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Didactic Dilemmas and Possibilities: Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Speaking Spanish in Foreign Language Education in Swedish Lower Secondary School

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This study examines experiences, attitudes and expectations in relation to teaching and learning to speak Spanish in schools. Interviews were conducted with teachers and students at five lower secondary schools to investigate what aspects are emphasised when discussing speaking in the school subject Spanish as a modern language. In addition to questions about general and personal perceptions, a retrospective method was applied where teachers and students were asked about spoken activities observed by the researcher. The interview data were analysed using qualitative content analysis and sorted under the didactic questions: *who? what? and how?* From the analysis, four didactic dilemmas were identified, representing challenges when it comes to teaching speaking: 'Speaking as authentic or adapted practice', 'Accommodating each individual student or the whole group', 'Planning and conducting spoken activities in whole class or small group settings', and 'Speaking Swedish or speaking Spanish'. These dilemmas are discussed within the context of previous research and the teachers' and students' voices.

Keywords: didactic dilemmas, Spanish, speaking, perceptions



1 Introduction

Teaching and learning to speak a language are competencies at the core of language education. For many learners in the Scandinavian context, being able to speak the language is the most desired learning aim and the rationale for choosing to learn a specific language (Barfod Lund et al., 2023; Finndahl, 2023). Nevertheless, speaking is considered a complex skill to acquire due to all the cognitive resources that have to be activated simultaneously and the speaker's lack of time to plan and think ahead (Goh & Burns, 2012; Levelt, 1989; Tornberg, 2020). Oral interpersonal interaction, described as 'the origin of language' (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 70), is thus an essential ability in any language. Hence, this complex skill is a key competency and must be taught and learned in language education.

The Swedish educational system, particularly regarding foreign language instruction, aligns with European intentions: 'Supporting language diversity and language learning has been a constant policy line of the European Union' (Hériard, 2021, p. 108). The Swedish syllabi for foreign languages are based on a communicative and action-orientated approach, where the learning aims connected to speaking skills include the ability to express oneself, interact with others, develop problem-solving strategies and build confidence in using the language (Skolverket, 2022).

In general, English is the first foreign language for learners in Sweden, given that it is compulsory from Year 3 in primary school. The second foreign language is typically covered in the school subject Modern Languages from Year 6 (age 12) in lower secondary school, with Spanish being the most popular language over French and German (Bardel et al., 2019; Skolverket, 2017, 2022), but little is known about how speaking Spanish is experienced by learners and teachers in the classroom setting in lower secondary school. In a report, the Swedish School Inspectorate presented that students of Modern Languages have limited possibilities to communicate in their chosen foreign language during instruction, with a follow-up report confirming that description (Skolinspektionen, 2022). However, neither of these evaluations investigated spoken output in more detail nor included experiences related to teaching and learning speaking skills. Similarly, speaking was not investigated in the comprehensive European language survey in 2011, which only focused on reading, listening and writing skills (Skolverket, 2012). In this evaluation, the Swedish students of Spanish as a second foreign language scored low proficiency results.

Given that the students' spoken skills were not investigated, the Swedish National Agency for Education conducted an amplified study with a specific focus on speaking in order to identify the characteristics of the best-performing schools (Skolverket, 2013). It found that these schools had certified Spanish teachers, started earlier with modern languages, and used optional national proficiency tests. Moreover, Spanish was spoken to a certain extent in classroom interactions. Although students appreciated the teaching methods, they expressed the need to be further challenged in using Spanish, both within and outside of school. In other words, not much is known about students' spoken proficiency levels or how they experience learning to speak Spanish and other modern languages despite that this knowledge is crucial for developing teaching practices regarding spoken skills.

Turning to the language teachers, research on language teachers' beliefs, thoughts, knowledge, perceptions and assumptions is often gathered under the definition of *Language teacher cognition*, explained as the 'Unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, think and believe' (Borg, 2003, p. 81). When these cognitions are brought to light, they provide an important key to understanding the art of teaching. Studies have found that modern language teachers struggle with the amount of their own spoken target language and how to apply a communicative approach to teaching (Erickson et al., 2022; Llovet Vilà, 2018; Nilsson et al., 2019). However, when it comes to other beliefs, for example, how to encourage students to speak the target language without anxiety, more investigation is required. Beliefs and emotions clearly constitute a dimension of language teacher cognition; in the present study, teachers' emotional intelligence or *socio-emotional competence* (Gkonou & Mercer, 2018) represents a way to understand the role of interpersonal relationships in teaching practice.

In sum, to develop and improve teaching related to speaking, it is important that teachers' and students' voices are listened to and reflected upon. Given that they bring experiences and attitudes into the educational context, their personal perceptions about speaking affect who they become in the foreign language classroom. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to contribute knowledge about what is placed in the foreground when teachers and students talk about teaching and learning speaking in Spanish as a modern language. The study relies on central didactic aspects, namely, the persons in teaching and learning, the content, and how the teaching is planned and carried out, which are all relevant when addressing perceptions of teaching and learning to speak. The following research questions were the focus of the investigation:

1. What is highlighted in relation to the personal and affective dimension when teachers and students discuss teaching and learning speaking?
2. What types of content are highlighted when teachers and students discuss teaching and learning speaking?
3. What aspects are emphasised when teachers and students discuss how teaching speaking is planned and carried out?

2 Background

2.1 *Conceptual framework*

The following section outlines the central theoretical and analytical concepts drawn from the fields of language teacher cognition, language didactics, student engagement, and student emotions.

The field of teacher thinking, or teacher beliefs, has a long history and today falls under the term *language teacher cognition*, which identifies the unobservable dimensions of teachers' minds (Borg, 2015; Burns et al., 2015). According to Borg (2003), teacher cognition comprises the interplay of schooling experiences, professional coursework, contextual factors, and classroom practice. Among them, previous experiences as language learners have been shown to be particularly resistant to change, even after completing professional coursework. Although professional development is not the focus of the present study, it is important to uncover teachers' views on speaking, given that beliefs and experiences directly impact classroom practices.

