pupils get graded by. All teachers have their own beliefs and they all look at their pupils in their own way. Therefore one has for example have the teachers own point of view to bear in mind when it comes to grading, perhaps does not every pupil, if any, get an entirely objective grading.(Nilsson 1977)

3.2.1 The history of the Swedish grading system

The grading system is a forever changing matter and in current discussion the government is talking about yet another grading system. The grading system has always been an important matter, and is indeed important today and is a part of

many teachers everyday-life. The following section will provide a picture of how grading came about in the 18th century and how it has changed over time.

In the middle ages it was the church that controlled the education and there were yet no grades given to the pupils.

In the 17th century Martin Luther brought his catechism and the demand on religious upbringing increased. The priests went home to people and tested people on their knowledge of their religion. The priests kept a record on how capable each member of the household was. These records are considered to be the first written grades.

In the 18th century the prelates made a model that should be used for these records in order to make all grading systems alike. In the 1770's the term 'grade' grew bigger and were more commonly used than before.

In the 19th century the big debate within in the school was if a public elementary school should be introduced. In 1842 a mandatory public elementary school became reality.

In 1882 it was decided that a final certificate would be given to the pupils upon leaving school, and that certificate would state the pupils' capability, knowledge and behaviour. It was not however until the year 1900 that the elementary school would have a unitary grading system: A, a, AB, Ba, B, Bc and C. In this grading system the A is the highest grade and C the lowest.

In 1927 a decision was made that the pupils should have a term report instead of just a final certificate. This means that the pupils were given a report each term where their current grades were stated.

In the 1930's a school debate was on as to whether the grades should be used as selection on who would be suitable to continue to the secondary modern school. So far an entrance examination had been used to decide who went to the secondary modern school. This test was however not to everyone's satisfaction, so they searched for another way to settle who should have the right to attend the secondary modern school. When the use of grades as the method was decided not everyone was happy, because the grade system was not alike all over the country and was therefore hard to compare. This brought about the decision that the grade system should be standardised so that it could be compared all over the country. It was decided that one third of the pupils should have the grade Ba (which was the average

grade), one third should have a higher grade and one third should have a lower grade.

These changes were carried out in the 1940's and in the 1950's they became the law when it came to the theoretical subjects, such as Swedish and mathematics. The grading system was however not yet applied to the practical subjects such as craft and physical education.

In 1962 the grades were changed from a letter scale to a number scale:1-5 (Nilsson 1977:9-14), where 1 is the lowest grade and 5 the highest.

In the 1970's and 1980's The Swedish National School Board tried to introduce a more criterion-referenced grading system. This investigation was cancelled because it was thought that the school would become too focused on tests and their results (Andersson, 1999).

1980 a new curriculum was introduced, called *Lgr 80*. There would only be grades in year 8 and 9. The 5-graded number scale was still in use. In 1989 there was another investigation about the criterion-referenced grades and 1990 it was stated that it would be the pupils' actual achievements, and whether or not they reached the goals which should be graded.

1994 the new curricula *Lpo 94* and *Lpf 94* were introduced. The grading system was now changed to a four-graded scale:IG, G, VG and MVG, IG is the lowest grade whereas MVG is the highest grade. The grades were to be complimented with talks about the pupils' progression in school. The Swedish National Board formulated the guidelines for the grade of VG and then it was up to the teachers on each school to decide the guidelines for the grade G (Andersson, 1999).

3.2.2 Grading texts

Elbow (2000) states that a text which is given to several readers tends to get different grades depending on who reads it. Elbow further mentions research carried out in 1913 where the investigators showed that high-school English teachers gave different grades to the same text. This is interesting and shows that this is an issue that has been going for ages, and just recently in Sweden three girls at an upper secondary school in Gävle handed in the same text to four different teachers. The text was graded from IG to MVG. It is stated in the article, that the grades are gratuitous and not at all based on the grading criteria. It also is discussed in the

article that since the criteria for the different grades are able to be interpreted in more than one way it is very hard to put a grade on a text (Westlund, 2007)

In the current debate about grading the Swedish National School Board has decided to review some schools in Scania to find out whether the grading is unfair. The Swedish National School Board will look at whether or not the schools use the national curricula and if they judge the pupils by the national grading criteria that exist. The Swedish National School Board will also examine if the teachers have possibilities to have discussions about the manner in which they give grades to their pupils. The Swedish National School Board will also compare the results of the national tests with the pupils' final grade. In Lund many of the pupils get an MVG as a grade in English. The average score of those who get an MVG is 17% while at three schools in Lund the percentage of the pupils who get an MVG is 50%, 47% and 38%. This has led the Swedish National School Board to think that perhaps not all schools work according to the curriculum's and the different criteria. (Fagerström, 2007) This leads to think about the current study and if the same element, with great variation in grades, would occur in this study.

3.3 Good writing skills

Löfqvist (1988) has conducted a study on pupils writing skills. He discusses that when grading an essay it is firstly the written proficiency that is of interest. Further he discussed what is part of what we see as written proficiency or writing skills.

