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EFL vs. ELF

“Communication works for those who work at it.”
John Powell

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Abstract

The study explores whether or not the Swedish syllabus of English would allow the teaching of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Furthermore, the study investigates the attitudes towards the teaching of ELF among Swedish teachers of English.

A questionnaire of ten questions was answered by fifteen respondents, all teachers in Swedish compulsory schools in the Gothenburg area. The questionnaire was divided into three parts, where the first part was designed to obtain information about the teachers (gender, number of years of teaching experience) as well as information about their attitudes regarding their own English. The purpose of the second and third parts of the questionnaire was to find out the teachers' attitudes towards their students' receptive and productive skills in terms of the variety of English they would find acceptable. The final part involved interpreting quotes from the syllabus.

The study shows that while the syllabus would allow for the teaching of ELF, the teachers' attitudes towards ELF are ambiguous. Native English still appears to have a prominent position compared to non-native varieties of English. However, the concept 'native English' has widened, and instead of only including British and American English, it seems to include all native Englishes. The final chapter discusses some of the implications for teaching English in Sweden, based on the results of the study.

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1. Introduction

Today English is used as a lingua franca on a daily basis among people from different parts of the world, but it is still those who belong to Kachru's so called 'Inner circle' (Hoffman, 2000:5-6), i.e. the native speakers, that provide the language norms. These norms seem to have a great influence on non-native speakers of English. Recent research into non-native speaker teachers' attitudes towards English as a lingua franca has shown that there is a reluctance to teach varieties of English other than Standard English (Jenkins, 2007). However, a native variety is not necessarily the most relevant variety for a lingua franca context. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate Swedish Teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Moreover, the purpose of this study included looking at the Swedish syllabus in order to find out whether teaching ELF would be allowed. The hypothesis was that the teachers would not be interested in teaching ELF as opposed to EFL (English as a Foreign Language). The reason for this was that previous research into non-native speaker teachers' attitudes (Jenkins, 2007) had shown that the general opinion is that native English is considered 'better' and more 'correct' than non-native English. When it comes to the syllabus, the hypothesis was that it would be possible to teach ELF as the formulations are fuzzy. Moreover, it was believed that the teachers would interpret the syllabus as encouraging the teaching of ELF.

However, the results show that there is a great ambivalence among the teachers participating in this study. Some do indeed seem positive to teaching a "world English" rather than only Standard English, whereas others seem more reluctant to change. Contrary to what was believed, not all teachers interpreted the syllabus as encouraging the teaching of ELF. In conclusion, this study indicates that the attitudes towards teaching ELF among Swedish teachers are predominantly, but not entirely, the same as for previous research; the native models are still seen as prestige models and are therefore preferred over an ELF model. However, the concept of 'native English' seems to be widening. Instead of only including British and American English, other native varieties, similar to

British and American English (such as Australian and Canadian English), are also included.

Furthermore, the results show that even though not all teachers interpret the syllabus as encouraging the teaching of ELF, they think it is important that their students are faced with many different varieties in order to prepare them for the `real` world.

In the next section, I will provide a background to why English has become a global language. Furthermore, previous research into this area will be presented, as will a comparison of ELF and EFL. Additionally, this section will provide information about the grading criteria and what is said about the subject of English in the syllabus. In chapter 3, the methodology section, a description will be given of how the data was collected and analyzed, and there will be a short discussion of how far it is possible to generalize from this population. The results of the study are given in chapter four and discussed in chapter five.

2. Background

This chapter provides a short background to the rise of English as a global language and a definition of ELF is given. Moreover, this chapter gives a short presentation of positive and negative aspects of the teaching of ELF as well as the teaching of EFL. Last but not least, this chapter present the results of previous research into teachers' attitudes towards ELF as well as a comment on the Swedish syllabus.

2.1 English as a Global Language

To be able to establish how English became a global language, it is necessary to understand what is meant by a global language. According to Crystal (2003:3-4) a language reaches global status when "it develops a special role that is recognised in every country", and there are two ways a language can achieve global status; either a language can be made the official second language of a country, or a language can be given special status in a country's foreign-language teaching. In other words, when it comes to a global language it is not only the number of speakers that are of importance, it is of importance who these speakers are: a global language has to be acknowledged not only by its native speakers but more importantly it has to be acknowledged by non-native speakers. English is not the first global language and it is most likely not the last global language, but how come English has achieved global status?

Like any prior global language, the rise of English is closely linked to power. Many studies (Hoffman,2000:1) show that two factors in particular have facilitated the spread of English in the world. The first contributing factor of importance is that many parts of the world that fell under the rule of the British Empire during the 15th century kept English as co-official language after liberation. Furthermore, America, which during the 20th century became the new political and economic giant, is of significance for the rise of English as a global language, as there is a close link between economic and cultural power (Graddol,2006:58).

As the world during the last decades in some sense has become smaller, the need for a global language has increased. The use of a global language is especially appreciated by the globalized academic and business communities of today (Crystal,2003:13), because a global language greatly facilitates co-operation between businesses all over the world, as well as students' possibilities to study abroad. However, it is also a necessity for the people of the world as they have become more electronically and physically mobile during the last decades and therefore have to overcome language barriers. As Crystal (2003:14) puts it "[t]here has never been a time when so many nations were needing to talk to each other so much. There has never been a time when so many people wished to travel so many places".

2.2 English in Sweden

As the spread of English in the British Empire started such a long time ago it is difficult to believe that the spread of English in Europe did not start until shortly after the Second World War. However, despite the late start, there are already many European nations where English now plays an essential role, especially in education and the trade sector (Hoffman, 200:1ff). In Sweden English has gained a high status, partly because it is a small country which is very dependent on trade with other countries, and therefore the English language has come to play an important role in education (Hoffman, 200:1ff). English is now the first and only foreign language Swedish students in practice *have* to learn even though most students also choose to learn what is called a "modern language", i.e. French, Spanish or German. However, those "modern languages" have not reached the same status as English, partly because those languages are not as present in Swedish society as English. This is the case in many European countries and the presence of English is of course of advantage when it comes to teaching, as the sources for varied and stimulating teaching materials are easily accessible. However, despite all the benefits the presence of English in society may provide, it also

creates problems for teachers of English as a foreign language, problems which will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 What Variety to Teach?

As the English language is constantly present in Swedish society, teachers of English are regularly faced with students who speak a dialect strikingly different from Standard English. A plausible reason for this is, as mentioned above, that the English language is present in Swedish society. The learners therefore come in contact with English outside school via movies, music, the Internet etc. This means there are many sources that may influence the learners' accent.

In Europe English has traditionally been associated with the Standard British variety spoken in England and even today many textbooks use British English (Hoffman, 2000:7). As part of Europe, the teaching of English in Sweden has been influenced by British Standard English. However, as Hoffman (2007:7) says, it is indeed American English that is the variety most present in European countries, among them Sweden. This has become evident in the language classrooms as well. However, as the students, mainly due to modern technology, come in contact with many other non-standard varieties of English, the question is: what variety/varieties should be taught, i.e. what variety/varieties are acceptable?

In order to find an answer to this question it first of all needs to be established what is meant by Standard English. According to Thomas (1996:222), a Standard English is a well-documented variety of English, i.e. a codified variety of English, commonly associated with the educated middle- or upper class and therefore the preferred variety when it comes to education. However, in order to make things a bit more complicated there is no such thing as *one* English Standard variety. Instead there are several Standard Englishes, e.g. British English, American English etc. Although it is possible to find differences between the standard Englishes mentioned above, they are comparatively few compared to differences found between non-standard varieties of English

(Thomas, 1996:223).