In addition to language teacher cognition, the present study constitutes a part of *language didactics*, in Swedish *språkdidaktik* (Lindgren & Enever, 2015; Tornberg, 2020), which is defined as the teaching and learning of languages and refers to the concept of “*Didaktik*” in the German and Scandinavian tradition (Andrée & Bladh, 2021). In order to understand teaching, not only language teaching, the didactic questions are commonly used as a guide. In the present study, the following questions are applied: *What* is the content? *Why* should this content be learned? and *Who* is learning this content? The answers lead to the question, *How* should the content best be taught? (Wahlström, 2016). In addition, the concepts of *didactic dilemma* (Almqvist et al., 2017) and *scaffolding* (Goh, 2017) are also relevant. A didactic dilemma for teachers is described as a complex educational decision – a *didactic choice* (Oliynyk, 2021) without simple solutions and where one option often excludes

another. Didactic dilemmas emerge as practical issues in the classroom and may also concern more ideological educational questions, as identified through interview data. Regarding the concept of scaffolding, Goh (2017) identifies three research-based approaches to scaffolding learners' language that are beneficial for learning speaking processes: task-repetition, pre-task planning and communication strategies, all of which support spoken classroom activities.

An additional relevant concept is *learner engagement*, which constitutes an instrument to interpret students' behaviour and experiences that has been investigated systematically in relation to second language learning. Hiver et al. (2020) outline language learner engagement as dynamic and contextual, categorising it into various dimensions: *behavioural engagement* defines how actively the learner engages and takes initiative, while *cognitive engagement* describes the mental learning effort. *Social engagement* emphasises the relationships and interactions with others and *affective engagement* focuses on the students' feelings in relation to school and its activities. Finally, *task engagement* concerns the students' observable participation in specific language learning tasks.

A key concept regarding language learners' emotions is *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety* (Horwitz et al., 1986), which defines psychological stressors related to using a foreign language. This is a widely applied construct within the research on learners' emotions, especially in relation to spoken language, and is therefore particularly appropriate in interpreting students' perceptions of teaching and learning speaking. In other words, cognitive and socio-cultural factors appear to be intertwined with emotional and affective aspects of language learning (Swain, 2013).

2.2 Previous Research

Although extensive research on the perceptions of teaching and learning speaking among young learners is lacking, this section outlines findings relevant to the aim and educational context of the present study.

2.2.1 Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching and Learning to Speak

Empirical research that investigates language teacher cognition related to speaking skills in foreign languages is scarce, as established by Llovet Vilà and Nyström (2023). For example, two of the most essential works on language teacher cognition by Borg (2003, 2015) lack specific sections dedicated to spoken skills.

However, some research into Swedish modern language teachers' beliefs have been investigated in lower secondary school settings (Granfeldt et al., 2016). In a study where 315 teachers from 186 schools answered a questionnaire, 41% stated that they speak the target language during 25–50% of the lesson time, with more use during whole class activities than when talking to individual students (Erickson et al., 2022). Similarly, Llovet Vilà (2018) and Nilsson et al. (2019) investigated modern language teachers' beliefs and found that both in-service teachers and teacher students struggle to apply a communicative classroom approach in the target language. This difficulty is mainly explained by the students' varying proficiency levels and by their ambition to speak the target language rather than the majority language, even when teaching grammar. A recent study by Beslagic (2024) into teachers' insights about teaching grammar in modern language education showed that teachers' emotions and the educational context (e.g., group size) strongly affect their didactic decisions.

In addition, although assessment is not the main focus of the present study, it illustrates what is valued as important knowledge. Borger (2019) highlighted the particular complexity of assessing spoken interaction in English, showing that a decisive factor in spoken performance is the individual student and the relationships between the students. Similar results were found by Frisch (2021), who additionally identified that English teachers struggled to fully define the notions 'speaking' and 'spoken production and interaction' at a personal level.

Another challenge in planning and carrying out teaching is the *time aspect*. Lightbown and Spada (2020) report on two widespread time-related misconceptions regarding efficient language learning: first, the idea that starting language studies as early as possible in the curriculum leads to better outcomes. Second, the 'common sense' (Lightbown & Spada, 2020, p. 422) belief that exclusively speaking the target language is the most efficient method. The authors explain that neither of these ideas is based upon research-based evidence. Instead, they suggest more efficient teaching approaches: concentrated periods of intensive instruction and integrated content and language instruction.

2.2.2 *Students' Perspectives on Teaching and Learning to Speak*

Among lower secondary students, Granfeldt et al. (2023) found generally positive attitudes towards the ability to speak more languages than English, although modern languages were not considered

important school subjects. Girls were more anxious than boys about speaking in class yet more motivated to learn. The investigation also assessed proficiency in speaking, and when the students were asked about the test, they explained that they were unaccustomed to speaking and interacting independently in the target language. Spanish students rated their own performance lower compared to students of French and German (Granfeldt et al., 2023). The findings that the students are not used to practising independent spoken interaction align with research on students of Spanish who reported that their instruction in lower secondary school had included more writing and reading than spoken activities (Aronsson, 2023).

Investigations into the connection between emotion and motivation in learning modern languages in Sweden have established that these concepts are closely related to young learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) in a foreign language (Sayehli et al., 2022). Moreover, the correlation between a high level of foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and a low level of WTC was similar between the three modern languages of French, German and Spanish. Another finding was that FLCA was found to inhibit even highly motivated learners (Sayehli et al., 2022). Nilsson (2020) found similar results about young learners of English in Swedish primary school, where numerous students expressed anxiety about speaking in class and distress when they did not understand instructions or failed to communicate in the target language.

When investigating Norwegian English students' perceptions of teachers' spoken target language in lower secondary school, (Brevik & Rindal, 2020) show that teachers who spoke more of the majority language were seen as more helpful. This finding was interpreted not solely in terms of the actual amount of each language spoken but rather as functions of pedagogical translanguaging, meaning that the didactic situation, rather than the language choice, is what mattered. Similarly, Cypriot English students in upper secondary school expressed that the majority language provided a sense of security and helped students understand difficult concepts (Tsagari & Diakou, 2015).

With regard to the rationale for choosing a Modern language in Sweden, Finndahl (2023) found that French, German or Spanish were chosen primarily for affective reasons, such as for journeys, because friends and family knew the language, or because the teacher seemed nice. Although the language was expected to be useful in the future, English was considered sufficient. Overall, the most desired learning goal was the ability to speak the new language fluently (Finndahl, 2023).

In a report on perceptions among Modern language students in Danish lower and upper secondary schools, the students equated knowing a foreign language with being able to communicate, particularly orally, in that language (Barfod Lund et al., 2023). Generally, students wished to practise speaking more and achieve better fluency and confidence, but they felt hindered by a focus on accuracy. The students put collaboration with others in the forefront, and they explained that teachers need empathy in addition to teaching skills, claiming that their motivation increased when teachers were able to empathise with their perspective (Barfod Lund et al., 2023).