Löfqvist says that no matter if you are expressing yourself in speech or in writing you must have a skill to give structure to what you want to convey. On one hand you must find good ideas, judge them and separate the pertinent from what is not. You also need to be able to compare things and be creative. In this skill, he discusses, lay also an ability to organise ones thoughts, to link them together in such a way that it makes sense for the possible reader. This competence is mandatory for the writer to be able to make the reader apprehend the intended meaning of the text.

In 1977 Hultman and Westman conducted a study of how pupils in upper secondary school use language. Some of the advice concerning writing that was given the most attention at this time was the importance of using adjectives. It was asserted that the adjectives contributed to make the writing style descriptive and clear. Hultman and Westman write that one has to be careful when you give writing

advice; they say that one might be able to continue to demonstrate the role of the descriptive adjectives for a rich account but that you have to keep in mind that it is obvious that the modern news paper style is very thrifty with adjectives.

Holst (2004) say that is how you introduce your text that decides whether or not it gets read. She claims further that you capture your reader by starting strong, intense and straight to the point. She talks a lot about something she calls gold nuggets. A gold nugget is when you find something interesting and by putting it into words you bring forward pictures in the reader. To do this you need to make the abstract concrete and exemplify it with carefully chosen examples which both describe and set the mood. Holst says that it is nearby impossible to capture and affect every reader with the same text, because we are all so very different persons. She also says that understanding the context is far more important than being able to understand every word and sentence.

In order for a text to be seen a readable it needs to be, according to Lundstedt (2002), adapted to the readers and their previous knowledge, interests and needs. This is also stated by Holst (2004), Ehrlow et al. (1990), Löfqvist (1988) and Skolöververket (1984). Lundstedt further mentions that the structure of a text and the correct usage of grammar are also important. She states that good texts are personal, they should mirror the way you as a writer express yourself. An important question to ask yourself when you write is who you are writing for. Teleman (red. Malmgren & Sandqvist,1991) and Rienecker and Jörgensen also, along with other already mentioned researchers, claim that it is of great importance to adapt your text to your readers and to follow the rules of writing in order to make your text easy to read.

Togebly (red. Malmgren & Sandqvist, 1991) talks about the ten commandments of writing. These commandments bring up the things that Togebly says are important when you write, such as the gathering of material, that you need to focus your writing to make sure you reach your readers. He also stresses the importance of using strong wording and to make the sentences hang to together and make sense. You should also be straight to the point when you write and the last commandment is that you should pick your style of writing and stick to it.

Ekholm says in *Skrivboken*(1997), which is a book directed to adolescents on how they should think and what they should do in order to become good writers, that it is important to read a lot of books and to make writing a habit, something you do every

day. Ekholm further states that it is important to give good and clear descriptions of the characters and equally important is to give clear descriptions of the surroundings and the mood. Something he stresses in this book is that when you describe something you should not use too many adjectives, the text gets better if you use them with care and try to find nouns or verbs that can help to describe the situation/surrounding. He says that it is within the verbs that the power of the text lies, therefore it is important to find the verb that gives the text that power you are looking for. One advice he gives is that you should look for the words that gives most colour to your text.

4. Presentation of the results

The following section will provide a full-length description of material and method (shorter descriptions of material and method were given in sections 1.2 and 1.3.) as well as give a full presentation of the results of this study.

4.1 Material in detail

Sections 4.1 and 4. 2 provide the complete description of material and method used in this study.

4.1.1 The texts

The material used for this study consists of four English texts written by Swedish pupils in the Swedish Compulsory school system, in secondary education, in the ninth grade, where pupils are of the age of fifteen.

These texts have been chosen out of a total 86 (the total number of texts are 86 because there were 86 pupils who took the national test this particular year) texts from the compulsory national tests in English which are conducted each year in the ninth grade in Sweden. The texts come from one school that was what the current researcher could get access to. This might limit the study somewhat since all of the texts come from the same source and perhaps if other schools would have been involved in this study it would have added some more variety to the material used.

The four texts that have been chosen to become part of the present investigation were not randomly selected, but rather chosen very carefully to fit the design of the

study. The four texts were selected with a view to the number of adjectives which the texts included. Two of the texts already contained many adjectives and the other two texts did not contain so many adjectives.

The texts were sent to two teachers in order to get the texts graded. To be able to answer the research questions these four texts has been modified in such a way that an answer to the questions would be possible.

4.1.2 The teachers

The two teachers teach Swedish and English, and Swedish and French respectively. The latter teacher has previously also taught English but does not teach it at the moment. They are both about 30-35 years of age and have worked as teachers for 5-10 years. One of the teachers is male and the other is female.

These two teachers were chosen because of good contact during the researcher's teacher practice and also because they have good knowledge of the English language and have great experience of grading text in English written by pupils. Neither one of the teachers had any prior knowledge of the study and its aim.

4.1.3 The interviews

Two interviews have been conducted, one with each teacher in this study. The purpose of the interviews was to provide the teachers with an opportunity to discuss matters connected to the study in greater detail and in doing so to provide the researcher with an opportunity to find out what view the teachers have on the importance of the adjectives in a text and also to try and find out what the teachers consider to be a good text.

The interviews furthermore aimed at trying to shed a light on the teachers' opinions on what was needed in a text for it to be given the grades G, VG or an MVG. This final purpose of the interviews was of particular interest to this study, one central aim of which is to try and see how teachers grade essays in relation to the relative density of adjectives. (See appendix IX for the interview questions.)

