

Abstract

Title: The Roots of Variation of English-Teaching
A Phenomenographic Study Founded on an Alternative Basic Assumption
Language: English
Keywords: Second language teaching, teaching-theory, in-service training, phenomenography, theory of variation, alternative basic assumption

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The aim was first, to investigate the structure and variation of English-teachers' ways of comprehending the concept of English, second, to study the extended concept comprising the concepts of English and English-teaching and third, to relate the ways of comprehending the concept of English-teaching to some current second language research and to the Swedish curricula and syllabuses.

A number of English-teachers of compulsory school, upper secondary school and adult education in Sweden were in-depth interviewed. The interviews were transcribed and analysed from a phenomenographic perspective. However, the starting point was the alternative basic assumption that a person could expose more than one way of comprehending a concept at the same time.

Four qualitatively different categories of the ways the concept of English was comprehended were found. In the Ideologist category, the concept was comprehended as any school subject, in the Structuralist category as a descriptive structured system, in the Semi-holist category as that which appears when exposed to it and in the Naturalist category as the informational content conveyed by means of the language as a medium.

In order to describe the relation between the ways the concepts of English and English-teaching were comprehended, the extended categories were created. The ways the concept of English-teaching was comprehended proved to be possible to link to the ways the concept of English was comprehended.

Characteristic of the way the concept of English-teaching was comprehended in the Extended Ideologist category was the training of the pupils to learn to learn, in the Extended Structuralist category the presentation and practice of the structured descriptive system, in the Extended Semi-holist category the arrangement of situations so that exposure to English could take place and in the Extended Naturalist category the imitation of authentic communicative situations in which acquisition could occur.

The ways English-teaching was comprehended proved to be in harmony with the Swedish curricula and syllabuses and with some current second language research. Knowledge about the ways English-teaching is rooted could promote the development of language teaching practice.