To summarise, research shows that teachers are aware of their own spoken target language. Moreover, although students are anxious and unaccustomed to spoken activities in class, they have a strong desire to learn to speak and communicate in the foreign language. Overall, to develop classroom practices regarding speaking in Modern languages, in general, and Spanish, in particular, more knowledge is needed about teachers' and students' experiences, given that they are invaluable sources of knowledge.

3 Method

3.1 Data Collection

To learn more about how teachers and students discuss teaching and learning speaking, five Spanish groups in Year 9 (ages 14–16) from different Swedish schools participated in the investigation. The researcher searched for representation and strived to find schools in different socio-economic areas. Nonetheless, they were all urban schools in mid-Sweden. The teachers were certified to teach Spanish and had between 5 and 20 years of experience. Observations and recordings were made of four or five consecutive lessons per group. Thereafter, semi-structured interviews (Alvesson & Torhell, 2011) were conducted with each teacher and six students from every group, resulting in a total of 5 teachers and 30 students participating. The duration of the teacher interviews was between 33 and 57 minutes and the student interviews between 7 and 24 minutes.

The interviews covered the central didactic aspects formulated in the research questions. These aspects were addressed through questions about participants' professional profile, their approach to teaching speaking generally, and their implementation of spoken activities specifically, as well as

their own language choice of either Spanish (target language) or Swedish (majority language). The students were questioned about their experiences of speaking Spanish both inside and outside of the classroom, and they were asked to offer advice to future teachers on teaching speaking, based on their own experiences, describing both challenges and successes they had encountered.¹

Furthermore, during the interviews, some of the observed activities when the students had spoken Spanish with each other were discussed, for example, asking a peer about TV preferences. The informants were asked about the purpose of these activities (only the teachers), how it went, and what they thought of each activity. The aim was to facilitate a retrospective reflection, similar to *stimulated recall* (Gass & Mackey, 2017), wherein the participants were shown pictures of the activity in order to recall it and get closer to the actual classroom situation. If no such situations had been observed, participants were asked to describe other spoken activities normally carried out in class.

Prior to data collection, the author presented the project to the group, emphasising the students' anonymity and that participation in the research was voluntary. Participants were informed of their right to interrupt participation at any time. Information was provided about the research plan, purpose and method, and they were assured that there were no risks related to participation. This oral information was accompanied by a written form, and the students' version was linguistically adapted to their age. Written consent was obtained from the teachers and the principal of each school, as well as from the students and both their caregivers. Despite this, a few students in each group chose to not participate in the study.

Students were interviewed in pairs. The teachers, who know their students, selected participants based on the criteria that they would have different proficiency levels and attitudes towards Spanish. This method was chosen to capture a wider spectrum of perspectives, ranging from less to more motivated students. The author had no information about the students' differences during the interviews and did not at any point register the students' names, genders or any other personal information. This decision was an ethical consideration and a means of ensuring transparency in the data collection (c.f. Alvesson & Torhell, 2011), following the ethical guidelines by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017).

¹ See Appendix 1 for the specific questions in the interview guide.

3.2 Data Analysis

The 20 audio-recorded interviews were carried out in Swedish, and the author translated the quotes in this text. In the transcriptions, pseudonyms were assigned to the teachers: Ana, Beatriz, Claudia, Diana and Eduardo, while the students were assigned letters between A and F within each group. The analysis followed the procedures of qualitative content analysis according to Graneheim and Lundman (2004). Units of analysis, *meaning units* (words, sentences or more than one sentence), which had a specified interrelated content, were used as the point of departure and then reduced into more manageable *condensed meaning units*. Subsequently, *categories* and *subcategories* that shared commonalities were identified within the condensed meaning units (See Appendix 2 for a detailed description of the 26 categories and nine subcategories).

To facilitate the analytical process related to the research questions about the participating persons, their content and organisation, condensed meaning units were sorted into the didactic questions of *Who? What?* and *How?* This method displays the potential of the didactic research field. The sorting was conducted simultaneously with the creation of categories and subcategories.

Under the *Who?* sorting, categories framed the teachers' own attitudes towards Spanish and their perceptions of the students' emotional and cognitive prerequisites. Student categories under *Who?* involved comparisons with English, the rationale for choosing Spanish, as well as attitudes towards speaking Spanish in general. The following is an example of when the student defined themselves as someone who is afraid of making mistakes when speaking Spanish outside of class, although it generally goes well; therefore, it says something about *who* the student is that participates in the classroom activities.

The main category is **Attitudes towards speaking Spanish in general**, with the subcategory **Speaking outside of the classroom**:

Table 1

The analytic process from meaning units to categories

Meaning unit	Condensed meaning unit	Subcategory and description
Interviewer: <i>How was it?</i> [to speak Spanish outside of class]	Speaking Spanish outside of class generally works,	Speaking outside of the classroom – Personal opinions and emotions about using Spanish outside of class.

Student: *Well, I don't know. I am a bit anxious of making mistakes, but most of the times it goes well.* despite certain anxiety.

The categories pertinent to the didactic content of teaching and learning that address the *What?* question included communicative and linguistic skills as well as thematic topics across both groups. The student interviews included the main category of **Perceptions of specific content**, as students discussed various content intertwined with how it was valued. According to their perceptions, three subcategories were identified: usefulness and difficulty of the content, as well as engagement with the content.

In the following example, a teacher explained the choice of certain content, and it was classified under the category **Thematic topics, linguistic structures and communicative skills**.

Table 2

The analytic process from meaning units to categories

Meaning unit	Condensed meaning unit	Category and description
We should practise the phrases that they had just come across, to learn them and to drill them ... Not just look at them, but actually use them, as the purpose was to use the vocabulary.	The activity was centred around practice and using vocabulary around shopping for clothes.	Thematic topics, linguistic structures, and communicative skills. The communicative skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Linguistic structures and vocabulary within different thematic topics.

The categories under *How?* in the teacher interviews identified their perceptions of assessment practices, code-switching, the use of didactic materials, and lesson structure. Similarly, corresponding categories in the student interviews addressed frame factors, scaffolding, assessment practices, as well as the organisation of groups and classroom activities. The following example was categorised as **Practical organisation of classroom activities** and displays one student's preferences regarding how the teacher chose to teach.

Table 3

The analytic process from meaning units to categories

Meaning unit	Condensed meaning unit	Category and description
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<i>But the teacher gives the instruction in Spanish first, and then in Swedish. That's very good. Because then you can try to understand in Spanish, and then if you don't understand, you still get the instruction in Swedish.</i>	It is good that the teacher gives instructions in Spanish first, and then in Swedish.	Practical organisation of classroom activities. How the teacher organises or ought to organise the activities during class.
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In total, 534 and 1,342 meaning units, respectively, were analysed in the teacher and student interviews; furthermore, 26 categories and 9 subcategories were identified.