4.2 Method in detail

4.2.1 The texts

Four texts written by ninth grade pupils have been chosen from the original 86 texts, two of them because they contained many adjectives and the other two because they did not contain that many adjectives. What is considered to be many versus few adjectives is based on the number of adjectives found in the texts; the texts that are considered to have many adjectives are in fact the texts that have the highest number of adjectives of all the texts and the texts that are considered to have few adjectives are the texts that have the lowest number of adjectives in addition each text must further have been given at least G as a grade. There are texts with fewer adjectives than those which have been chosen but they do not have a grade of pass and has as a consequence not been included in the study.

All of the texts used in this study have been graded at least a G (i.e the grade of pass), the reason for this is that a text with an IG (a grade of fail) probably has so many flaws that these flaws would somehow generally affect the appearance of the texts and in particular that such flaws might get in the way of the adjectives and you might potentially get a grading based on other variables instead, such as a general lack of fluency. Excluding essays with a grade of fail has been a necessary step in the work and it is further not believed to have affected the results of this study.

The next step was that the current researcher began editing the pupils' essays. The two texts with many adjectives have had as many adjectives as possible removed and the texts with few adjectives have had adjectives added to them. Not all adjectives have been removed from the texts with many adjectives because it was important for the study that it would not be too obvious that the texts had been tampered with.

The adjectives that were added to the two texts have been added with great care so that the final version of the texts would still seem to have been written by a pupil in the ninth grade. If the texts had been altered so much that the language level would be much higher than the average capacity of a ninth grade pupil, the whole point of this study would be lost. It is crucial for the study that the teachers that have been asked to grade the texts believe that the texts really are written by ninth grade pupils and are not altered by anyone.

The texts will be provided as appendices at the end of the essay and text number 1 is appendix number 1 and so on until appendix number 8. Appendix number 9 is the interview questions.

4.2.2 The teachers

The teachers, who from now on will be called teacher A and teacher B, have been asked to grade the texts and give reasons why they think that the grade is fair. The teachers have each been given four texts each, two original texts and two altered texts.

Finally, it is important to underline again that the two teachers have not been informed about what this study is investigating or any of its steps, because it is important that the teachers' judgement of the texts is as objective as possible.

4.2.3 The interviews

To be able to find out what the two teachers included in this study think about the importance of adjectives, and what they think a good text is and how they grade pupils' texts, an interview with each teacher has been conducted.

The interviews, which have been carried out individually, took place in the teachers' study. Both interviews have been recorded and transcribed. The teachers included in this study were well aware that they were to be recorded and both teachers gave their consent to be recorded. The interviews were carried out in English because the study is in English studying the English language. It was thought to be better to have the interviewee's exact words instead of a translation of them that might not be completely correct.

Denscombe (2000:130ff) states that an interview carries many similarities with a simple conversation, but it is actually much more. The person you are interviewing must to begin with agree to be a part of it; it is unethical to conduct the interview in secret with a hidden recorder. An interview is a scheduled meeting whose goal is to produce material which will be used in research. Further it is the interviewer who controls the conversation and decides what subjects will be dealt with during the interview.

An interview is often carried out in order to go deeper into a certain subject and you often do not interview very many people. The present study is a qualitative study, which is a more in depth study than the quantitative study, and as opposed to a

quantitative study the material need not be as large as if the study would have been of the latter kind.

The interviews that have been conducted with the teachers in this study could be named so called semi structured interviews (2000:135). In semi-structured interviews you have subjects and questions that are to be discussed answered, but you allow the interviewees to develop their own ideas and speak more fully and fairly freely about the subjects that have been brought up.

4.3 The texts in the study

The following table provides some short information about the texts that have been used in this study. Each text will be further explained and looked at in greater detail later on in this section; a discussion of each text will also follow later on in this section.

Table 1 A presentation of the texts

Text 1	This is an altered text which has had adjectives added to it. In its original form it was given the grade MVG-.
Text 2	This is an altered text which has had adjectives removed from it. In its original form the text received the grade G+.
Text 3	This text, which is an original text with many adjectives was given a VG as a grade.
Text 4	This text is an original text with few adjectives and was given an MVG.
Text 5	This text is an original text with few adjectives and was given an MVG.
Text 6	This text is an altered text where adjectives have been added. The text got an MVG in its original form.
Text 7	This text is an original text and contains many adjectives. This text was given a G+.
Text 8	This text is an altered text where adjectives have been removed from it. This text was given a VG in its original form.

4.3.1 Text 1

In this study text number one was graded by teacher A and was given a grade that was a little bit lower than in its original form. In this study it got a VG while in its

original form it got an MVG-. This is one of the texts that was tampered with and has had adjectives added to it.

4.3.2 Text 2

Text number two is an altered text where adjectives have been removed from the original text. In its original form it received a G+ but teacher A grading it for this study gave it a VG.

4.3.3 Text 3

This text has not been tampered with in any way and is one of the original texts that is considered to contain many adjectives. This text received the same grade by the teacher included in this study as by the teacher grading the text earlier.