As mentioned above, the varieties most commonly associated with the teaching of English in Swedish schools of today are British or American standard varieties. Furthermore, what has traditionally been taught and still is being taught in Swedish schools is English as a foreign language (EFL), which means the teaching of English gives prominence to native speakers' norms and culture. However, in the globalized world where most speakers are non-native speakers of English, but rather users of English as a lingua franca (ELF), the question arises as to whether it is justifiable to teach a native speaker model as opposed to ELF.

2.4 What is ELF?

According to Jenkins (2009:201), a lingua franca is a language that is used among speakers of different linguacultural backgrounds. This means that English as a lingua franca refers to a language used for communication between non-native speakers of English. This does not, however, mean that native speakers are excluded, but the language they speak does not necessarily provide the model for what is right and wrong. In order to make the difference between English as a lingua franca (ELF) and English as a foreign language (EFL) clearer, Kachru's categories of different types of English speakers presented by Hoffman (2000:5-6) needs to be explained; according to Kachru's model there are three concentric circles (inner, outer and expanding) where each circle represents a different type of English user. In the inner circle the native speakers of English are found, i.e. speakers of English who have English as their one and only mother tongue, e.g. Americans, Australians, Canadians and the British etc. The outer circle includes speakers of English who are second language speakers of English, i.e. speakers who do not have English as their first language but who use English in every day communication. Thirdly there is the expanding circle whose members are people who use English as "another" language, i.e. people who have learnt English as a foreign language. Swedish learners of English belong to the expanding circle.

In English as foreign language teaching the inner circle speakers set the norms for what is acceptable and good English, in other words EFL refers to English learnt to reach the native speakers' standard (Seidlhofer,2000:53), whereas the teaching of ELF is meant to "reflect the needs and aspirations of the ever-growing number of non-native speakers who use English to communicate with other non-natives" (Graddol,2006: 87). This means that the ELF target is a fluent bilingual speaker, which in turn means that speakers of ELF are not expected to produce utterances as similar as possible to the native speakers', but rather utterances that do not deviate too far from the utterances of the native speakers (Kirkpatrick, 2007:191). That is to say *intelligibility is more important than native-like accuracy*, which means that for example some pronunciation problems are regarded unnecessary to rectify as they do not disrupt intelligibility. One of the best known works when it comes to grammatical studies of English as a lingua franca is Jenkins's study of phonology of international English where she states the following features (simplifications) which do not disrupt intelligibility (Kirkpatrick, 2007:167):

- i). dropping the third person present tense –s
- ii). Confusing the relative pronouns "who" and "which"
- iii). Non-L1 use of the indefinite and definite pronouns
- iv). Not using correct tag questions
- v). Inserting redundant prepositions
- vi). Overuse of certain verbs (do, have, make, etc).
- vii). Replacing infinitive constructions with that-clauses
- viii). Overdoing explicitness

These are only a few features of the English language that do not disrupt understanding between speakers of ELF and if they do not disrupt understanding it is questionable if they are worth correcting. The next section provides some advantages and disadvantages of the teaching of ELF and EFL.

2.5 EFL vs. ELF – Advantages and Disadvantages in Teaching

When it comes to teaching, a native model is the model most accepted both by teachers and learners of English. However, this does not mean that it is the most suitable model when it comes to second language learning. The advantages and disadvantages of EFL will now be discussed before moving on to any advantages and disadvantages of ELF.

First of all, as EFL is the model traditionally used in teaching, it has the major advantage of being codified, i.e. there are already a great many different EFL teaching materials available, including dictionaries and grammars (Graddol,2006:114). In addition to that, a native model is prestigious as it by tradition has provided the respected standard, i.e. a native speaker model is associated with the proper and correct English, that is to say native speakers have for a long time been regarded as the final arbitrators when it comes to standard and quality of a language (Graddol,2006: 114). The disadvantages of teaching EFL is that it first of all is difficult deciding what variety to teach as there are many. Second, if EFL is taught, this means that most teachers and learners would not ever be able to reach the highest proficiency level as it lies in the literal meaning of EFL that achieving a native standard of English is impossible. This could make the use of this model demotivating for the learners (Kirkpatrick, 2007:187). Furthermore, it is more likely that English will be used in communication with non-native speakers than with native speakers of English, as the number of non-native speakers is greater than the number of native speakers. Therefore it could be argued that it is inappropriate to teach EFL as it gives prominence to inner-circle culture and languages norms (Kirkpatrick, 2007:188).

When it comes to the teaching of ELF, its biggest disadvantage is that, contrary to EFL, it has not yet been sufficiently codified and therefore it is difficult to find teaching materials. Furthermore, it has been argued that teaching a non-native model would make the speakers internationally unintelligible. However, ELF is not without rules as rules are necessary for intelligibility, but as shown above some rules or features of native English do not disrupt intelligibility and as Kirkpatrick (2007:168) argues, the English language spoken today is nothing like Old English, it has been

simplified and influenced by other languages such as French, Scandinavian and Latin. In other words, a language is dynamic rather than static, i.e. it keeps changing constantly, and the tendency throughout history is towards simplification. That is what English as a lingua franca stands for and it is very possible that English as a lingua franca will be well documented and codified in the future. The advantage of ELF is that it is focused on communication between the majority of English speakers, namely the speakers of the outer circle. Furthermore, ELF enables speakers to reach the highest proficiency level and in addition to that ELF is not focused on teaching norms, but rather focused on facilitation of communication, i.e. strategies for communication and cultural information (Kirkpatrick, 2007:194).

2.6 Non-Native Speaker English Teachers' Self-Perception and Attitudes to English

This part will briefly describe attitudes towards English grammar and pronunciation among non-native speaker teachers in the expanding outer circle.

According to Braine (2010:17ff) most studies of non-native speaker (NNS) English teachers show that NNS teachers feel inferior to native speaker (NS) teachers. The NNS teachers' feelings of inferiority are linked to their belief that they have worse pronunciation than the NS teachers, as well as not having as good listening, vocabulary and reading skills. However, according to Braine (2010:18), NNS teachers have many advantages. Firstly, NNS teachers usually have a "deeper insight into the English language" (Braine,2010:28). Secondly, they are usually better qualified and in addition to this, NNS teachers tend to have deeper insight into their students' difficulties and therefore have a better understanding of how to help the students overcome their difficulties (Braine,2010:18). Nevertheless, NNS teachers tend to be less confident in their teaching skills than NS teachers and because of this feeling of inferiority, the NNS teachers tend to be "preoccupied with accuracy and more formal features of English at the expense of communicative English teaching" as they do not feel their grammar is 'worse' than NS teachers' grammar (Braine,2010:28).

The inferiority many NNS teachers experience has to do with the fact that the norms of English are associated with native varieties of English and NNS teachers strive to provide 'good' English (Braine, 2010:28). In her research paper, Vasiljeva (2007:18) found that Swedish teachers think a native-like grammar and the use of it is indeed important and a sign of 'good' English. However, the teachers in her study also claimed that the focus on correctness is less important today than some ten or twenty years ago. In accordance with the Communicative Approach (p.14-15) the teachers in her study claimed the aim of teaching grammar is successful communication (Vasiljeva, 2007:22). Nevertheless, the teachers made comments like: "I think that in learning a foreign language like English it is important that the students get the grammar right to a level that most native English speakers would find acceptable" (Vasiljeva, 2007:21-22). Another teacher claimed that even her students recognised 'the importance of grammar' and want to have a good grammar as they "[w]ant to be good at English" (Vasiljeva, 2007:21). In other words the Swedish teachers in this study found a native-like grammar a sign of 'good' English.

