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Teachers' and students' attitudes and perceptions toward varieties of English in Swedish upper secondary school

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Abstract

This study investigates teachers' and students' attitudes and perceptions toward the teaching and learning of varieties of English in a Swedish upper secondary school context. Data from 129 student questionnaires and nine semi-structured teacher interviews are analyzed. The results show that British English (BrE) appears to retain a prominent role amongst upper secondary students in Sweden as their ideologized values reveal that they feel that BrE sounds more pleasant and intelligent than AmE. However, American English (AmE) is the preferred variety of English amongst the participating students. The results also show that teachers predominantly teach British Standard English (BrSE) and American Standard English (AmSE), which they consider to be the 'correct' varieties of English. Teachers agree it is important to teach a wide range of Englishes, but do so by contrasting them with BrSE and AmSE. This study further suggests that other varieties of English are treated as a "funny thing" by the participating teachers, and argues that teachers must be made aware of their own language attitudes.

Introduction

The current syllabus for English at the upper secondary level in Sweden states that students of English should "meet written and spoken English of different kinds"¹. The course plans for English 5, 6 and 7, which are the three courses taught at the upper secondary level, further state that students should learn "[s]poken language, also with different social and dialect features". In the last three decades, researchers have predicted that Swedish students would come to prefer American Standard English (AmSE) due to

¹ The Swedish national syllabus for the teaching of English at the upper secondary level:

<https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.4fc05a3f164131a74181056/1535372297288/English-swedish-school.pdf>

the vitality of the variety and its strong presence in media (Bradac and Giles, 1991). British English (BrE) had previously dominated the educational scene in Sweden, but according to Modiano (1993), American English (AmE) was gaining in importance. Modiano further stated that BrE would be “forced to accept parity with AmE” (1993, p. 40), and predicted that for some, AmE would become the preferred variant of the language. These predictions were made more than twenty years ago, and the aim of this study is to discover if these predictions came to fruition. A further aim is to discover how upper secondary level teachers perceive varieties and the ideas and attitudes they have toward varieties of English in order to obtain a more thorough understanding of what they teach their students and why.

The following research questions will be addressed:

1. Which variety of English do Swedish upper secondary school students prefer and why?
2. What attitudes and perceptions do the participating teachers have toward varieties of English?

Background

Varieties of the English language

A *variety*, also known as a *lect* or a *code*, is a specific form of a language. Hudson (1996, p. 22) has defined a variety as “a set of linguistic items with similar distribution”. With this definition, national varieties such as Canadian English, regional varieties such as London English, and the English used by football commentators, are all varieties according to Wardhaugh (2010, p. 24). The term variety has come to be preferred by linguists over ‘dialect’ and ‘accent’ due to their association with various negative connotations (Clark 2007, p. 5). Social variation occurs within each of the regional varieties due to socioeconomic, ethnic, gender, age, and educational differences, to name a few (Greenbaum and Quirk 1990, p. 5). Wolfram and Schilling (2016, p. 59, pp. 79-81) have defined levels of variation to include the vocabulary of a language (lexicon), the sound system of a language (phonology), the formation of words and sentences (morpho-syntax), the meanings of words (semantics), and the use of language forms to perform different functions (pragmatics). One variety can further differ from another in its spelling (orthography); however, this is the most superficial aspect in English with only minor differences, according to Greenbaum and Quirk (1990, p. 6).

English is spoken by three distinct groups of language users. These three groups are made up of those who speak English as their native language (ENL), as their second language (ESL), or as a foreign language (EFL) (Jenkins 2009, p. 15). ENL is spoken by those who have been born and raised in a country where English is historically the first language. ENL is not one variety of English, but rather a large number of regional varieties, and the 'standard' form of the language differs between the different territories. The two 'traditional' Standard Englishes, BrSE and AmSE, "co-exist with many other Englishes in the UK, the US, and elsewhere as part of a 'world English' or within a range of 'world Englishes'" (McArthur 2001, p. 1). A standard English is in some ways different from other varieties in that it is primarily a written variety. It can be defined as a grammatical and lexical system that is a "superposed dialect which is socially sanctioned for institutional use" (Widdowson 1994, p. 380). A standard English does not have a distinctive phonology and can as such be manifested by any accent.