4.3.4 Text 4

Text number four is also an original text but this one is a text considered to contain few adjectives. This text received the grade MVG both by the teacher grading it earlier and by the teacher included in this study.

4.3.5 Text 5

Text number five is an original text which contains few adjectives. The teacher included in the study grading this text gave it a VG+ which is a slightly lower grade than it got the first time it was graded, where it received an MVG-.

4.3.6 Text 6

Text number six is one of the texts that have been tampered with. The original composition contained few adjectives and so adjectives were added to this text. The text received the same grade after it was altered with as before anything was done to the text, which was an MVG.

4.3.7 Text 7

Text number seven is an original text with many adjectives. This text got the same grade by the teacher included in this study as by the teacher grading it earlier. It got the grade G+ in both cases.

4.3.8 Text 8

Text number eight is an altered text. The original text contained many adjectives and so adjectives have been removed from this text. In its original form it received a VG and the teacher B, who graded this text for this study, did also give it a VG.

5. Analysis of the results

This section will provide the analysis of the texts used in the study along with the teachers' written comments and their interviews. On top of this connections will be drawn to the theoretical framework section on what other researchers has said about grading and about writing good texts. A direct reference to a study similar to this one cannot be done because such a study has not been found. Therefore the theoretical framework section is based on what researchers have previously discussed about good writing skills and grading which this current study also, in a way, is looking at.

5.1 Analysis of the texts

The analysis will be divided into two parts where the first one deals with the texts that got the same grade both times they were graded (once for the national test and once for this study). The second part then, deals with the texts that either got a higher or a lower grade than the first time they were judged by a teacher. A presentation of the teachers' written comments about their grading of the texts will start up the two following sections (5.1.1 and 5.1.2), thereafter the analysis of the texts with help of the teachers comments, the interviews with the two teachers and the previous work will follow. Only the parts of the interviews that are of importance for this study has been transcribed.

5.1.1 The texts that received the same grade twice

The texts that received the same grade a second time are texts number three, four, six, seven and eight. Of these five texts are three original texts (texts number three, four and seven) that has not had any changes done to them and the other two has had adjectives either added or removed from them (texts number six and eight).

Teacher A, in this study, says that text number 3 is “a VG composition” because of the “fluency and an eager to tell the story about Mr Dunant.” Further this teacher says that the things that limit this text to this grade are that “the pupil is uncertain of grammar...the pupil also mixes present tense and past tense. There are spelling mistakes and word mistakes as well, such as ‘learn out’ instead of ‘teach’.” Teacher A also says that text number four “deserves the grade MVG because there is a great fluency in the text and it is a good and thrilling story with only a few minor faults.” Teacher B says that in text number six “the student has written a good and interesting story. There is good fluency and the vocabulary is good. There are only a few grammatical mistakes.” This made the teacher give this text an MVG.

One thing that seems to be of more value than many other things, when it comes to grading a text, is fluency. It seems as if as long as there is fluency in the text some grammar mistakes and spelling mistakes can be overlooked and one can still get a really good grade, which a VG and an MVG most certainly is. An eager to tell your story seem also to be an important factor in order to get a good grade, it can easily be imagined that a story that someone wants to tell is more interesting to read than one who has been forced onto a paper. In both comments on these two texts we can see that fluency plays a big role when it comes to the grades and that the texts did get the high grades because of it and because the writers succeeded to build up suspense and also did not have many grammatical or spelling errors. In the interviews carried out with both teachers in the study they both claim that great fluency is important when they grade a text. When asked about what they looked at when grading a text they answered as follows: (teacher A)- *“Let me start with the MVG eh I think you need fluency in the text and you need...eh...you need to use many words, adjectives for instance but you also need to be a good speller and if you lack one of those things you get a VG and if you write a text...quite well but not...if you don’t use many adjectives or if the spelling is bad you get a G”* (Teacher B)- *“The higher grade writes more colourful than the lower grade. The things that makes me grade the texts differently is grammar, the spelling, the story, if they follow their ...their...topic that they got and of course if it is a good story, an interesting story that’s what I base my grade on.”* Both teachers thinks that adjectives are important which can be seen in theses comments where teacher A say that if you do not use many adjectives you get a lower grade and teacher B says that the pupils who writes more colourful gets the higher grades. When the teachers were asked about how

important they think adjectives are they both rated them rather high: (teacher A)-
“Well I think adjectives are quite important for a text if you want to reach the higher grades...so I would say about a four...”, and teacher B said as follows: *“I think it’s a 4. I think it is quite important to use a lot of adjectives because it makes the text more interesting and more colourful and you can see and maybe paint a picture in your head if you have a lot of adjectives.”*

When the teachers were asked about what they thought the adjectives brought to a text they said that: (Teacher A)-*“ it gets more live I think...it makes it more interesting to read, it gives blood and pulse...to a text I think”* (Teacher B)-*“The same as I said before...adjectives bring life to a text...like a painting you get an explanation of what things look like and how they are.”* As is shown in section 2 about the adjective, an adjective can be used to give detailed description of the setting of the story and one can then assume that the writer of text number four has been able to build up suspense by describing the characters and the surroundings in a detailed and exciting way.