4 Resultat

In the semi-structured interviews, teachers talked about a wide range of topics, while the student interviews resulted in more of a question-and-answer-type structure. In the following, the results are presented in relation to the research questions, covering the personal dimension, the content, and how the teaching is planned and carried out.

4.1 Talking About the Personal and Affective Dimension of Teaching and Learning Speaking

4.1.1 Teachers

When the personal dimension was discussed, personal attitudes, abilities and emotions were in focus. Although the didactic *who?* question normally refers to the learner, there were also examples in the data where teachers discussed themselves as individuals. They explained how their profession is inspiring yet challenging. In comparisons with their other subjects, such as English or Swedish, one teacher expressed that she adopts a different role when teaching Spanish compared to teaching the other languages.

When the teachers talked about the students as individuals, emotions and feelings of security were emphasised in relation to speaking. Teachers struggled to make students feel comfortable in spoken activities, as exemplified in the quote from teacher Beatriz: 'But I think that's the hardest part, to involve those students who think it's scary'. The teachers referred to the students' emotions in relation to spoken activities, also exemplified in the following excerpt:

Well, oral interaction . . . it's difficult, in general, with speaking because they know so little and they want it to be right, and they don't really dare to try. And I believe they think it has to be

perfect . . . it is inhibiting when they think, 'Now it must be completely right'. And I try to tell them that it doesn't have to be perfect. (Teacher Diana, about emotions related to speaking)

The students' different linguistic abilities presented another challenge for the teachers. Overall, students with high proficiency levels generally continue their language studies, while students with difficulties often drop out of Spanish – a situation that also raised concerns about how to retain students with difficulties in the group and encourage them to develop their oral skills.

4.1.2 *Students*

When the students described the personal dimension of speaking, there were many comparisons with English, but not with other languages. They explained that English is much easier to speak than Spanish, due to the perceived easy grammar and the extensive exposure to English outside of school. In addition, they claimed not to be afraid of making mistakes in English, while this anxiety was central when speaking Spanish. Another difference was that Spanish was considered as more 'equal', as few students have prior knowledge in Year 6, while English knowledge differs already from the start, as exemplified in the following excerpt:

Interviewer: What do you think about speaking Spanish in class?

Student C: Well, that is what you have to do... (laughter) No, but it's good, because then you have the language that everyone speaks.

Student D: I think it's good too. But, of course, some words ... you'll just happen to speak Swedish and, 'Oh, ouch, well'. It's not like I will refuse to speak if I can't say it in Spanish, but I say something quickly in Swedish and then ... But I do try to speak Spanish. It's like a good place to do it.

(Ana's students)

With regard to the purpose, Spanish cannot match the importance of English. While many considered it fun, interesting or cool to know Spanish and other languages, it was not seen as particularly important. A few students stated that speaking Spanish was only important for their grades. However, for some, Spanish was a conscious choice, as it was considered one of the world's biggest, and it was justified with experiences such as journeys, having Spanish-speaking friends and families, future jobs, or possibilities to make friends all over the world. Most of the students had tried to speak Spanish and communicate in a 'real world setting' outside of class. They described using successful strategies that allowed them to communicate and get the message across, noting that, on the one hand, speaking outside of class could feel more stressful, without access to the

‘security nets’ of teachers, classmates or scaffolding structures; on the other hand, it could be perceived as *less* stressful, given that no one would be evaluating their performance.

Positive personal experiences of speaking Spanish in class were expressed in terms of security and ability, which fostered self-confidence once students were able to speak and communicate with a peer. Speaking was typically described as more fun than writing, and the classroom was seen as a good and safe place to practise speaking. Negative experiences of speaking Spanish in class concerned anxiousness and the fear of making mistakes that others might hear – a fear that may stop students from raising their hands. The students expressed an ambition to get it right and stressed that Spanish is difficult to speak correctly, given that it is spoken fast and is considered to have complex grammar. A few students expressed that teachers occasionally seemed to forget that the language was new and thus difficult for learners.

4.2 Talking about the Content in Teaching and Learning Speaking

4.2.1 Teachers

When discussing content, teachers described spoken proficiency as involving pronunciation practice, reading aloud and playing theatre – all of which are spoken classroom activities – while definitions of spoken production and interaction specifically were more elusive. They commonly talked about spoken production and interaction in terms of progression – a development that starts with imitation, reading aloud or pronunciation, then passes through scaffolding phases of formulating sentences, and eventually ends in free and spontaneous language production and interaction. Moreover, speaking was considered difficult both to learn and to teach, as one teacher explains,

The oral production, it’s something they’ve been allowed to practise. But the interaction is tricky. It should be spontaneous ... and you may not have much of a model, so to speak. You should not just read out a dialogue, but it should come spontaneously with perhaps a few scaffolding words. And it’s very difficult. It’s really very difficult for them. (Teacher Beatriz)

The communicative skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) were considered as content *per se*, in addition to thematic topics and linguistic structures. Thematic topics were everyday activities related to the students’ lives, for example, weather, clothes, holidays, restaurants, home and recreation, indicating that knowledge should also be useful outside of class. Linguistic structures

were generally described as accuracy training related to vocabulary and grammar, for example, verb conjugation or gender of nouns.

4.2.2 *Students*

Unlike the teachers, the students were not explicitly asked to define spoken proficiency, but they explained that writing is generally a more frequent classroom activity than speaking. They discussed the same linguistic structures and vocabulary but commonly described them as being practised within thematic areas, for example, weather, holiday activities or clothes, with the conjugation of verbs as the most typical practice of linguistic structures. Moreover, the content was generally described in connection to how it was perceived, on scales of either usefulness, difficulty, or engagement, but not specifically for them as individuals but rather as typical and general for learners.

The students considered it useful to describe clothes and practise vocabulary about dates and weather, and educative to master tasks that seemed difficult at first, for example, using one's knowledge to produce more complex language than just single words. Activities that brought a sense of reality were also described as useful, for example, talking to someone was considered more educational than writing dialogues.

According to the students, the content also differed in terms of its difficulty. This was expressed as either knowing the vocabulary or not, or understanding the instruction or not, but no content or spoken activity was considered too easy. Moreover, they explained that despite knowledge of a verbal structure, they sometimes lacked the accurate vocabulary and thus could not produce their own sentences. The actual topic might also be problematic, for example, if the students lacked information about a country or fashion style or could not figure out a good story in a guessing game.