Language attitudes

Attitudes to language are essentially social attitudes, with Hult (2004) concluding that users cannot separate social functions of a language from their language and culture acquisition. Kachru (1990, p. 140) has stated that "one does not have to be initiated in phonetics or linguistics to identify, for example, a speaker of American, British, or Indian varieties of English", but when it comes to attitudes it is not as simple. While AmE and BrE are categorized as native varieties, Indian English is at least implicitly categorized as a non-native variety (Nelson and Kang 2015, p. 321), irrespective of the fact that English is the native language of a large group of ENL speakers in India (Jenkins 2009, p. 16). Linguists agree that "no variety of a language is inherently better than any other" (Wardhaugh 2010, p. 356), with the only exception being pidgins. However, the attitude that linguists have toward varieties is not shared by everyone else. Wardhaugh (2010, p. 357), among others, has noted that many believe that some languages or varieties are better than others, and that "it is widely believed that you can be advantaged or disadvantaged not just socially or esthetically, but also cognitively, i.e., intellectually, by the accident of which language or variety of a language you happen to speak." Trudgill (1975, p. 26) has argued that

[t]he fact that no one language is 'better' than any other is important for the role of language in education (...) Just as there is no linguistic reason for arguing that Gaelic is superior to Chinese, so no English dialect can be claimed to be linguistically superior or inferior to any other. All English dialects are equally complex, structured and valid linguistic systems.

Regarding non-native speech, Smith and Rafiqzad (1983, p. 57) have claimed “[s]ince native speaker phonology doesn’t appear to be more intelligible than non-native phonology, there seems to be no reason to insist that the performance target in the English classroom be a native speaker.” Smith (1992, p. 75) later stated that “[o]ur speech ... in English needs to be intelligible only to those with whom we wish to communicate in English.” Despite this, many researchers have found that EFL learners associate status and correctness with BrE and AmE, and perceive these to be their model for correct pronunciation (e.g. Buckingham 2015, McKenzie 2008).

In a Swedish context, Bradac and Giles (1991) have speculated that students prefer AmE as a model for pronunciation because they associate attractiveness and solidarity dimensions with AmSE, while status and competence are associated with Received Pronunciation (RP). In Denmark, Ladegaard and Sachdev (2006) found that although Danish EFL learners found AmE to be more socially attractive, they considered RP to be their preferred model of pronunciation. In Norway, Rindal (2010) similarly concluded that RP was the favored model of pronunciation amongst a group of upper secondary students. While the students rated the dimension popularity higher for General American than for RP, formality, intelligence, education, politeness, aesthetic quality and model of pronunciation were all rated higher for RP.

Methodology

Teacher participants

A large number of principals and teachers were contacted via e-mail in early 2017. The e-mail explained that I was looking for teachers to fill in a questionnaire and to participate in an interview on English teaching. The e-mail also explained that I was interested in language attitudes and policy documents, but did not mention that the study was specifically concerned with varieties of English. Nine teachers responded to the e-mail and agreed to participate in the study. All nine teachers have completed a teacher education program in Sweden and were teaching English at the upper secondary level at the time of the interview. Their level of experience ranged from 1.5 years to 35 years, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographical information about the participating teachers. Listed are the participants' pseudonyms, current workplace, which type of program the students they teach attend, age, decade of teaching qualification, and years of experience teaching English.

Participant	School	Program	Age	Qualification	Years of experience
Marcus	Charter	Academic	20-29	2010-2017	1.5
Jenny	Charter	Academic	30-39	2010-2017	3
Axel	Charter	Academic and vocational	30-39	2010-2017	4
Henry	Public	Academic	50-59	2000-2009	9
Lars	Public	Academic	30-39	2000-2009	10
Camilla	Public	Academic and vocational	30-39	2000-2009	10
Susanne	Public	Academic	40-49	2000-2009	12
Johan	Public	Academic	40-49	1990-1999	17
Lene	Public	Adult education	60-69	1980-1989	35

Table 1 further shows that the participants include teachers who work in public schools as well as charter schools, with students who are preparing for higher education (academic programs) as well as students in vocational programs and adult education. The teachers vary in age from 20-29 to 60-69, and received their teaching qualification between 1980 and 2017. All of the participants are from Sweden apart from Henry who is a native speaker of English from the United Kingdom, and Lene who is from Denmark.