The following to texts that got the same grade twice has nothing mentioned at all about fluency, which might suggest that there are other things besides fluency that are equally important. The thing in these two texts that seems to have been the reason for their grade is the great knowledge of the topic. Text number seven in this study got a G+ both of the times when it was graded and the teacher grading it for this study gives the following reasons for the grade given: *“This text has a simple language and doesn’t show a big vocabulary. There are a lot of grammatical mistakes and the construction could be better...the story is good and the student has a lot of knowledge about the topic.”* As mentioned above it looks like it is the pupil’s great knowledge of the topic and the story that has granted him/her this grade, since the rest of the things that teachers look at when grading, such as grammar, usage of words etc, has some great flaws and is not entirely up to par. Text number eight got a VG from teacher B in this study because it *“has a good storyline and the student has a lot of knowledge about Henri Dunant. There are both grammatical and spelling mistakes, but you understand what the student wants to say. The text works and you can easily follow what the student want to say with its text.”* This text also had many grammatical an spelling mistakes but both the storyline and knowledge about the topic appear to have weighed up for those flaws.

5.1.2 The texts that received either a higher or a lower grade

Three of the eight texts got either a higher or a lower grade the second time they were graded. Texts number one and five got a lower grade and text number two got a higher grade.

Teacher A chose to give text number one a VG because: "There is a great fluency in the text and an eager to tell." It can be assumed that the reason the text did not get an even higher grade is because the teacher found some "very annoying mistakes" such as "spelling mistakes, word mistakes...and direct translations from Swedish."

Yet here again the great fluency of the text is what grants it a really good grade. This text did however get a lower grade this second time it was graded. Text number one is one of the text that has been tampered with for this study and has had adjectives added to it. One speculation about the lowering of the grade is that the extra amount of adjectives in the text did not heighten the quality of the text; they actually might have lowered it. Another speculation and perhaps a more probable one is that it is not the same teacher that has graded the text both times and the two teachers might find different things in a text of different importance.

Nilsson (1977) says that each teacher has its own personal beliefs on what is important and that therefore each teacher's personal criteria on what is good are factors to think about when pupils get graded. Also one has to take the teacher's emotional connection to the pupil in consideration. The teacher grading the text the first time probably has spent more time with the pupil and has taught English to the pupil in question. The second teacher grading this text might not know the pupil at all and is then more objective and judges the text only on the basis of the text and does not think of who has written it.

An example for how grades can differ when the same text gets graded by different teachers can be found in an article published in *Aftonbladet* 2007-05-15 which shows that one cannot always trust the grade given to your text. Three girls in Gävle handed the same text to four different teachers; logically the text should have gotten pretty much the same grade by all four teachers since there are grading criteria for them to follow. The text did, however, receive everything from the grade of fail, IG, to the highest grade possible, MVG. This suggests that teachers put much of their own values of what they think is a good text rather than leaning entirely on the criteria when grading. One has to bear in mind, though, that the grading criteria of today do

not state clearly what is needed for each grade; much is up to the teachers' own interpretation. The teachers in the current study, however, seem to be in concord when it comes to grading. They have graded all the text included in the study pretty much the same way, only few variations occur. They also seem to have pretty much the same criteria for the different grades.

In fact Andersson (1994) states that when the new grading system (IG-MVG) was introduced, the Swedish National School Board only formed the guidelines for the grade VG and later it was up to the teachers on each school to decide what would be considered an IG, a G and an MVG. This might be a reason to why this text when handed in to different teachers at different schools got such a wide variety of grades. These teachers simply have different views on what is a good and what is a less good text. This could point at that perhaps do all of the grading criteria, not just one of them, need to be developed and formed by a central authority, such as the Swedish National School Board, in order for the teachers to be able to grade texts equally across the country.

In an article published at *Sydsvenskans* webpage a survey has been done in Gothenburg where many teachers admit to have been giving pupils higher grades than they really deserves. Bengt Selghed, who is doing research on Kristianstad University about grading, says in an interview that many teacher grade with their hearts rather than their brain. He claims that a subjective grading is almost inevitable since the teachers wants what is best for their students and does therefore look at more things when grading than just pure knowledge. The other things that they look at is the pupils behaviour in school and sometimes even the pupils looks can be a factor when the grades are being set. (<http://sydsvenskan.se>)

In the comments from the teacher in this study there are not anything mentioned about adjectives at all. This could be quite remarkable but one has to ask oneself if you would look at the adjectives alone when grading a text. A probable reason for this is probably because a text is not graded on the basis of how many adjectives there are and also the adjectives would probably be filed under some of the other criteria that the teacher say they have, such as vocabulary or descriptive language. The comments to text number one suggest rather strongly that there are other things that are important to look at when judging a text, such as grammar, spelling, fluency and if the writer does seem to want to tell his or her story, the teacher grading this text calls this an "eager to tell". Lundstedt (2002) claims that apart from the

importance of adapting your text to your reader, it is also important to use grammar correctly and to have a good structure to your text. She also says that a good text is a text which is personal; the writer should be visible in the text. When it comes to adjectives Ekholm claims that they should be used with care, they should only be used if it is absolutely necessary. The adjective you use should be precise and carefully chosen. Ekholm further claims that the most powerful word class is the verb.