Regarding whether content was engaging or not, the students explained that it is nice to know more about your classmates, fun to compete in a game, or interesting because the content relates to reality (holiday plans or TV programmes). Overall, the ability to speak the language, even despite its difficulties, was described as inspiring. Nevertheless, on the uninspiring end of the scale were monotonous activities, for example, extensive work in the textbook or playing the same game all the time.

4.3 *Talking about How Teaching Speaking is Planned and Carried Out*

4.3.1 *Teachers*

Regarding how speaking is planned and carried out, teachers considered the assessment of spoken proficiency to be particularly complex, considering both the quality of oral skills and practicalities, such as frequency and feedback methods. The complexity is exemplified in the nature of interaction, which includes a degree of unpredictability that makes it impossible to prepare completely in advance. Additionally, interaction includes peers who may be friends or not. Moreover, assessment is best done outside of class, for example, in a quieter room and away from classmates' earshot, which complicates the organisation.

As for different languages, the teachers mentioned that both Swedish (majority language) and Spanish (target language) were spoken in the classroom. They explained an ambition to speak Spanish first and then translate if needed, but they were not always aware of their own code-switching. Swedish was generally spoken to ensure that everyone understood, especially instructions, although sometimes they forgot to speak Spanish or explained that Swedish was more efficient. All teachers except one mentioned occasions when, despite their original ambition to speak Spanish, they ended up speaking Swedish. In addition, they aimed to gradually increase the amount of spoken Spanish throughout the school years and exemplified various ways of doing so, such as following the same lesson structure, repeating the same expressions, or using the whiteboard for scaffolding. Another method was to consistently use the specific classroom expressions in Spanish, for example, *What does it mean?* or *Can I borrow a pencil?* – phrases normally learned from the start. In the following quote, teacher Eduardo explains the inner negotiation process preceding the didactic choice of language:

I could do this in Spanish. But the problem is that I don't get that confirmation back, and I just see like panic eyes looking at me and: 'Wait, I hope he doesn't say my name. I don't know what he's saying, but I hope he doesn't say my name'. And then, as a teacher, you just become: 'Now I want to know that you're keeping up' and so, you take it in Swedish.

When it comes to assessing the students' spoken language, teachers explained that group- or pair work complicates evaluation. They cannot hear individuals when everyone talks simultaneously, yet they assumed that too much Swedish was spoken outside of the teachers' earshot. The teachers believed that, considering the nature of the activities, students would gradually master speaking

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more Spanish, but they assumed that students prioritised finishing the tasks or getting the message across, therefore resorting to speaking more Swedish. They also believed that students forgot to speak Spanish during activities that were too engaging, which was problematic. Moreover, teachers were aware that linguistic difficulties often led students to speak Swedish, and they understood the students' frustration about not being able to express themselves in Spanish.

In addition to the choice of either Spanish or Swedish, teaching materials mattered in teaching oral skills, and the teachers used printed and digital textbooks, games, and audio-visual material for this purpose. They considered authentic material, interpreted as material not adapted to language learners, to be beneficial and motivating, and they strived to use more authentic material when planning and carrying out lessons. However, given that Swedish is the ordinary medium of communication in school, it was described as somewhat unnatural to conduct classroom communication in Spanish. Overall, the teachers found it problematic and time-consuming to create activities with an authentic approach, as exemplified by teacher Ana:

[The difficulty is] to organise situations that seem authentic. And that they know so little, and they don't really dare ... and well, it's difficult for them to get proper fluency. And if it's too good an exercise, and the theme is too interesting, then they get [so] frustrated that they can't say anything.

In descriptions of lesson structure, the introduction of each lesson was identified as particularly important, as students come from other lessons and need to 'zoom into Spanish'. One method is to conduct oral presentations and instructions as joint, guided activities at the beginning of the lesson, which is beneficial when students are reluctant to pause individual written work. During lessons, teachers sometimes followed their original plan, but if they realised it was too difficult or not engaging, they changed it ad hoc, emphasising how proof of a good lesson is that students are engaged and working actively. In the following quote, teacher Claudia explains her didactic choice of changing a lesson plan:

But it also depends on the students' daily mood. Some days, they come and are angry and don't want to do anything. Or at least the students who set the tone in the group are in that mood. And then you have to meet them a little, with 'Well, okay ... I take this in Swedish, because today is not a good day'. (I think to myself, I don't tell them). And then you try to coax out a little language from them.

Spoken activities were said to mainly be carried out in pairs or small groups to ensure that everyone speaks simultaneously and to prevent others from overhearing. This method was considered to reduce students' embarrassment and inhibition; it was even expressed that classes which are too

silent are bad for language learning. One challenge encountered was that teachers must attend to students in need of special support and thus cannot help others in spoken activities.

As for scaffolding speaking, teachers described the struggle to provide the right sort and amount, as scaffolding structures can sometimes be limiting and hinder the students' own language production. Repetition was mentioned as one scaffolding method, along with games, speaking with the support of pictures, and the use of cognates and formulaic sequences. Although groups varied in their level of talkativeness, successful spoken activities were characterised as being joint and guided, with the right scaffolding provided.

4.3.2 *Students*

When the students talked about how teaching speaking is carried out, Ana's students stressed the beneficial structure of their sessions. They have one out of three lessons a week in smaller groups that only include students from their own class. In contrast, the other two lessons involve twice as many students, including those from other classes, making the environment appear less safe and secure. These smaller groups were seen as particularly helpful for spoken activities:

Student C: And then I feel that it is easier for many to talk. Something you might not dare if it was a larger group. Because it's like other students, from other classes, people don't know them and just don't relax, so they are more tense. So, you get more conversation in a smaller group.

Student D: Mm, we get to speak a little more Spanish, and since you're with your friends, it's easier. It feels better.

(Ana's students)

They also emphasised the importance of support for speaking, and they preferred scaffolding in the form of modelling, written keywords, written linguistic structures, or translations into Swedish. Spoken activities without any scaffolding were rare, and the students elaborated on the balance between getting help, but not too much help. They knew that they were capable of accomplishing even difficult speaking tasks, leading to reflections on how much translation or written text that was needed during speaking activities. However, they stressed that, in regard to understanding instructions, everyone, including students with lower proficiency, must know what to do to ensure that no one is left behind.

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Another type of ‘scaffolding item’, according to the students, was their classmates and the teachers. The teachers’ availability and patience were perceived as highly supportive, and spoken activities offered possibilities to get to know the classmates better and learn from them, as explained by Claudia’s students:

Student E: Yes, you get a lot of help from your friends, or that is, the people in the group.

Student F: Yes, exactly.

Student E: And if you don’t know the meaning of a word, then you can ask: What does it mean or how do you say this? And they help ...