When it comes to pronunciation, Jenkins (2007:156) found that teachers belonging to the expanding outer circle generally preferred a native accent, more specifically RP and GA accents, over non-native accents and other native accents. In other word they tended to "evaluate accents in a hierarchical manner", which is consistent with earlier studies (Jenkins, 2007:70). In line with Jenkins' study, Walker (2010:57) found that NNS teachers tend to evaluate all other accents, native as well as non-native, against RP and GA. That is to say, accents similar to RP and GA were considered pleasant and highly intelligible whereas accents dissimilar to those accents were considered less pleasant and intelligible. Furthermore, interestingly, Walker (2010:57) also found that NS teachers generally favoured international intelligibility more than NNS teachers. In other words, the NS teachers were keener on, and more positive to, the teaching of ELF than the NNS teachers.

Jenkins' study suggests that accents are judged by aesthetic aspects as well as their intelligibility. As hinted above, all accents were compared to the RP and GA accents. The RP accent was described with words such as 'correct', 'perfect', 'beautiful' and 'pleasant' as well as 'easy to

understand' (Jenkins, 2007:170). Interestingly, although the GA accent was considered almost as acceptable as the RP accent, words such as 'correct' and 'perfect' were not mentioned in relation to GA. Instead GA was described with words such as 'informal', 'relaxed' and 'easy to understand' (Jenkins, 2007:168). A Swedish English accent was also assessed and the teachers (all NNS) were mainly positive towards Swedish English, apart from the Finns and the single Swedish teacher participating in Jenkins' study (Jenkins, 2007:171). Most participants, however, even though not familiar with the accent, described Swedish English as 'native-like', 'precise', 'pleasant' and 'easy to understand' (Jenkins, 2007:171). Other non-native accents, less similar to RP or GA, were received more negatively, mainly due to their alleged unintelligibility (Jenkins, 2007:83ff). It is interesting that all varieties are evaluated against RP and GA, because, as Seidlhofer (2000:54) argues, there is no standard that is more 'correct' than any other standard; NS language is merely one kind of variety, one reality. Walker (2010:51) argues that teaching an ELF pronunciation is not equal to lowering the standard of English, it rather equal to changing to a different, more achievable standard.

When it comes to the participants' own accents, all the participants in Jenkins' study appeared to be ambivalent about their own English accents. When asked if they liked their own accent, most of them said they were 'reasonably positive' (Jenkins, 2007:211). However, it is also worth mentioning that most participants felt that admitting 'loving' their native accent would not be accepted (Jenkins, 2007:211). Furthermore, even though the NNS teachers claimed to be satisfied with their accent, when asked, they all admitted desiring a native accent, preferably a GA or RP accent (Jenkins, 2007:211). This is consistent with Walker's findings (2010:58) that the overall picture is that NNS teachers highly value NS accents. The reason for this is that it is believed that a native accent equals competence. A native accent is therefore considered 'good' whereas non-native accents dissimilar to RP and GA are considered 'bad', 'incorrect' and sometimes even 'horrible' (Jenkins, 2007:212). However, as stated, most teachers showed ambivalent feelings towards their accents. According to Walker (2010:63) this ambivalence has to do with the fact that accent on a subconscious level is closely linked to identity. Giving up a non-native accent can

therefore be perceived as giving up a part of the self.

As stated above, most participants in Jenkins' study argued that native accents are easier to understand for both native and non-native speakers of English. However, as Walker (2010:53) argues, neither of those accents is easier or harder to understand; rather it has to do with the amount of variation speakers are willing to accept. Jenkins (2007:220) refers to this phenomenon as the 'social connotation hypothesis'. This means that accents are reacted differently to, depending on their social connotations rather than their actual features. There is in fact no evidence that RP or GA accents as such are easier to understand; however, if those are the only accents students are exposed to, it is likely that they will find those more intelligible. According to Jenkins (2007:187), the greater tolerance towards RP and GA accents "could suggest that the subjects in these experiments have been 'brain-washed' to some extent and that renders objective responses on their part very unlikely". However, as some of the responses towards non-native accents similar to native accents were described positively regarding both their aesthetic qualities and international intelligibility, Jenkins (2007:187) argues that it seems as if a first step towards acceptance of ELF accents has been taken.

2.7 The Swedish Syllabus of English as a Foreign Language

This section focuses on what is said in four parts of the Swedish syllabus of English as a foreign language, namely "aim of the subject and its role in education", "goals to aim for", "structure and nature of the subject" and last but not least "goals that pupils should have attained by the end of the ninth year in school" (Skolverket). The formulations in the syllabus regarding English as a Foreign Language are very vague. However, some parts that are of importance for this essay, i.e. formulations about what kind of English should be taught and what the subject should involve, will now be highlighted. The quotes will not, however, be discussed in depth in this part, but in a later chapter where they can be discussed in relation to the results of the questionnaire survey carried

out.

In the syllabus it is stated that the “ability to use English is necessary for studies, travel in other countries and for social and professional international contacts of different kinds” (Skolverket). This suggests that ELF could be taught, because, as mentioned several times, ELF is used for communication between non-native speakers of English, and most speakers of English belong to Kachru’s outer circle. Furthermore it is stated in the syllabus that the aim of the subject is to give the students a broader perspective “on an expanding English-speaking world with its multiplicity of varying cultures” (Skolverket), which clearly could be interpreted as if ELF is necessary as the EFL approach focuses on the native speakers’ culture and pragmatic norms. Additionally it is stated that the subject of English “provides both a background to and a wider perspective on the cultural and social expressions surrounding pupils in today’s international society” (Skolverket). Again, there is a focus on the *international* use of English.

In the section about what goals the students should have attained by the end of the ninth school year it is written that students should be able to understand “speech, even though regional in nature” (Skolverket) and that they should be able to compare their own life and culture with cultures and traditions in “some countries where English occupies a central position” (Skolverket). “Central position” could be interpreted as English being the official language of a country. Other possible interpretations are that it refers to either English as a co-official language or English having a special status within the educational system or trade sector.

There are also formulations that could be interpreted as against the use of ELF, for example you can read that the subject aims at providing the students with communicative skills which involves mastery of “a language’s form, i.e. its vocabulary, phraseology, pronunciation, spelling and grammar” (Skolverket). As mentioned above, ELF is not yet sufficiently codified, which can make this part somewhat problematic.

The aim of the subject involves developing “an all-round communicative ability and the language skills necessary for international contacts (Skolverket). The focus on communication might

be an indication of an advantage for the teaching of ELF. However, according to Hedge (2000:44) communication is now established as a distinguishing feature and a goal of EFL. Communicative competence involves linguistic, pragmatic, discourse and strategic competence as well as fluency (Hedge, 2000:46). Linguistic competence involves knowledge of a language's form and meaning whereas pragmatic competence means "knowing how to use language in order to achieve certain communicative goals or intentions" (Hedge, 2000:48). This includes having knowledge about social conventions, i.e. knowing what is appropriate language use in a specific context ("when to speak, when not, what to talk about with whom, when, where and in what manner" (Hedge, 2000:50). Discourse competence refers to the different abilities learners need in order to understand and create coherent spoken and written language. The last competence is fluency, i.e. the ability to "link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation" (Hedge, 2000:54).