The nine teachers were interviewed one-on-one in English during March and April 2017 at a location chosen by the participant. Immediately preceding the interviews, the teachers filled in a quantitative questionnaire (Appendix 1). The questionnaire answers were used to inform the semi-structured interviews. The choice to conduct interviews rather than only to distribute questionnaires was made with the intention to be able to gain in-depth data and to ask the respondents to explain or elaborate on their answers. This design has been labelled by Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, and Hanson (2003) as a sequential explanatory design. A variation of this design is the retrospective interview, in which the respondents' own questionnaire responses are used as retrospective prompts for further open-ended reflection about what they meant. The participants were encouraged to elaborate, and the interviews ranged between 16 and 40 minutes, with an average of 26 minutes.

Student participants

The second group of participants in this study consisted of 129 students who filled in a questionnaire (Appendix 2). All of the participants in this group were students who had one of the nine teacher participants as their English teacher at the time. The participating students were between the ages of 15 and 35, with the clear majority being 16 to 17 years old. The students were not asked to provide any other demographic data.

The use of written questionnaires as a means of measuring attitudes in a certain population is a popular method which builds on the idea that questionnaires from a small portion of a large population can be used to measure, describe and analyze characteristics, behaviors and attitudes (Palviainen and Huhta 2015, pp. 193-194). The questionnaire used in this study was constructed with the intention that it would not take more than five minutes for the students to complete, and consists of quantitative and qualitative components, which are of equal importance. The questionnaire was given to their teachers, with most of the teachers agreeing to distribute it to a small group of their students. Two teachers were not willing to distribute questionnaires to their students due to upcoming national tests. One teacher requested that the author distribute the questionnaires during one of his lessons. The students were provided with information about why they were being asked to complete the questionnaire, and that it was optional for them to do so. The questionnaire included a glossary (the same glossary was also given to the teachers) which explained the following terms: *accent*, *variety*, *proficient*, and *near-native proficiency*. One question (“Why do you want to have the accent you chose above? Use keywords to explain”) prompted the students to write their own answer and provided example keywords which have likely influenced the responses. The remaining questions were multiple-choice. The questionnaires were filled in anonymously by the students and have been analyzed together as one group.

Data analysis

The qualitative material collected from the teacher interviews were first transcribed word by word. After the selection of which quotes from the interviews to include in the present paper, parts of the material were transcribed again using standard orthography, which Roberts (1997) has suggested should be used if possible to avoid stigmatization, in addition to producing easily readable discourse.

The transcribed material was analyzed through a line-by-line reading, as recommended by McCarty (2015). The data was further coded using one or

more short textual labels, as suggested by Dörnyei (2007, p. 26) and exemplified in (i).

- i. *Language attitude; Regional variety*: If we look at the South first then like y'all, and the way they tend to sort of mash words together in the South, and the sound of it because, how would you describe it, it's sort of, I say sort of lazy ring to it if you get what I mean. (Axel)

Other labels which were used included *national variety*, *social variety*, *ideology*, and *perception of students*. The qualitative data from the student questionnaire was categorized into twelve emergent dimensions: *prestigious*, *formal*, *professional*, *proper*, *intellectual*, *simple*, *casual*, *sloppy*, *pleasant*, *cool*, *authentic* and *exposure*. The twelve categories have been named after words that were common in the data, but as the students provided a large number of keywords, the choice was made to categorize keywords that were synonyms or nearly identical in meaning into a smaller set of dimensions. One such example is the keywords “sounds more pleasant”, “sounds nicer” and “sounds better” which all occurred in the data and were categorized in the dimension *pleasant*.

Results

Students' preference with regard to varieties

The 129 students who participated in this study were first asked to state which accent they want to have when they speak English. As Figure 1 shows, 48 percent said they want to have an American accent, while 35 percent said they want a British accent.

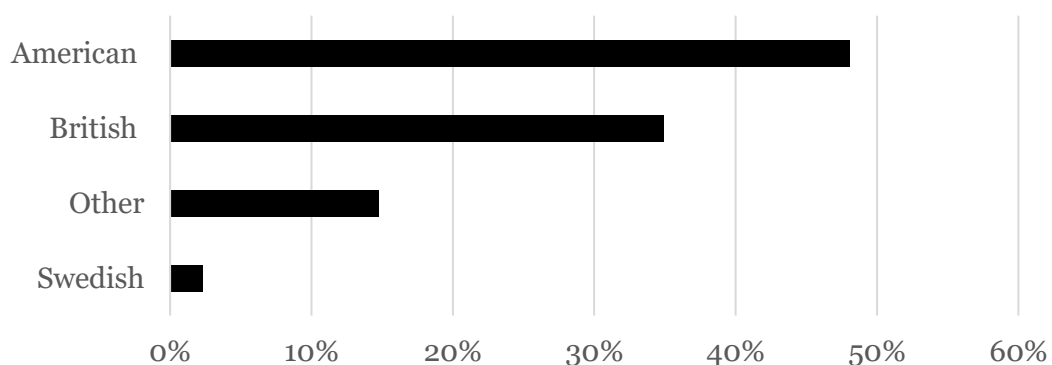


Figure 1. Students' responses to the question “What accent do you most want to have when you speak English?”