Text number two got a G+ the first time it was graded and a VG the second time in its altered version. Yet here again the gap between these two grades are not so great. G+ can be considered to be almost a VG. The major reason for this grade given by the teacher grading this text is that there is fluency. The reasons for it to not get an even higher grade are “spelling mistakes, word mistakes and direct translations such as ‘to take him as a threat’. There are also some unfinished expressions...” When considering the comments from the teacher on this text, it is very doubtful that the number of adjectives would have had any impact on the grade at all. In fact it is very doubtful that the amount of adjectives has had any impact on any of the grades given to the texts in this study. Teacher B gives the following reasons for why text number five gets a VG+: “The text has a good storyline and...has a good fluency. The student also has a big vocabulary and the grammar is good.” The reasons why this text did not get an MVG by this teacher is because of some grammatical mistakes and “some spelling mistakes like thought should be taught and so on.” The teacher also mentions that “the sentences could have a better construction...” These two texts along with several others in this study show that fluency is of great importance for a good grade and the making of a good text.

6. Conclusion

The research questions for this study are: Does a text with many adjectives get at higher grade than a text with fewer adjectives? Is a text with many adjectives considered to be a better text by the teacher grading it? The number of adjectives does not seem to be the only and most important factor that decides which text gets the higher grade. Though the teachers in the interviews state that they think adjectives are important and that if a pupil uses many adjectives it gets the higher grades. There are several other things when writing a text that are just as important to master. One of the most important things, it seems, is fluency. If there is great

fluency in the text it gets a high grade. Teacher A said in the interview that one of the things required for the highest grade was good fluency. Grammar and spelling are also things that are pointed out as important to get a good grade. In the written comments it is not much mentioned about adjectives at all and thus could conclusions be drawn that adjectives are not so important after all but the written comments in addition with the interviews show that these two teachers included in this study thinks that adjectives are important and they say that the pupils that use many adjectives and writes more colourful does get the higher grades. This then could mean that a text with many adjectives would get a higher grade than a text with fewer but only if the texts where equally as good when it comes to grammar, fluency, spelling, knowledge of topic and so on. Meaning that one cannot expect to get a high grade just because one uses many adjectives, one does also have to have a good vocabulary, have fluency, know much about what one is writing about and be able to use the grammar correctly. In short one needs to have good knowledge of how to use the written language.

Had more than the two teachers been consulted for this study the result for this study might have been different and the research questions might have gotten somewhat different answers. The results may also had come out differently if other interview questions were asked and the result would probably also have been different if other texts were selected and also if others than the two teachers in this study were chosen instead. There are many factors that would have changed the outcome of this study and therefore it would be very interesting to do this study all over again and in a larger scale to see if the results of this study is misleading or not.

The discussion about grading in school is always current and very important. Because of this it is vital that research in this area is kept up in order to find a way to give the pupil's a chance to be graded on equal values. A quite frightening example is the article in Aftonbladet 2007-05-15 where three pupils handed in the same text to four different teachers and got four different grades ranging from an IG up to an MVG. This raises the question of which type of criteria these teachers has based their grade upon.

Gratifyingly for this study is that both teachers picked out for this study has graded the texts rather alike, both in comparison with each other as in comparison with the teacher who has graded the texts the first time. This suggests that they grade texts based on pretty much the same criteria and values. It also suggests that the teachers

in this study are very capable and able to grade texts and also they have great experience when it comes to grading.

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86 essays from the national test in English, written by pupils in the year nine.

4 modified texts chosen from the 86 texts mentioned above.

2 interviews with two teachers.

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Appendix I

Text number 1

A true hero

Once I met a hero, a true hero. His name was Mr Smith. One day, I was walking home from a restaurant and I took a shortcut through a dark alley. Suddenly I felt someone grabbing me from behind. I saw a man walking down the street on the other side of the alley. He was tall and had dark hair and was wearing a dark suit and sunglasses. I cried for help and the next thing I know, is that I was laying in the back of a truck. I felt that my arms were tied to each other. I looked out through the window and I saw a car driving closely behind the truck. The man who was driving that car was the same man that I saw in the alley. He saw me and it looked like his mouth was moving. I think he said that he was going to help me. The truck changed direction and drove into a forest. The car behind slowed down and suddenly it was gone. After a few minutes the truck stopped and a door opened. Two masked men came in and pulled me out. They dragged me into an old barn and locked me inside a small room. I heard a telephone ring and someone who answered in German. I didn't understand much, but it sounded like he was afraid. Only a few seconds later I heard gunshots and that dark-suited man opened the door. He didn't say anything but he helped me up and took me out of there. When we came out of the barn he told me to run, so I did. I didn't stop until I was out on the highway. Then I took the bus to the nearest city and then I took the train home.

The next day I read the newspaper and the man who rescued me was in it on a picture. Under the picture there was a text who said: "Agent known as Mr Smith, got killed in a fire fight less than one day ago." I felt sick and went to bed.

Appendix II

Text number 2

A true hero

My hero. My hero in life is with no doubt my foreign teacher. He opened my eyes to a whole new world. He made me care about other things than just me. He thought me that life is not always about me. That there is other things in life to, to care about I have never, and I will not ever again, have such a caring teacher and friend. He is my hero and he will always be.