When it comes to the grading criteria, they are as vaguely formulated as the syllabus. There are no specific references to grammar or vocabulary use, not even for the highest grade. In general the grading criteria seem to focus on fluency in comprehension and production, again without references to any specific variety, as well as the use of strategies. In order to gain an A, which is the highest grade, students need to understand the general message as well as details in spoken language in varying speech tempos. The student is also expected to use a varied language which is well structured and coherent. Furthermore, the student is expected to adapt his/her speech to the precipitants and the situation (Skolverket₂).

3. Methodology

The study carried out aimed to measure to what extent teachers use varieties of English other than British and American varieties and whether or not they find other varieties of English acceptable. In other words the aim of the study was to indirectly find out their opinion of English as a lingua franca. In addition, the study included investigating whether the syllabus would allow the teaching of ELF.

An electronic online questionnaire (Survey Monkey) was used, partly because they are easy to handle and partly because online questionnaires can easily be sent out to a large number of people. The questions were closed in order to make the results easier to analyze. However, comment boxes were added in case the teachers wanted to comment on, or explain, their answers. The questionnaire consisted of ten questions about the teachers' own language competence, what kind of English they would accept from their students in both oral and written production, what varieties students are faced with during lessons (teaching materials) and last but not least how the teachers' would interpret certain vague formulations of the syllabus. In other words, the questionnaire was divided into four parts, each part having a specific purpose. The first part focused on the teachers' own language competence and aimed at finding out whether the teachers would give the same answers regarding their own language and their students' language competence. The second part was about teaching materials and the third part of the questionnaire aimed at finding out whether there was a difference in what the teachers considered acceptable English when it comes to their students' oral and written production. In other words, this part was about the students' receptive and productive skills. The fourth part, about the syllabus, aimed at finding out if the teachers interpreted the syllabus as encouraging the teaching of ELF. In addition, the respondents were asked to give information about their gender to see whether gender affected attitudes. Moreover, the teachers were asked to give information about how many years they had worked as teachers in order to see whether more experienced teachers would prefer native speaker standards. As it was an online questionnaire their answers were collected electronically. However, the results were

analyzed manually.

The questionnaire was sent out to 20 respondents and 15 of those returned the completed questionnaire. All participants had a teachers' degree and all were teachers in compulsory school, i.e. teachers teaching year six to nine. Moreover, all teachers participating in the study had all been teaching for at least one year. The questionnaire was sent out to teachers in state schools as well as 'free' schools in the Gothenburg area. As the questionnaire was anonymous it is impossible to ascertain in which part of the city and at what school the teachers work. The questionnaire was sent to a total of 12 different schools. The teachers were sent the questionnaire 10 days before the November holidays and were asked to return it before going on holiday.

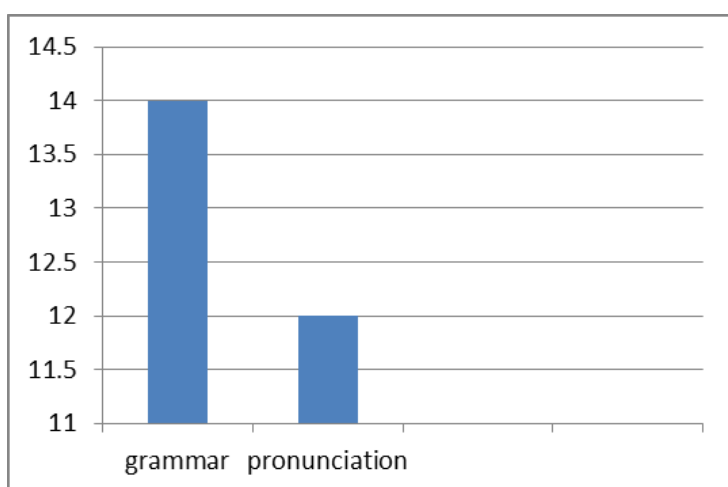
4. Results

When all results were collected and counted, they showed that ten women and five men had answered the questionnaire. However, the responses showed no differences due to gender, nor any differences due to years of teaching experience. Some teachers who had taught for 20 years or more were very conservative when it comes to varieties of English, while others were more open to different varieties. The same goes for the less experienced teachers. As neither gender nor years of teaching affected the answers, those factors will not appear in this report of the results.

4.1 The teachers' own Language Competence

The results show that when it comes to the teachers' own English competence, it seems native-like grammar is more important than a native-like pronunciation. As Table 1 shows, all but one expected themselves to have native-like grammar, whereas only the number of teachers who expected themselves to have native-like pronunciation was slightly lower. In relation to Jenkins' (2007) findings about teachers' expectations of their language competence, it is surprising that three teachers did not expect themselves to have native-like pronunciation.

Table 1. Teacher's expectations about their own language competence.



4.2 Teaching Materials and Lesson Content

The teachers were asked to answer questions about preference of teaching materials (text books and/or authentic materials). Table 2 shows that a small proportion of the subjects preferred materials that only used one variety of Standard English. None of those who selected this option made a comment about their choice, but in relation to the answers given to the rest of the questions, it is plausible that this refers to standard British English or possibly standard American English. However, most teachers seem to prefer teaching materials that use a mix of different standard varieties. Several teachers made comments about the importance of the use of different varieties, for example: “ [i]t is of utmost importance to use a variety of different versions of English texts and materials in order to prepare them [the students] for the real world where they're to use their English” (T1). The teachers who preferred a mix of standard and non-standard varieties made similar comments: “I believe it is important to let the students hear/read the different variations” (T3). In other words the results show that most teachers think it is important that their students are faced with many different varieties. The difference lies in whether the students should be exposed to standard varieties only, or standard and non-standard varieties. Note that no teachers preferred teaching materials with non-standard varieties only.