Figure 1 further shows that two percent of students want to sound Swedish when they speak English, while 15 percent responded “Other” on the

questionnaire. The “Other” answers included one student who wants to sound like “myself” because one accent should not be “more praised than another”, ten students who wrote that they want to sound neutral or have a mix of native English accents, and eight students who want a native accent which is not BrE or AmE. The latter responses include Australian, Canadian, Irish, Scottish, and Indian English.

The participating students were further asked which variety or varieties of English they think should be taught in Sweden. The results in Figure 2 show that the largest group of students (34 percent) think BrE and AmE should be taught.

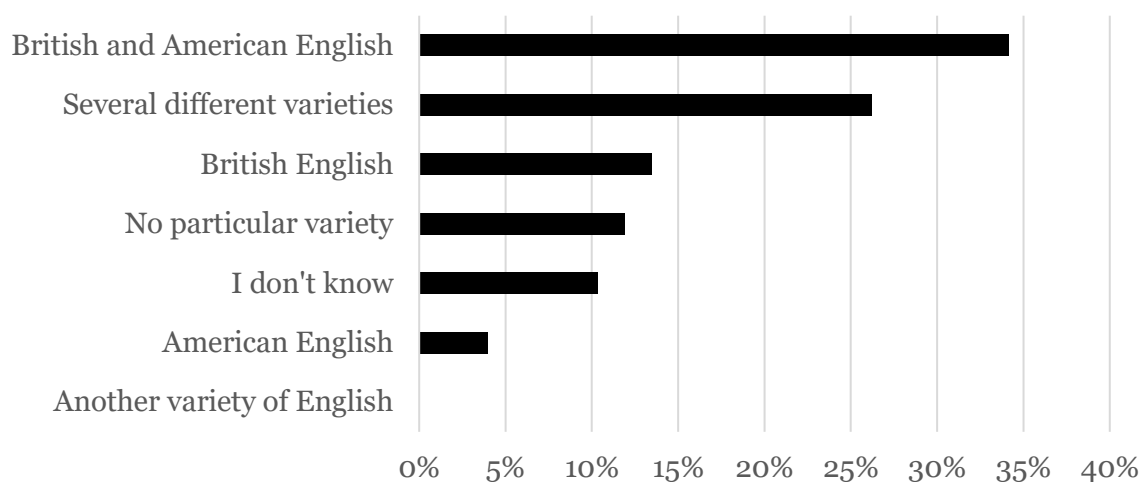


Figure 2. Students’ responses to the question “Which variety of English do you think should be taught in Sweden?”

As many as one in four of the students (26 percent) say that several different varieties of English should be taught in school. A further 14 percent chose the option that only BrE should be taught in Sweden, while 4 percent think only AmE should be taught.

According to nearly all of their teachers, the students prefer AmE. For example, Susanne said in the interview that she believes 80 percent of her students prefer AmE, while Camilla thought as many as 90 percent of her students want to speak like an American. Camilla and Lars explained that some of their students speak BrE to “show off” as seen in (1), or because they think it sounds “quaint”, as seen in (2).

- (1) Well, most students they are sort of leaning towards American because that’s what they hear in TV series and so on, but then occasionally you still see those, if they want to show off, they will go for the more British kind, and I don’t know

if that's because I speak this way or if it's because they think they will sound a bit posher. (Camilla)

- (2) There's always one or two students that wants to sound British because they think it sounds quaint and they like Harry Potter. (Lars)

Henry stated that he does not know that his students necessarily *want* to speak AmE, but that they do, which he thinks is a result of their exposure to AmE. Henry further stated that some of his students have said that they think AmE is “more normal” and “cooler” than BrE, as seen in (3).

- (3) I don't know if they want to, but they do, and I think that's the exposure they have to a lot of media in American English and occasionally some students have expressed that they think American English is cooler than British English, and more normal because more people speak it. (Henry)

The students' answers to these two questions combined with their teachers' responses suggests that a large number of the students want to speak and learn AmE. However, the students' responses reveal that they do not want to speak and learn AmE to the degree that their teachers believe, and it is clear that many more students want to be taught BrE than their teachers perceive.