At first I was afraid of him. I had just started seventh grade and I had heard rumors about his temper and that he was strict. At first we got off on the wrong foot with each other, because I was as I was, only caring and thinking about me. After a while I started to like him, thinking: "He is okay" and I started to learn something in his lessons. I started to like the way he was teaching and the way he told the stories and the facts that he did. Geography is not the world's funniest to read, but he made me interested, and I think, the whole class. He made it seem fun and interesting. I remember one time, a classmate, hm, or someone in my class I would rather say, had told me that I was a whore, and I was very upset. This teacher sat beside me and comforted me, and he got me to understand that I was not, because I, at the time, was thinking the same about myself. That for me was a life-changing moment. I started to get better in school, I hung out with other friends, my life was changing. Sadly, but true, this teacher moved away and quit his job here. But as a tribute to him, me and two friends sang to him, when we were going off to summer vacation. This teacher will never be replaced, he was only my teacher for a year, but under that year he got to me. He's my hero. My hero

Appendix III

Text number 3

True heroes

There are many people we can call heroes, but the biggest to me it's Malcolm X. He was a normal black man with red hair, the thing I liked with him was that he was smart. As a fifteen year boy he was very criminal. One day he met some bad people that made him do some bad things. Like one night they tried to rob a rich mans home, every one ran away but he got caught. At the prison he became a muslim and a old man taught him how to read. He learned every word from a dictunary the old man had. When we came out he had a dream, to make black people as important as the white were at that time. A old black man was starting to invest money in Malcolms foundation, Black Muslims. As the time went he found himself a women and they got two small girls. Now Malcolm started to grow, more and more people started to join him. They now saw him as an icon.

White people started to take him as a threat. One night when he was home alone with his family. Some people thrown burning bottles in to his hom in hope to kill him and his familie. Before his last speech to the people he told his wife that he may not come home. He thaught that he would die. When talked to the people at the last speech, he told about what had happened. At the end of the speech a group of armed men ran in to the room, killed Malcolm an anyone else in the room.

He is my greatest hero, because he were acheating so much by talking to the people. He made so many young black people to start going to school. He often said to the people that they must stand up against the white people. That they don't have to sit back at the busses or not marring white girls or white boys. He called himself Malcolm X. Malcolm was his first name an he didn't want a last name that were coming from the white, so he took X that stands for unknown.

I take Malcolm X as the greatest, because he makes people that nothing is impossible. He became a smart man at the prison from being at little gangster.

Appendix IV

Text number 4

A true hero / True heroes

I've chosen to write about Henri Dunant, because I think he is a true hero, who have helped many people in the world.

Henri Dunant was a man, who travelled to different places in the world to learn new things. He doesn't like all the bad things in the world and wanted to give the people who don't have it so good, poor and helpless people etc. One time Henri Dunant visited Italy. It was only a short time after the "battle in Solferino". The battle was between the French and the Austrian armies. When Dunant went in the "battle areas" he saw lots of wounded and helpless victims, lying on the ground and no one was there to give them help. Some of the people was dead too. On the dead human beings some birds have began to eat. This made Dunant very sad and angry. He decided to start a organization who would take care of wounded people etc. The first thing he did was to organize the village women and children to take care of the dead and wounded. He also give the homeless people shelters, food and clean water. After this Dunant had decided to start the red cross and the red crescent. In a conference in 1869 he told about the idea of the organization. After that the red cross was launched.

In the organization worked many people who work without paying to. Dunant was very surprised about it was so many people who wanted to "work" (giving help) for free.

The red cross and the red crescent organization today:

Today are the red cross and the red crescent movement in many different countries, all over the world. The movement are doing for example this things:

- They give help to wounded soldiers and other people after wars.
- They give shelters, food and clean water to people who live in areas there natural disasters had been.
- They help familys find each other after natural disasters and epedemies.
- They help sick and very poor people who live in poor countries.
- They have running blood giving centres.

- They learn out things about first aid.

I think Henri Dunant is a very big hero, because he has so kind and helpful. He start a organization who have helped very many unhappy people to a better life. The things he did intrested many other kind people to. I thing they are heroes too. I don't think the world has been this good, as it is today, without the red cross and the red crescent.

Appendix V

Text number 5

A true hero

Once I met a hero, a true hero. His name was Mr Smith. One chilly day, I was walking home from a nice restaurant and I took a shortcut through a dark and narrow alley. Suddenly I felt someone grabbing me from behind. I saw a skinny man walking down the lit street on the other side of the dark alley. He was very tall and had dark hair and was wearing a dark pinstriped suit and black sunglasses. I cried for help and the next thing I know, is that I was laying in the back of a large truck. I felt that my arms were tied hard to each other. I looked out through the dusty window and I saw a blue car driving closely behind the truck. The mysterious man who was driving that car was the same tall man that I saw in the alley. He saw me and it looked like his mouth was moving. I think he said that he was going to help me. The big truck changed direction and drove into a deep forest. The car behind slowed down and suddenly it was gone. After a few minutes the truck stopped and a door opened. Two masked men came in and pulled me out. They dragged me into an old barn and locked me inside a small room. I heard a telephone ring and someone who answered in German. I didn't understand much, but it sounded like he was afraid. Only a few seconds later I heard gunshots and that dark-suited man opened the door. He didn't say anything but he helped me up and took me out of there. When we came out of the barn he told me to run, so I did. I didn't stop until I was out on the open highway. Then I took the first bus to the nearest city and then I took the train home. The next day I read the daily newspaper and the unknown man who rescued me was in it on a black and white picture. Under the picture there was a text that said: "Agent known as Mr Smith, got killed in a firefight less than one day ago." I felt sick and went to bed.