Table 2. Teaching materials

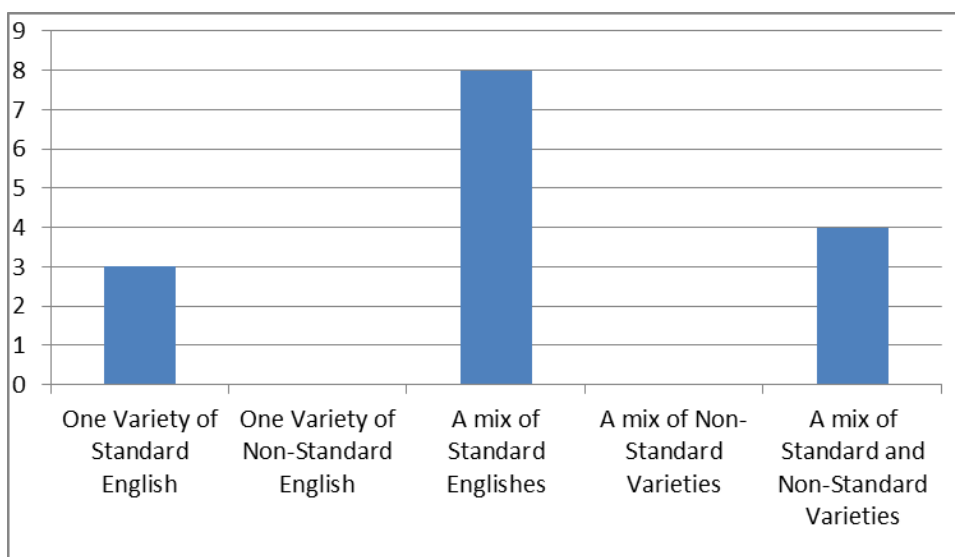
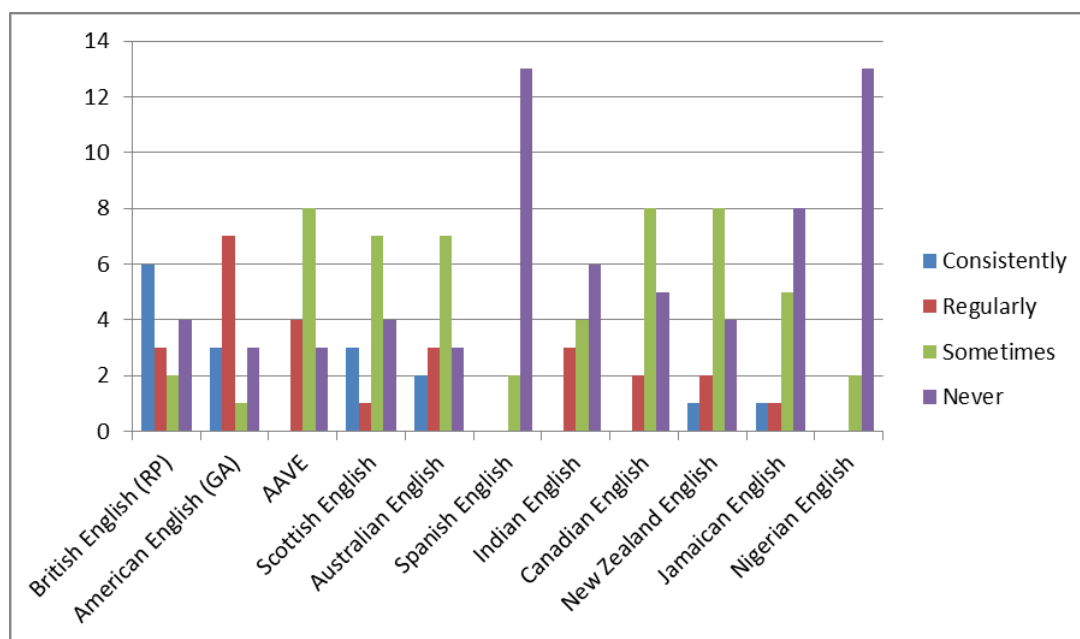


Table 2 shows that most teachers find it important that the students are faced with different varieties. As Table 3 shows, it seems that students are indeed exposed to many different varieties, if not consistently, at least regularly or sometimes.

Table 3. Students' exposure to different varieties during lessons.



The variety students are faced with most consistently is British English (RP), closely followed by American English (GA) and Scottish English. It should, however, be noted that only six out of fifteen teachers said their students were consistently faced with RP. Surprisingly, four teachers claimed their students were never faced with RP and three teachers claimed their students were never faced with GA. With the results of Jenkins' study in mind it is, however, not surprising that students are rarely faced with Spanish English, as it is a non-native variety. Given the result of this question it would have been interesting to see how the teachers would have rated other varieties. The varieties used in this question are mostly varieties of standard Englishes.

4.3 Students' use of English

Table 4 shows the participants' opinion on what varieties can be considered as correct as British or American standard Englishes in students' written production. When it comes to students' use of English it seems that the teachers would consider the varieties most similar to Standard British or American English, namely Australian and Canadian English, the most acceptable. Surprisingly, almost half of the teachers would consider a mix of American and British English correct. However, those who would accept a mix of American and British English restricted this to a mix of vocabulary. One teacher makes the following comment regarding mixed usage of of British and American English: "Mix to an extent. Spelling conventions should be adhered to; vocabulary mix can be tolerated to an extent". However, as Table 4 shows, the other half of the teachers would not accept a mix of varieties. This becomes clear in the comment left by T1 (similar comments were made by other teachers):

"While I've answered yes to a number of varieties, I would only approve of the use of the mentioned varieties if the use is consistent and not mixed. I would never approve of the use of L2 English in favour of L1 English, meaning that unless English is the native and/or official language in a country, I would not approve of it".

Finally, it is interesting to note that of all varieties of English, English influenced by Swedish grammar would be the least accepted.

Table 4. Varieties teachers would consider as good as Standard British or Standard American English in written production.

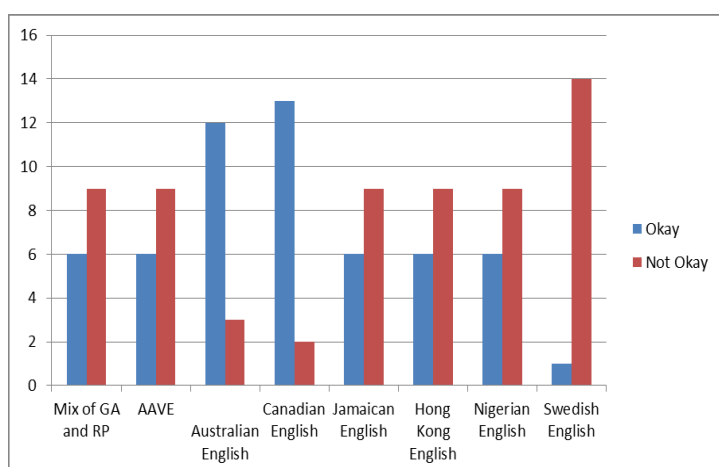
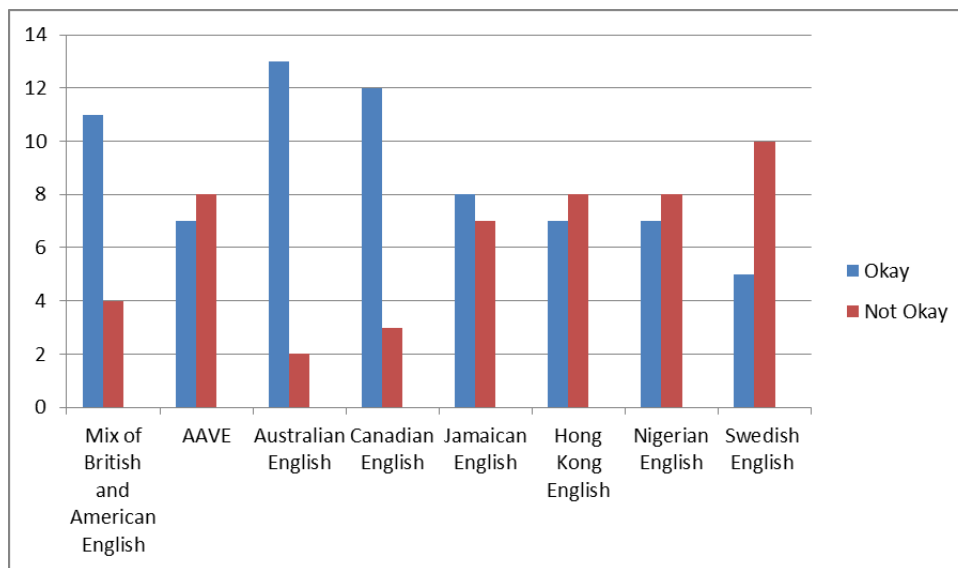


Table 5. Varieties teachers would consider as good as Standard British or Standard American English in oral production.