In order to understand why the students want to learn these specific varieties, they were asked to write keywords about why they wished to have one specific accent. This resulted in 196 keywords which mainly commented on AmE and BrE. The students' ideologized values for AmE and BrE, as seen in Figure 3 and 4, reveal that many students prefer AmE because it sounds *pleasant*, that it is *cool*, and that it is *simple*. BrE, on the other hand, is also said to be *pleasant*, but students also prefer it because it is more *authentic* and *prestigious*.

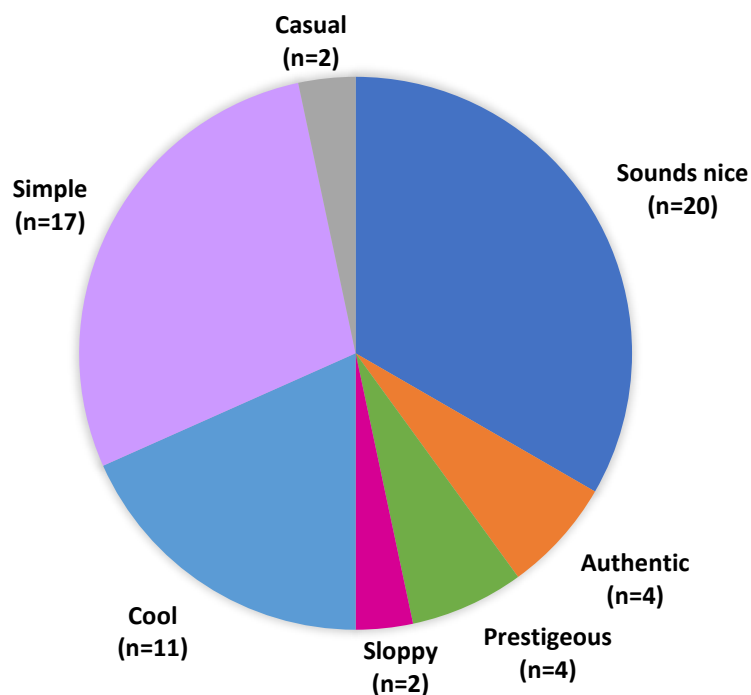


Figure 3. Students' ideologized values of American English.

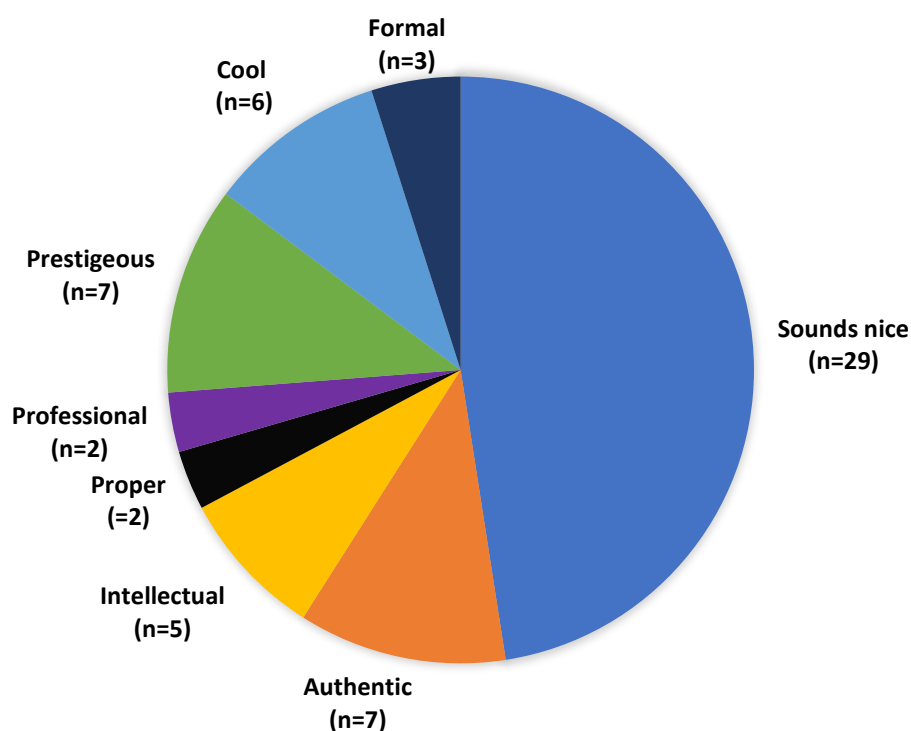


Figure 4. Students' ideologized values of British English.