Student F: Yes, and then if no one knows, you can ask the teacher.

Repeated tasks or content, both within one lesson and from one occasion to another, were seen as helpful. The students did not consider repetition to be a boring feature per se or a contrast to variation but rather as essential for recalling vocabulary or grammar after, for example, a holiday. Although the students were not asked specifically about assessment, they explained that spoken tests are performed outside of the classroom. Moreover, they stressed the importance of proper preparation in advance and conducting the tests together with a familiar peer. How the groups were organised and the classmates’ behaviour are significant factors for the students. Peers were described as supportive and helpful, but also the other way around – as restraining forces that hinder one’s willingness to engage in spoken interaction, as exemplified in the following:

Student A: Or it’s kind of like ... tasks where you have to talk to your friend, but you skip them (laughs).

Student B: Yes.

Interviewer: How interesting. Why do you skip them?

Student A: Because it’s like... it’s quiet in the classroom, and you have to sit there and talk ...
(Eduardo’s students)

Likewise, Beatriz’s students describe the impact of peers in an interaction activity carried out outside of the classroom:

Student B: There are only two people there, so you are not afraid to make a fool of yourself.

Student A: They are your friends, so it doesn’t matter.

Regarding teachers' spoken language, the students preferred the instructions to be given first in Spanish, then translated into Swedish, giving them a chance to check their own comprehension. When teachers spoke exclusively in Spanish, students felt insecure and anxious. They appreciated it when teachers spoke Spanish but stressed that they should encourage students to speak Spanish as well, for example, by reminding them when they forget, as explained by Diana's students:

Student F: And then I think, just try to talk, even if you don't know how to say it. Just sort of say something.

Interviewer: That the teacher should say so.

Student E: No, that the teacher should make the ...

Interviewer: The students?

Student F: Yes ... that the students also get to talk a lot.

In terms of time distribution, the students suggested that spoken activities often required more time for both preparation and reflection. Overall, they wanted to avoid too rapid progression, preferring that everyone had learned the intended content before proceeding. In addition, they suggested more 'practical' (students' definition) activities and less reading and writing, explained as more spoken practice and less assessment. Spoken activities at the beginning of every lesson were seen as positive, as were activities with a competitive nature. Finally, teachers were advised not to wait for some students to raise their hands, as it takes courage to raise one's hand and speak in class.

5 Discussion

In this study, teachers and students discuss teaching and learning to speak Spanish as a foreign language in school. Insights are provided in terms of similarities and differences in central didactic aspects, such as the roles of teachers and students, the perceptions of the content taught, and how the content is taught.

Regarding the relevance and importance of speaking skills, the students compared languages and concluded that English is much more important than second foreign languages, which aligns with other findings in a Scandinavian context (Barfod Lund et al., 2023; Finndahl, 2023). However, they also explained the advantage of learning Spanish is that it is more equalising than English, given

that most students start their Spanish studies without prior knowledge. The students emphasised that the ability to speak Spanish is useful and fun, but not particularly important. They argued that talking with someone is more educational than writing dialogues but that writing takes place more frequently in the classroom, a result also found by Aronsson (2023).

To understand and develop teaching practices, it is imperative to listen to students' and teachers' voices. Taken together, the teachers in the present study highlighted speaking in terms of ideals or practice, revealing a tension, for example, between their intention to speak more Spanish themselves and using more authentic material and their perception of these goals as too difficult for their students. Conversely, students discussed speaking Spanish in terms of sense or sensibility as either related to cognitive and rational aspects or to emotional and affective aspects. In addition, the students described speaking Spanish as useful but unimportant (sense) and fun but scary (sensibility). Within these overarching themes of ideal, practice, sense, and sensibility, the study identified complex didactic decisions and dilemmas that teachers are faced with yet also revealed possibilities when it comes to teaching speaking.

Overall, the five teachers' perceptions of teaching and learning speaking can be understood in relation to *Language teacher cognition* (Borg, 2003), where their convictions about what should be taught and how it should be taught is related to their classroom practices. This connection often leads to tensions between their ideals and the reality of the classroom. While the present study does not investigate teaching speaking in practice, it acknowledges that beliefs affect action, emphasising that teachers need opportunities for reflective practices in order to develop their teaching methods. Moreover, given that speaking is the least investigated area within language teacher cognition, this study contributes important knowledge to the field.

In the following, the results will be discussed in relation to four didactic dilemmas, complex educational decisions without simple solutions (Almqvist et al., 2019), which were identified in the teachers' answers. They will be discussed from the teachers' point of view, taking into account the students' answers as well as previous research.

5.1 Dilemma 1: Speaking as Authentic or Adapted Practice

The teachers in the present study expressed difficulty in achieving authenticity in both the didactic design and material but considered non-adapted material generally too difficult for students at their

proficiency level. Moreover, they acknowledged that speaking a foreign language in school includes an artificial element, given that the language is not typically needed nor the most efficient means of communication. However, to gain language skills, both teachers and students stressed the importance of using the language in, and also beyond, the classroom, in authentic ‘real-world’ settings; therefore, the classroom should be as authentic as possible.

The students’ appreciation of future possibilities and their assertion that speaking Spanish (and other languages) is fun, cool, useful, interesting, and thus valuable to learn, aligns with previous findings (Granfeldt et al., 2023). Nevertheless, in the students’ comparisons of speaking in and outside of the classroom, the two activities had clearly different characteristics, both positive and negative: In the classroom, the students were given support, but they were also assessed. In contrast, speaking outside of the classroom required the students’ own resources, but they are free from evaluation by classmates or teachers. By emphasising that the two contexts are completely different and that authentic communication can mean many things, teachers could broaden the concept of ‘authentic language use’.

As for authenticity, another teacher concern had to do with activities that could be too fun or too engaging for the students, typically described as those when all students are truly engaged in a task (c.f. Hiver et al., 2020), thus highlighting the risk that students might speak too much Swedish. However, the students stressed the benefits of activities with an authentic competitive nature, such as games, arguing that engagement enhances learning.

Although real-life communication may include scaffolding features, it is characteristic for education to provide support, scaffolding and practices adapted to the learners. When the teachers described spoken proficiency as a progression through adapted scaffolding, they also acknowledged that too much scaffolding might hinder students’ development of their own, possibly more complex and genuine language production. The students agreed that receiving the right level of support is a delicate balance, but they preferred having ample scaffolding, as opposed to the risk of being left without support. In addition to written words or translations, they gave examples of other types of scaffolding, for example, repetition of activities and more time for preparation in advance. These methods, task repetition and pre-task planning, are also highlighted by Goh (2017) as effective ways to scaffold spoken activities. In a broader sense, scaffolding can be seen as an adaptation of

authentic real life-situations, but it also constitutes a natural support on the way towards independent language proficiency.