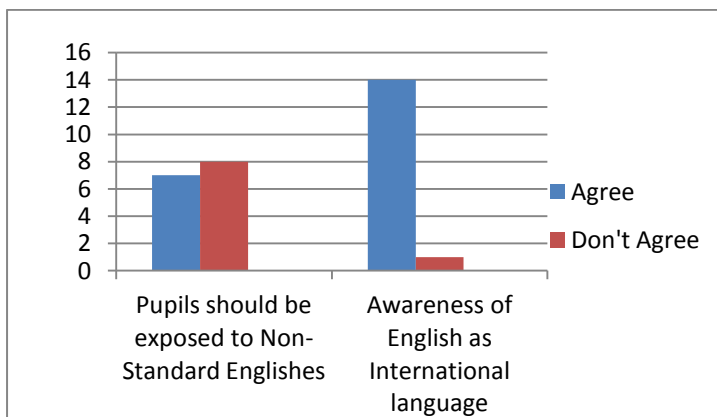
The results in Table 5 indicate that teachers would accept a greater variety in oral production than was the case for written production. In other words, a blend of varieties seems to be more accepted in oral than in written production. As T4 puts it: “as long as they talk...”.

Once again, the varieties most similar to British and American English seem to be the most acceptable varieties. Note that two thirds of the teachers would accept Swedish English in oral production, compared to the one teacher who would accept Swedish influences in written work. This is in accordance with the results in Jenkins’s study where most teachers approved of Swedish English because its pronunciation was close to native-like. Only the Swedish teacher did not approve of it.

4.4 Interpretations of the Syllabus

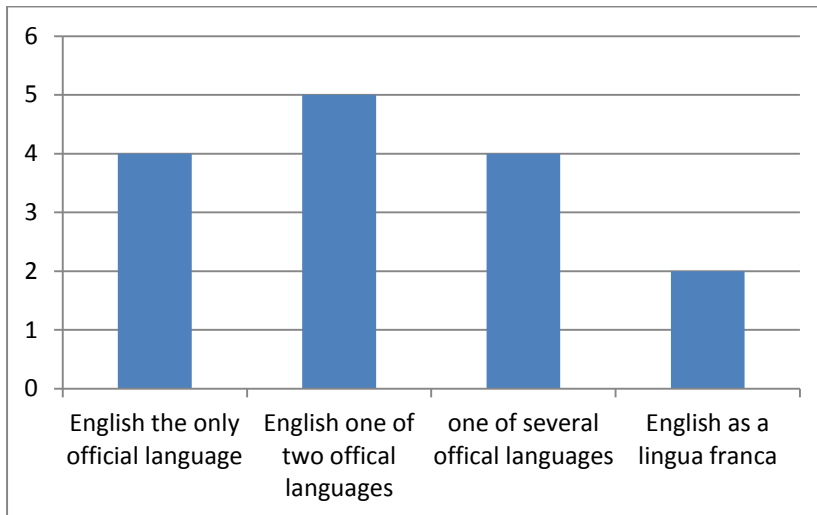
The third part of the questionnaire was about various vague formulations in the syllabus. The first formulation the teachers were asked to comment on was what was meant by “an expanding English speaking world”. They were asked to consider whether they agreed with two given alternative interpretations. The results show that whereas most teachers would agree that “an expanding English-speaking world” means that the students would be aware of the fact that English is an international language, only half of the teachers found that the same expression indicated that the students should be exposed to non-standard Englishes. Note that it was possible to answer “yes” to both of the statements on this question.

Table 6. “Expanding English-Speaking World”



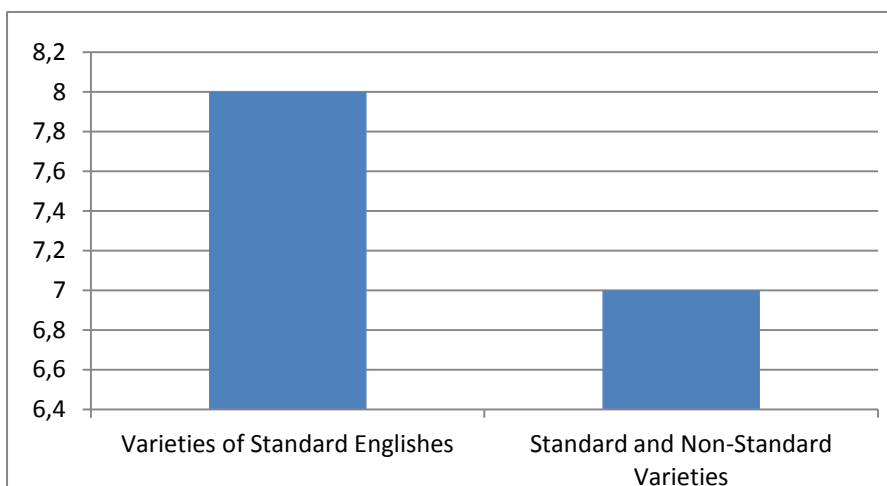
The next quote from the syllabus which the teachers were asked to consider involved the formulation “English-speaking countries”. They were asked to choose the alternative they thought best matched their interpretation. As seen in Table 7, there is a great variation in interpretations among the teachers.

Table 7. “English-Speaking Countries”.



The last quote the teachers were asked to consider was what “regional in nature” might refer to. The teachers’ opinions on this were just as diverse as for the previous question. Half of the teachers interpreted the meaning of “regional in nature” as varieties of standard Englishes and half the teachers interpreted it as standard as well as non-standard Englishes.

Table 8. “Regional in Nature”



5. Discussion

When interpreting the results, there are a few factors that ought to be considered. Firstly, the validity of the study would have increased if more teachers had answered the questionnaire. Secondly, as it was an anonymous survey, there is a possibility that more than one teacher at the same school may have answered the questionnaire. This might have led to less variation in answers to some of the questions, as teachers working at the same school might work closely together, for example by planning the items to be taught together. However, it is not likely that this will have had a great impact on the results, as the teachers do not have to do everything exactly the same way. Moreover, some of the questions were about their personal opinions rather than the schools' policy. Even though it is impossible to generalize the results of this study to all teachers in Sweden, the results still give an indication of what kind of English teachers think should be taught.

Overall the results show that Swedish teachers of English, when contemplating their own language competence, feel that a native grammar is more important than a native-like pronunciation. Moreover, the results suggest that teaching materials using a variety of standard Englishes are preferred over materials using only one variety. Interestingly, the results also suggest that contrary to what the teachers' said about their own language competence, they seem to expect their students' to have not only a native-like grammar, but also a native-like accent. However, overall, there is a greater acceptance towards different varieties in oral than in written production. Last, but not least, the results suggest that the syllabus is indeed vaguely formulated and therefore can be interpreted in various ways. The most common interpretation seems to be that the students' should be faced with different standard varieties.

In the next section of this chapter, the teachers' reactions to teaching materials will be analyzed. Subsequently, the teachers' reactions to accents (pronunciation) and written English will be discussed, and thirdly, the teachers' interpretations of the syllabus will be comment on. Lastly comments on the investigation will be made.

5.1 Teaching Materials

When it comes to teaching materials, the great majority of teachers seem to think that it is important that the materials used contain more than one variety of English (p.19). The main reason for using different varieties seems to be that the teachers want to prepare their students for the 'real world' (p.19). The meaning of 'many different varieties' seem to be limited to meaning native standard varieties. However, in order to prepare the students for 'the real world', it could be argued that non-standard varieties have to be taught as the students are more likely to meet non-native English than native English speakers. Yet, contradictory to what the teachers said about the importance of using many varieties in teaching, most of them seem to prefer British or American English as the main source of their teaching material and varieties of (native) English similar to those varieties as their secondary sources (p.20). This might only reflect the fact that British or American teaching materials are easier to access than non-native English materials, as non-native varieties generally are not codified (Graddol,2006:114).