As the two figures show, further dimensions which were associated with AmE were that it is *authentic*, *prestigious*, *sloppy*, and *casual*. Other dimensions which were associated with BrE were *intellectual*, *formal* (as opposed to informal), *cool*, *professional*, and *proper*. One additional keyword that was

common in the data, which has not been included in Figure 3 or 4, is *exposure*. Nineteen students stated they prefer AmE because it is the variety that they are exposed to the most. *Exposure* was listed as the reason for preferring BrE by three students.

In conclusion, Swedish upper secondary level students appear to prefer AmE due to their level of exposure to the variety, their perception that AmE is easier or simpler to speak, and that they think it sounds more pleasant. The relatively large group of students who prefer BrE also prefer it because they think it sounds more pleasant. They further prefer BrE because they feel it is the most authentic, prestigious and intellectual variety of English. This is line with Ladegaard and Sachdev (2006), and Rindal's (2010) findings in Denmark and Norway where students rated BrE higher for pleasantness, intelligence and formality. However, unlike the students in Denmark and Norway, the largest group of students in this study considers AmE to be their model of pronunciation.

Teachers' attitudes and perceptions of varieties of English

The nine participating teachers revealed a wide range of ideas, attitudes and thoughts on varieties of English during the interviews conducted for this study. Marcus answered that he teaches his students BrE on the questionnaire, but later said in the interview that he chose BrE because he speaks and writes BrE and ideally wants his students to produce BrE. However, he does not explicitly teach his students BrE or any other variety of English. Axel similarly admitted to not teaching his students about varieties of English, apart from occasionally pointing out the differences between BrE and AmE, but after some thought added that he recently spent some time teaching his students the differences between Southern American English and Northern American English, as seen in (4), during a lesson on the American Civil War.

(4) If we look at the South first then like y'all and the way they tend to sort of mash words together in the South, and the sound of it because, how would you describe it, it's sort of, I say it has a sort of lazy ring to it, if you get what I mean.
(Axel)

Jenny said that she feels it is very important for the students to learn that not everyone in the UK speaks "classical English", as seen in (8).

(5) In Great Britain there is a difference between classical English, the one that we usually say, the one type that the Queen speaks, and then if you go outside London to certain areas and they have a completely different accent, and that

could be related to their social environment or educational background and so on, it's important to make these distinctions (...) so that if one day some of my students get in touch with a person who doesn't speak classical English, so that they do not wonder "what is this, what kind of a language is this?", so that they know, so that they have this awareness. (Jenny)

Jenny also explained that she aims to teach her students both BrE and AmE and that she does so by making a choice by herself, or together with her students, whether they should speak with a British or an American accent during a given lesson, as seen in (6). Jenny further explained that her students are not always happy with her choice, as seen in (7).

(6) Sometimes I ask my students "Do you want me to have an American accent or a British accent, which one are you interested in?" and it varies sometimes. Sometimes they say let's have a British accent, for instance, so then I have to switch. (Jenny)

(7) They say "Oh, do we have to have a British accent today? Please switch, just for today." (Jenny)

Teachers Camilla and Lars both discussed teaching their students a number of varieties of English, but consistently returned to that they teach their students about certain varieties because they are 'fun' or 'interesting'. Lars said that he teaches varieties as a "funny thing, or an interesting aspect of English", and explained that he has taught his students about Cockney by watching a "very funny" instructional video about how to speak the variety, while Camilla specifically mentioned Geordie and Irish English and said that she always tries to teach one of the two varieties "just because the fun of it", as seen in (8).

(8) I always try to get a bit of Geordie in or a bit of Irish English, just because the fun of it, and I think because I think it's fun, the students will also enjoy learning more about different dialects. (Camilla)

A consistent theme throughout the interviews was the idea of awareness. Several of the teachers emphasized how important it is to be conscious of different varieties but appear to have different views on who should be aware of the varieties. Whereas Lars, Johan and Jenny stressed that it is important for the students to have an awareness of different varieties, Camilla and Marcus only mentioned that it is important for them as the teacher to be aware of varieties, as exemplified in (9).