5.2 Dilemma 2: Accommodating Each Individual Student or the Whole Group

Given that teaching generally occurs on a group level, and that individuals' needs must be balanced with the conditions of the group, the teachers described an ongoing struggle to adapt their teaching not only to the group and the group's daily mood but also to the students' individual capabilities. Their greatest challenge in teaching speaking skills lay in engaging students who were anxious, demotivated or had lower proficiency levels, and the challenge in encouraging these students to participate. In relation to this, the teachers expressed a struggle to prevent them from dropping out of Spanish classes.

In addition, they were worried that while an activity could leave these students frustrated, the same activity could bore students with higher proficiency levels. Therefore, the teachers explained that they continuously tried to gauge the students' reactions in order to establish how spoken activities were perceived. They described delicately balancing the students' socio-emotional skills, which they used to create positive group dynamics and challenge and support students with both higher and lower proficiency. This essential pedagogical competence has also proven key in building relationships between teachers and students, as well as among the students themselves (cf. Gkonou & Mercer, 2018).

Regarding socio-emotional skills, the students emphasised that teachers must be empathetic, as this reduces anxiety and increases confidence when it comes to speaking the new language. This finding is consistent with those found by Barfod Lund et al. (2023). Students strongly advised teachers to avoid progressing too quickly and urged teachers not to adapt their teaching to the most motivated or most proficient students. Interestingly, when describing the spoken activities, none were actually perceived as too easy.

The students' individual perspectives included not only anxiety but also joy and engagement in speaking Spanish. They explained that the ability to speak the language enhanced their self-confidence, which can be understood in terms of affective engagement (Hiver et al., 2020), aligning with previous research (Barfod Lund et al., 2023; Nilsson, 2020; Sayehli et al., 2022). Moreover, they indicated that it is educational for a person to overcome difficulties and master something that

seemed impossible at first, for instance, understanding and speaking Spanish with others. This finding opens possibilities for teachers to prioritise spoken activities despite their complexity.

Teaching inevitably has to be adapted to both individuals and the group, which is an ongoing challenge. By relying on teachers' socio-emotional competence and encouraging students to reflect on and verbalise (c.f. Haukås et al., 2018) emotions and expectations around speaking, personal experiences can contribute to the whole group's learning and development.

5.3 Dilemma 3: Plan and Carry Out Spoken Activities in Whole Class or in Small Group Settings

Speaking in class is not only related to emotions, cognitive prerequisites, or interpersonal parameters but also impacted by the possibility of making one's voice heard. Teachers explained that one key factor in promoting spoken participation is through small group activities, given that whole class settings inevitably offer fewer possibilities for each student to practise speaking. Nevertheless, they were concerned that small group settings made them unable to hear all students and thus support or evaluate their performances, given that the teachers often had to help students with difficulties. They were also worried that students might speak less Spanish than they should in small groups outside of the teacher's earshot. However, both teachers and students agreed on the benefits of small group settings where everyone speaks simultaneously as a way to avoid one student dominating the conversation.

The students' negative feelings about speaking Spanish in whole-class settings can be understood in terms of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), as the students explained the situation as often being frightening and scary. Speaking Spanish in this context was compared to being forced to do something they were not prepared for; however, this anxiety was perceived to be lower in small group settings. The overwhelming benefit with small groups, according to the students, is not solely related to emotions; the students also explained that they learn from and about each other in small group settings (c.f. Barfod Lund et al., 2023), thus both learning Spanish and getting to know their classmates better.

Both the teachers and students emphasised the importance and impact of peers not only in assessing speaking (c.f. Borger, 2019) but in all spoken classroom activities, given that they are generally interactional in nature. The students stressed that peers can be restraining but nevertheless

constitute supportive forces in a group and thus are a crucial parameter in the outcome of spoken activities.

While teachers were puzzled about assessment proceedings, the students were not too worried about how exams were conducted as long as they felt adequately prepared and could perform them outside of their classmates' earshot. Nevertheless, they explicitly wished to practise more in small groups without the pressure of assessment. In other words, they preferred more opportunities for speaking in small groups and less testing during class time.

5.4 Dilemma 4: Speaking Swedish or Speaking Spanish

The teachers faced a dilemma regarding their own spoken language, as they continuously had to decide which language to speak and expressed frustration about speaking more Swedish than they intended. Speaking in Spanish meant that some students did not understand and would lose attention, while speaking in Swedish ensured that the students understood and paid attention but would miss out on possibilities for target language input.

Consistent with previous research (Erickson et al., 2022), the teachers aimed to increase their spoken Spanish in relation to students' proficiency levels throughout the school years. However, the guidance about communicative language use presented a challenge for the teachers, as they expressed the same issues regarding language choice as reported by other researchers (Llovet Vilà, 2018; Nilsson et al., 2019). The teachers wished to speak more target language in class. Moreover, the teachers exemplified how foreign language education differs from other subjects. As explained by Borg (2006, p. 5), 'FL teaching is the only subject where effective instruction requires the teacher to use a medium the students do not yet understand'. One teacher's descriptions of 'going into a role' and speaking Spanish in class as 'somewhat unnatural' was thus not considered a dilemma but rather a consequential part of the foreign language education context. In addition, the teachers stated that it is sometimes quicker and more efficient to speak Swedish than Spanish, a finding confirmed in previous research (Lightbown & Spada, 2020) related to the misconception that exclusive use of the target language is the most efficient method for learning.

However, the teachers' dilemma regarding language choice was by no means recognised or shared by the students. Instead, the students placed strong emphasis on teachers' understanding and empathic approach, highlighting the importance of ensuring that no student is left without

explanations. The teachers' use of Swedish is one way to ensure this, a finding also established by Brevik and Rindal (2020) and Tsagari and Diakou (2015). The students in the present study appreciated it when the teachers spoke Spanish, as long as they understood. In addition, they expressed that they would like more possibilities to speak Spanish themselves in class.

6 Conclusions

Didactic research has often investigated either the perspectives of teachers' or those of students. However, in the present study conducted in Spanish classrooms across five different schools, the two classroom protagonists elaborate on the same topic and the same experienced spoken activities. While the results cannot claim to be generalisable, they offer nuances into teaching and learning to speak a foreign language.