The prominence given to British and American English could also be related to the fact that it is sometimes argued that native English is easier to understand than non-native English (Jenkins, 2007:170). It is, however, as Walker says (2010:53), arguable whether it actually is easier to understand those varieties of English or whether they are only perceived as easier as it is what most students are used to. Still, assuming that those varieties are easier to understand, it could be argued that at least the students aiming for the highest grade should be able to understand 'difficult' varieties, i.e. non-native varieties, as well. Perhaps it could even be argued that non-native varieties would be given prominence in the teaching of English in order to help the students cope with those "difficult" varieties, rather than teaching "easy" varieties as they will probably understand those anyway.

The teachers' answers also reflect the belief that native standard Englishes are 'better' than non-native varieties, which is in line with Jenkins' study (2007:70). To some extent native English

might be 'better' when it comes to teaching. However, 'better' should not be interpreted as referring to the quality of a variety, but rather to the fact that it is sufficiently codified. It is indeed good to have some common ground when teaching an international language. In fact a common ground is crucial or intelligibility will be disrupted. Hence, Standard English, such as British and American English, seem to be what is left to teach at the moment, in terms of grammar, as there are materials available in those varieties.

5.2 Accents

As stated above, the teachers in this study did not expect themselves to offer native-like English pronunciation. Hence, it is rather surprising that they seem to favor RP or GA pronunciation when it comes to their students' accents (p.22). However, this is in line with Jenkins' study where many of the teachers claimed to be content with their accents, even though their accents were not considered "perfect". Yet, despite claiming to be happy with their accents, they would prefer a native-like accent. It is impossible to say whether the teachers in my study would give similar ambivalent answers regarding their own language if asked. Still, when asked about their students' oral production and what varieties they would consider as good as RP or GA, their answers suggested that non-native accents were less desirable than native accents similar to RP or GA, such as Australian and Canadian English (p.22). This shows the same ambivalence regarding what is considered 'good' or 'proper' English accents as in Jenkins' study (2007:70).

Moreover, an interesting aspect of Jenkins' study was that all teachers, except the participating Swedish teacher, would approve of a Swedish accent (Jenkins, 2007:171). As the results of this study show, the non-native accent the teachers disapproved of the most was indeed the Swedish English accent. This is interesting, because according to the teachers in Jenkins' study, the Swedish accent was considered 'native-like'. Even though not considered as 'correct' as RP or GA, it

was still highly acceptable. This indicates that the teachers in this study are indeed rather ambivalent towards what accents they find acceptable. The teachers themselves claim not to aim at offering a native-like accent, but nevertheless they disapprove of students' use of a Swedish English accent, even though to some extent it is considered 'native-like'. This ambivalence could indicate that the teachers to some extent are willing to teach ELF, but they are still restricted in their view of what Jenkins called the 'social connotation hypothesis' (2007:220). In other words, the teachers are reacting to the social connotations of native Standard English, rather than its actual features. However, the negative reactions towards Swedish English could also be due to the fact that they do not like what they know. They feel that in order to truly know a foreign language, in this case English, they have to give up their native accent. This is in line with what is meant with English as a Foreign Language (EFL), where the norm is the native-speaker accent (Seidlhofer,2000:53). However, as Walker argues, accent is closely linked to identity. Giving up a native accent can therefore be perceived as giving up a part of oneself. This might be the reason why the teachers feel they do not have to offer a native-like accent, but when it comes to their students, the social connotations of native English are still what set the norms.

Interestingly, some teachers seem to accept a mixed usage of British and American English vocabulary. This could indicate that the negative attitudes towards ELF are not as cemented as they appear as first sight. On the contrary, allowing a mixed usage of vocabulary indicates that they at least to some extent are interested in teaching international English with influences of many varieties, rather than a specific variety. However, this could also have to do with the fact that their students are still rather young and have not yet reached the proficiency level where they can be expected to use one variety only.

Another group of teachers claim that they would not accept any non-native varieties. In fact they claim that they would accept any variety as long as it is an official language/native language and as long as students use one variety only. This is interesting, because on the one hand we have teachers who would presumably accept extreme versions of native English (regional accents etc),

whereas on the other hand there is one group of teachers who would not accept it. In other words there seem to exist groups with opposite beliefs, which indicates that due to the vague formulations in the syllabus, all students do not receive the same education.

Another fact that is interesting is that some teachers actually claim to accept any variety. This could be taken to mean that they expect themselves to know all these varieties. In other words, by accepting any variety as long as they are not mixed, the teachers must know the differences between all existing native varieties. This puts great demands on them as teachers. Still, it is important to keep in mind that although claiming that they would accept any official variety, it does not mean that they would actively teach all of them. Furthermore, as Thomas (1996:223) argues, standard Englishes share many features. The fact that this group of teachers would only accept native Englishes indicates that they are not supporters of the teaching of ELF. However, the fact that some teachers would accept any variety, as long as it is an official language, shows that even though the focus still is on native varieties, the concept of native English has been expanded from referring to British and American English only, to all native varieties. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that, in accordance with Jenkins' study (2007:170), it seems that British and American English still have a special prominence.

5.3 Written Production

The prominence given to native Standard English seems to be greater when it comes to written production than was the case for oral production. Many of the teachers say they think it is important to have a native-like grammar and expect their students to use standard varieties in their written work. This is in line with Vasiljeva's (2007:18) and Braine's findings (Braine,2010:28). The teachers would in other words not accept errors like those on page 8, i.e. errors that are considered not to disrupt intelligibility (Kirkpatrick,2007:167).

It is not surprising that teachers are more rigid about grammatical correctness in written production. However, it is surprising that, in relation to Vasiljeva's findings (2007:18) that there is less focus on grammatical correctness today than a decade ago; errors that not disrupt intelligibility are referred to as errors instead of mere language development (Walker 2010:51). Furthermore, as Walker argues (2010:51) there are many different standard varieties around and the differences between those are not considered as errors, but as mere differences. Yet, despite ELF being the English variety most speakers use, ELF is always compared to native English varieties and wherever differences are found those are considered to be errors.

It is interesting that the majority usage of English is considered as incorrect as opposed to an accepted minority variety. Braine argued (2010:28) that this might have to do with the fact that grammar is an area where NNS teachers do not feel inferior to NS teachers. Teaching 'proper' grammar might therefore be a sign of EFL still being higher valued than ELF, as the NNS teachers are not interested in change that would simplify the language. Still, considering the fact that many different varieties of Standard English are accepted, it is plausible to believe that the only reason ELF is not accepted is that it is not sufficiently codified. However, the strong commitment to the native standard grammar could also be taken as a sign of Jenkins being right in her assumption that people to some extent have been 'brain-washed' (2007:187).

5.4 The syllabus

When it comes to the interpretations of the syllabus, the respondents, as expected, gave a wide range of different answers (p.22-23). This indicates that the formulations in the syllabus are indeed very vague and can be interpreted in many different ways. In other words the teachers are free to choose their interpretation as long as their students reach the goals. However, it seems most teachers interpret the syllabus as referring to standard English, but at the same time they argue that

it is important that their students are prepared for the 'real world', i.e. they claim that it is important that their students are faced with different varieties of English (p.19). This means that even though, according to the teachers, there is nothing specific about teaching different varieties in the syllabus, they still think it is important to do so. This indicates that the concept of Standard English had been broadened from including only British and American English, till including all native standard varieties. However, it is surprising that the teachers, despite recognizing English as an international language, do not seem to acknowledge the importance of teaching international 'difficult' non-standard Englishes, such as Chinese English.