- (9) I need to be aware that well, they know what trash can is but they don't know what a dust bin is, okay. So I mean I have to know those things and those times I think about that. Sometimes also when we do listening things, I think that I should be aware of, well, what kind of English is this and what problems may arise from this and so on. (Marcus)

Another theme that was brought up several times in relation to what varieties are and why they should be taught was the concept of culture. Susanne and Jenny both appeared to consider the teaching of varieties to be the same as the teaching of culture. Susanne explained that she believes that she should teach her students about several different varieties of English because the syllabus says that she should teach her students about “the cultures where English is spoken”, as seen in (10), while Jenny stated that the teaching of varieties is a part of English language as a culture, and that it is important for her students to understand that other English-speaking countries “produce their own accent and their own culture”.

- (10) My general view, or from what I remember at least, it says that look at the cultures where English is spoken and so on, and they always have these words in plural then. Different cultures or societies and so that's my interpretation then that you should look at different cultures when they actually speak the language. (Susanne)

A further theme that was often brought up during the interviews was the focus on the two “traditional” standard Englishes, BrSE and AmSE (McArthur 2001, p. 1). Susanne, for example, stated that she teaches her students about different national varieties, but that she does so by contrasting them with the “norms”, while Jenny said that she believes her students want to learn AmE, but that she has nevertheless made the choice to alternate between BrE and AmE because she believes it is important for her students to be exposed to both varieties. Axel appeared to consider BrE and AmE to be the only available options to teach, as evidenced in (11), when he was asked if it has been an active choice not to teach a particular variety.

- (11) I don't feel I get any support for one or the other in the curriculum so I haven't, it hasn't really crossed my mind that much. (Axel)

Several of the teachers ask their students to choose one of BrE or AmE. Marcus stated that some of his students tend to mix BrE and AmE vocabulary and spelling, and that he tells them from the beginning that “any way is fine as long as you choose to stick with one or the other”. Henry similarly said that he teaches his students to separate BrE and AmE, and that he tells his

students that they should be consistent in using one of the varieties in presentations and essays. Camilla also encourages her students to separate BrE and AmE in writing and to think about the differences in spelling, but said that she no longer focuses on vocabulary because she believes it does not matter as native speakers of English would understand vocabulary from other varieties of English. One further example is Henry, who said in the interview that he highlights the differences between “English English” and “American English”, and that he tells his students that they should be as consistent as possible, both in speaking and writing, in one of the “main types of English, English English or American English”. Henry also noted that the oral parts of the Swedish national test include different accents, but that the English is “usually quite clean and not that dialectic [sic]”. Trudgill (1975) has argued that one variety cannot be claimed to be linguistically superior or inferior to another, but several of the teachers’ descriptions of what they teach with regard to varieties appears to suggest that they consider non-standard varieties to be deficient, and that it is only the “clean”, “main types” of English that are not “not that dialectic” which are correct.

In clear contrast with these teachers’ preference for BrSE and AmSE, Lars stated in the interview that it is his belief that the teaching of varieties does not matter anymore, as seen in (12).

- (12) I think the awareness is important. There are varieties, but I think that, it’s my personal belief that it doesn’t matter anymore. English isn’t a language that can be said to be tied to a specific place or even time, it debridges everything now and I would say that there is a Swedish English which is acceptable and even preferable in some cases.

Lars further explained during the interview that he used to believe it was important for his students to choose one variety (BrE or AmE), but that he has changed his mind and now believes that Swedish English is equally acceptable, in some cases even preferable, from teaching, travelling and reading about varieties and, in his words, discovering that “they are as confused as we are” in Britain with regard to spelling, amongst other things, and that there is no point in teaching a variety that is “changing as we speak”.

To summarize, it is clear that the teachers who participated in this study all teach their students about varieties of English to some extent, but they appear to do so by exaggerating stereotypes. The primary varieties which are taught are without question BrSE and AmSE, with many of the students being told by their teachers to choose one of BrE and AmE and to be consistent in their use of their chosen variety.