The teachers considered it difficult to explicitly define spoken production and interaction—a result consistent with previous research (Frisch, 2021). However, given how the concepts were interpreted in relation to practice, the teachers have clear ideas about their enactment and the nature of their complexity. Recognising that teaching is a complicated art form that seldom offers simple solutions, four didactic dilemmas were identified in relation to teaching to speak Spanish in lower secondary school. The convergence of teachers' and students' perspectives presents possible openings for exploration by using the voices of teachers and students to support teachers in their didactic choices. These possibilities can be summarised in the following suggestions when it comes to teaching speaking:

- Prioritise and scaffold activities with students' spoken target language
- Let spoken activities be engaging
- Encourage students to reflect on their learning process in order to visualise their perceptions about speaking
- Maximise the teacher's spoken target language while also speaking the majority language when suitable
- Adopt an empathic approach and continue to develop socio-emotional competence

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Appendices

Appendix I: Interview questions

Interview questions to teacher

1. Background:

- How long have you been working as an SFL teacher?
- What other languages do you teach?
- What's the difference between teaching the other language?
- How is the collaboration between the language teachers in your school?
- What do you think are the biggest challenges in teaching SFL at this level?
- What is a successful SFL lesson, in your opinion? And the opposite?
- What role does authentic material have in the SFL-education? And in your class?
- How does it work with your different group 2-4, one smaller, two bigger groups/week?

2. The instruction of spoken production and interaction

- How do you define spoken production and interaction?
- What is difficult/easy in the teaching of oral interaction (and production?)
- Do you follow a certain model or theory in your teaching?
- What is your opinion on evaluating spoken interaction? How do you evaluate? How do the evaluation criteria in the curriculum affect you on a daily basis?
- Relating to the didactic material: can you give an example of an oral activity that you like?
- How do you use the didactical material as input of oral activities in your lesson planning?
- What support, help or training would do you need to increase your teaching?

3. Regarding one or several specific activities/open spaces/ possibilities of communication

- Why did you choose it?
- What was your idea about it? What was the purpose? What were they supposed to learn from it?
- Did the activity result in the way you planned? Why/Why not?

- What kind of oral output did you notice from the students?
- Would you repeat this activity in another class? At the same level?

4. Reflections on the teacher's own code switching.

- Are you always aware of when you switch between the languages?
- Do you have a general idea about it?
- Would you like to give an example of when you spoke Swedish although your intention was to speak Spanish?
- Interview questions to students
- Do you like to speak Spanish?
- Why? /Why not?
- Is it important to be able to speak Spanish? Why?
- Do you like to speak other languages? Why/why not?
- Have you ever spoken Spanish outside of class? 'If yes, how did that differ from speaking Spanish in class?'
- What do you think about speaking Spanish in class?
- 'As I work with teaching training, what advice would you give to future teachers regarding how to prompt students to speak Spanish in class?
- How does it work with your different group 2-4, one smaller, two bigger groups/week?
- Related to one or more specific activities in class:
- What did you think about this activity?
- What did you learn?
- Is this something you usually do in class?
- What was easy/difficult? Why?
- If it was difficult, what made/would have made it easier?
- Did you get the support you needed? If not, what would be better help?
- What's the difference in the activity compared to what you do in English?

Appendix II

Analytic categories with descriptions.

Who? – Teachers

Category	Description of the category
The teacher's own attitude towards the subject	The teachers' attitude on a personal level, their motivation and driving forces.
Students' emotions and sense of security	How instruction is perceived by the students, the subject in general, but spoken skills in particular.
Students' linguistic abilities	Students' various prerequisites and levels of knowledge matter in the group.

Who? – Students

Category	Description of the category
Comparisons with English	The purpose of learning, knowing and using one language or the other. Personal opinions and emotions about the two languages and school subjects.
Personal reasons for the language choice or language skills	The point and value of knowing and learning Spanish and other languages.
Main category: Attitudes towards speaking Spanish in general	
Subcategory: Speaking outside of the classroom	Personal opinions and emotions about using Spanish outside of class.
Subcategory: Positive perceptions about speaking Spanish in class	General positive opinions and emotions about speaking and understanding Spanish. Not related to specific content or classroom activity
Subcategory: Negative perceptions about speaking Spanish in class	General negative opinions and emotions about speaking and understanding Spanish. Not related to specific content or classroom activity.

What? – Teachers

Category	Description of the category
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Spoken proficiency	How spoken proficiency is defined, and how it differs from other skills. Covers content that is characterised as spoken proficiency but not definitions of interaction and production.
Spoken production and interaction	Specific definitions of both spoken production and spoken interaction.
Thematic topics, linguistic structures, vocabulary and communicative skills	The communicative skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Linguistic structures and vocabulary within different thematic topics.

What? – Students

Category	Description of the category
Thematic topics, linguistic structures, vocabulary and communicative skills	The learning content per se; what the students learn or are supposed to learn. Generally related to specific classroom activities.
Main category: Perceptions of specific content	
Subcategory: Perceptions of usefulness	Students' opinions about content on a scale of useful or useless. Good and practical knowledge or the opposite.
Subcategory: Perceptions of difficulty	Students' opinions about content on a scale of easy or difficult.
Subcategory: Perceptions of engagement	Students' opinions about content on a scale of fun or boring and interesting or not interesting. Affective and emotional arguments.

How? – Teachers

Category	Description of the category
Assessment practice	How the teachers assess spoken proficiency, summatively and formatively
The teacher's own code-switching Spanish/Swedish	How teachers reason about their own target language use
Students' code-switching Spanish/Swedish	The students' target language use and the teachers' interpretation of when and why they switch languages
Teaching material	The choices of teaching material and the reasons and motives given for them
Practical organisation of teaching and learning – general	How teachers perform or plan activities not specifically related to spoken activities. The reasons and motives given for actions and choices.
Main category: Practical organisation of teaching and learning – spoken activities	How teachers perform or plan activities related to spoken activities and the reasons and motives given for the actions and choices

Subcategory: Practical organisation of teaching and learning – challenges around spoken activities	Difficulties and negative experiences in organising and carrying out oral activities (other than specifically about code-switching)
Subcategory: Practical organisation of teaching and learning – possibilities around spoken activities	Possibilities and positive experiences in organising and carrying out oral activities (other than specifically about code-switching)

How? – students

Category	Description of the category
Frame factors	How schedule organisation and change of teachers matter
Main category: Scaffolding	Supportive structures that were provided, as well as those that should have been provided
Subcategory: Repetition	How repetition of content is organised, generally as a scaffolding function
Assessment practice	How assessment is organised and performed
Group organisation and classmates	The impact of group organisation and the classmates' behaviour
Practical organisation of classroom activities	How the teacher organises or ought to organise the activities during class