5.5 Comments on the Investigation

If this investigation were to be carried out again, questions five, six and seven in the questionnaire would be slightly changed, so that they would include more choices of non-standard Englishes. However, overall the investigation must be considered as successful. The questionnaire was sent out to twenty respondents and as many as fifteen returned the completed questionnaire, which must be considered a very high response rate. This indicates that the teachers felt this was an interesting question. Furthermore, another factor indicating their engagement is that a range of responses was given to the questions. In other words, they did not just click in the boxes mechanically, but spent time explaining and/or justifying their choices by filling out the comment boxes as well.

The questionnaire seems to have been sent out at the right time, approximately ten days before the November holidays, which was the deadline for returning the questionnaire. Many of the teachers returned it long before the final day, though. However, some of the teachers had trouble making the link sent to them work and were therefore sent a new link. This resulted in the responses ending up in two different piles, which meant the results had to be analyzed manually as opposed to automatically by Survey Monkey.

The results of this study can naturally not be generalized to all teachers, as this study only examined the attitudes of fifteen subjects. Yet, the results could be interpreted as an indication of what teachers think of what constitutes 'proper' English. However, in conclusion, the findings of this study are ambiguous. There seem to be many different opinions on what should be taught. Furthermore, it seems that even though the pedagogical ideas have shifted and there is a greater focus on communicating than some years ago, those ideas have not quite reached all classrooms. In other words, the 'how' of the teaching has changed, but the 'what' still seem to be greatly determined by native speakers' norms. However, there seems to be a slow change towards teaching international English, as the definition of 'native-speaker' seem to be widening. Contradictory to this, the main reason for not teaching ELF seems to be the fact that it has not been sufficiently codified yet and the fact that the old values of what is considered 'correct', i.e. British and American English, to some extent seem to remain.

For future research, it would be interesting to investigate why Swedish teachers of English dislike Swedish English. Furthermore, it is interesting to consider how long it will take before someone codifies ELF and what will happen when it has been codified: would ELF be seen as a 'real' variety, i.e. a variety that could actually be learnt, and therefore taught? In other words: would it be considered a new Standard English?

6. Implications for Teaching

Considering the fact that most speakers of English are non-native speakers, in order to prepare the students for the 'real world' (p.19), it seems necessary to get them used to varieties that deviate from the so called 'proper' Englishes (British and American English). This means that native varieties such as British and American English should not be given prominence in the language classroom as those varieties are not necessarily the most relevant ones for a lingua franca context. British and American varieties are present in Swedish society via music, movies and the Internet, which means students are likely to encounter those anyway. However, as ELF has not yet been sufficiently codified, teaching materials making use of standard Englishes still have to be used. However, this should not be a problem as long as those varieties are not seen as 'better' than other varieties.

As grammar is an important part of a language, as an insufficient grammar disrupts intelligibility, it is evident that grammar should be part of the teaching of English. However, as Jenkins has shown (Kirkpatrick,2007:167), there are errors that do not interrupt intelligibility. Therefore it is about time that the pedagogical ideas of the communicative approach are implemented, i.e. the teaching of English should focus on (international) communication, as that is what the students most likely will use their English for. This means that the aim should be to produce utterances that do not deviate too far from the native speakers, rather than trying to "become" a native speaker, which is impossible (Kirkpatrick, 2007:187). However, as stated above, as ELF is not sufficiently codified, the native grammar still has to provide the frame, although implemented with common sense and not focusing too much on mistakes that do not interrupt intelligibility.

It seems the syllabus and the grading criteria would allow for the teaching of ELF (p.13-15). Furthermore, implementing the use of ELF would hopefully have a positive effect on the teachers' and the students' self-perception as this means they do not have to pretend to be something they

are not. For example, as Walker argued (2010:63), giving up your accent might be experienced as being forced to give up a part of yourself.

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Appendix – Questionnaire

Thank you for considering participating in this research study. Before you give your consent by completing this survey, it is important for you to understand what this will involve and why the research is being done.

The study involves answering a series of questions about English as a Foreign Language in Swedish schools. The questionnaire will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

Results from this study will form part of my C-level research paper. Your data will be stored securely and kept strictly confidential. For further details, before or after participating, please contact Emma Karlsson (ek238@sussex.ac.uk).

Thank you for reading this information, and I very much hope you will decide to participate in the research.

1. I am

- male
- female

2. How many years have you been teaching for?

3. What is your target regarding your own English language competence; do you expect to have a native like:

(click the box(es) for "yes")

- grammar?
- pronunciation?

4. Do you prefer teaching materials (text books or authentic materials) to use:

- one variety of standard English (e.g. American or British English)
- one variety of non-standard English (e.g. Indian or Afro American Vernacular English)
- a mix of many standard Englishes (e.g. British, American, Australian English etc)
- a mix of non-standard Englishes (e.g. Indian, AAVE, Hong Kong English etc)
- a mix of standard and non-standard Englishes (e.g. American English and AAVE)

Comment (optional):

5. Are your students consistently, regularly, sometimes or never faced with the following English varieties during English lessons (oral or written sources)?

	consistently	regularly	sometimes	never
African American Vernacular English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
American English (GA)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Australian English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
British English (RP)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canadian English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Indian English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jamaican English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New Zealand English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nigerian Standard English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scottish English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spanish English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comment (optional):

6. In written production, would you consider the use of the following varieties of English okay* as long as it did not impede communication? Click the box for "yes" .

***okay meaning you would not try to dissuade your students from using a specific variety in favour of a British or American standard variety.**

- African American Vernacular English
- Australian English
- Canadian English
- Hong Kong English
- Jamaican English
- Mix of American and British English
- Nigerian Standard English
- Swedish English (English influenced by Swedish Grammar)

Comment (optional):

7. In oral production, would you accept* students using:

***accept meaning that you find the use of the variety as good/correct as British or American standard English**

- African American Vernacular English
- Australian English
- Canadian English
- Hong Kong English
- Jamaican English
- Mix of American English and British English
- Nigerian Standard English
- Swedish English (English spoken with Swedish accent)

Comment (optional):

8. The Swedish National Curriculum says that:

" The subject has the aim of broadening perspectives on an expanding English speaking world with its multiplicity of varying cultures"

**How would you interpret " an expanding English speaking world" ?
(Click the box(es) if you agree)**

- Pupils should be faced with non-standard Englishes during lessons.
- Pupils should be aware of the fact that English is spoken all over the world.

Comment (optional):



9. The Swedish National Curriculum says that:

" Pupils should develop their ability to reflect on ways of living and cultures in English speaking countries"

Which of the following alternatives matches your interpretation of " English speaking countries" best?

- "English-speaking countries" equals countries where English is the only official language.
- "English-speaking countries" equals countries where English is one of two official languages.
- "English-speaking countries" equals countries where English is one of several (i.e. more than two) official languages.
- "English-speaking countries" equals countries where English is used as a lingua franca.

Comment (optional):



10. The Swedish National Curriculum says that:

" Pupils should understand speech even though regional in nature"

Which of the following alternatives matches your interpretation of " regional in nature" best?

- Regional in nature means varieties of standard Englishes
- Regional in nature means standard and non-standard varieties

Comment (optional):