Appendix VI

Text number 6

A true hero

My one true hero. My true hero in life is with no doubt my foreign teacher. He opened my big blue eyes to a whole new world. He made me care about other things than just me. He thought me that life is not always about me. That there is other things in life to, to care about I have never, and I will not ever again, have such a good and caring teacher and wonderful friend. He is my hero and he will always be.

At first I was afraid of him. I had just started seventh grade and I had heard terrifying rumors about his hot temper and that he was very strict. At first we got off on the wrong foot with each other, because I was as egoistic as I was, only caring and thinking about me. After a while I started to like him, thinking: "He is okay" and I started to learn something in his lessons. I started to like the way he was teaching and the way he told the fantastic and incredible stories and the humorous facts that he did. Geography is not the world's funniest to read, but he made me interested, and I think, the whole class. He made it seem extremely fun and very much interesting. I remember one time, a classmate, hm, or someone in my class I would rather say, had told me that I was a stupid whore, and I was very upset. This teacher sat beside me and comforted me, and he got me to understand that I was not, because I, at the time, was thinking the same about myself. That for me was a life-changing moment. I started to get better in school, I hung out with other nicer friends, my life was slowly changing. Sadly, but true, this wonderful teacher moved away and quit his job here. But as a last tribute to him, me and two friends sang to him, when we were going off to the lovely summer vacation. This teacher will never be replaced, he was only my teacher for a year, but under that year he got to me. He's my true hero. My one true hero.

Appendix VII

Text number 7

Heroes

There are some people we can call heroes, to me it's Malcolm X. He was a black man, the thing I liked with him was that he was smart. As a fifteen year boy he was criminal. One day he met some people that made him do some things. Like one night they tried to rob a mans home, every one ran away but he got caught. At the prison he became a muslim and a man teached him how to read. He learned every word from a dictunary the man had. When we came out he had a dream, to make black people as important as the white were at that time. A man was starting to invest money in Malcolms foundation, Black Muslims. As the time went he found himself a women and they got two girls. Now Malcolm started to grow, more and more people started to join him. They now saw him as an icon.

Some people started to take him as a threat. One night when he was home with his family. Some people thrown burning bottles in to his hom in hope to kill him and his familie. Before his speech to the people he told his wife that he may not come home. He thaught that he would die. When talked to the people at the speech, he told about what had happened. At the end of the speech a group of men ran in to the room, killed Malcolm an anyone else in the room.

He is my hero, because he were acheating things by talking to the people. He made black people to start going to school. He often said to the people that they must stand up against the white people. That they don't have to sit back at the busses or not marring white girls or white boys. He called himself Malcolm X. Malcolm was his name and he didn't want a last name that were coming from the white, so he took X that stands for unknown.

I take Malcolm X as my hero, because he makes people that nothing is impossible. He became a man at the prison from being a gangster.

Appendix VIII

Text number 8

A hero / Heroes

I've chosen to write about Henri Dunant, because I think he is a hero, who have helped people in the world.

Henri Dunant was a man, who travelled to t places in the world to learn about things. He doesn't like all things in the world and wanted to help people. One time Henri Dunant wisited Italy. It was some time after the "battle in Solferino". The battle was between the French and the Austrian armies. When Dunant went in the "battle areas" he saw the wictims, lying on the ground and no one was there to give them help. Some of the people was dead too. On the dead human beings some birds have began to eat. This maked Dunant feel anger. He decided to start a organization who would take care of people etc. The first thing he did was to organize the village women and children to take care of the victims. He also give people shelters, food and water.

After this Dunant had decided to start the red cross and the red cresent. In a conference in 1869 he told about the idea of the organization. After that the red cross was launched.

In the organization worked people who work without paying to. Dunant was surprised about it was so many people who wanted to "work" (giving help) for free.

The red cross and the red cresent organization today:

Today are the red cross and the red cresent movement in countries all over the world. The movement are doing for example this things:

- They give help to soldiers and other people after wars.
- They give shelters, food and water to people who live in areas there natural disasters had been.
- They help familys find each other after natural disasters and epedemies.
- They help people who live in poor countries.
- They have running blood giving centres.
- They learn out things about first aid.

I think Henri Dunant is a hero, because he has so kind and helpful. He start a organization who have helped people in life. The things he did intrested many other people to. I thing they are heroes too. I don't think the world has been this good, as it is today, without the red cross and the red cresent.

Appendix IX

Interview questions

- On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest, how important do you think that adjectives are for a text? Why?
- What are your beliefs on what adjectives bring to a text?
- In what types of texts are adjectives most important respectively least important?
- When considering the texts that were given to you, how do you think that they match your idea of what a ninth grader's language capacity should be?
- What is it in a text that makes you grade that text either a G, VG or MVG?