Discussion

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, several scholars have described how AmSE is replacing RP as the norm (e.g. Crystal, 2003; Bradac and Giles, 1991). In spite of this, relatively recent studies from Norway (Rindal, 2010) and Denmark (Ladegaard and Sachdev, 2006) have shown that EFL students still consider RP to be the most attractive model of pronunciation. The findings in this study, however, appear to suggest that Bradac and Giles (1991) and Modiano (1993) were correct when they predicted that AmSE would become the preferred variety of English in Sweden, although it must be noted that fewer than half (48 percent) of the students in this study responded that they want to have an American accent. A further 35 percent of students responded that they want to have a BrE accent, which is considerably more than their teachers hypothesized, and could suggest that BrE retains a prominent role amongst youths in Sweden. This is supported by the students' ideologized values of BrE and AmE, which reveal that students want to speak BrE because they think it sounds more pleasant, intelligent and formal, while AmE is chosen because of the amount of exposure to the variety, and the students' perception that AmE is easier. Only four percent of students respond that they think that solely AmE should be taught in Sweden, with the majority opting instead for "British and American English" or "Several different varieties" of English. Students' preference for AmE must be argued to be a result of the American global cultural hegemony (Crystal, 2003), with the influence of the United States with regard to TV, film and literature determined to be very strong in Sweden already in 1994 (Blanck, 2006). Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck, and Smit (1997) have further argued that students prefer one variety due to greater familiarity with it from EFL lessons and travel. None of the teachers in this study have claimed that they teach AmE only, but the interview data suggests that BrE no longer dominates in education in Sweden.

The findings of this study instead suggest that the participating teachers predominantly teach their students BrSE in combination with AmSE and focus on the differences between the two varieties. Although some other varieties are clearly taught (primarily national varieties, but also some regional and social varieties found in the United Kingdom and the United States), they are often contrasted with the "norms" (BrSE and AmSE). Several of the teachers further tell their students to choose one of the two "main types" of English and to be consistent in their use of BrE or AmE. It appears as if the 'traditional' standard Englishes are so prestigious amongst the teachers that they have not considered that they are not more 'correct' than any other variety of the language. Johan stated in the interview that in

his opinion, BrE is not more correct than AmE, but that it is important for the students to speak “correct English”, which begs the question, what is correct English? While linguists agree that all varieties are equal, many non-linguists believe that some languages or varieties *are* better or more correct than others (Wardhaugh, 2010, pp. 356-357). The teachers in this study are likely found somewhere in between, with, for example, Camilla stating that she actively thinks about not being biased “toward any different kind of English”. Naturally, there are valid reasons for teaching BrSE and AmSE, and researchers have, for example, suggested that students’ identification with the target language is critical in second language learning (Sachdev and Wright, 1996; Giles and Coupland, 1991). As such, it can be important for students to be allowed to learn the variety they prefer. At the same time, it is undeniable that the learning of varieties allows students to more easily understand different speakers of English, and this is something that is mentioned by several of the teachers. Lene, for example, said that the British Isles varieties are the hardest ones she can introduce students to, but that it is her goal for the students to be able to have the confidence to understand different varieties, as seen in (13).

- (13) It would be listening, for the students to be able to manage that they don’t, that their ears are prepared for different kinds and that they have the confidence, they grow into the confidence of knowing, okay this may be a shock to me, but if I just give it a few minutes, I can manage. And that there’s a pattern to the varieties, okay so the vowel sounds like that, but I can pick them out, and so within minutes I can understand what somebody is saying. (Lene)

A further practical reason for learning about varieties is that some students are self-conscious about how they sound, and by learning about the different ways of speaking English, as suggested by Camilla in (14), students may worry less about how they sound.

- (14) What I do try to teach is the fact that there are different ways of speaking English and you shouldn’t, well you shouldn’t be too focused on one because also some students might be nervous about how they sound, and I can also say well it’s okay, we do speak differently. (Camilla)

It is evident that not all of the participating teachers consider the teaching of varieties to be important, however, particularly in the case of regional and social varieties. Susanne, for example, stated that she does not know enough about regional or social varieties to teach them, which suggests that she does not consider it to be important for her students to learn varieties of language

beyond the “norms”. Other teachers revealed their attitudes about ‘non-traditional’ varieties of English when they stated that they teach their students about certain varieties as a “funny thing” and “just because the fun of it”. Bradac and Giles (1991, p. 10) have recommended that both teachers and students need to become aware of their language attitudes, and that teachers need to “intervene in the stereotyping process” to help their students develop an awareness of their attitudes. Such intervention would likely have positive consequences for students in their learning of all foreign languages, in addition to positive social consequences (Bradac and Giles, 1991, p. 10), but in this study, it appears as if some of the teachers are instead exaggerating stereotypes (see, e.g., example [4] where Axel says Southern American English has a lazy ring to it). It is not unlikely that this results in their students learning that non-standard varieties of not only English, but all languages, are deficient.

Pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research

Teachers need to be aware of the current status of English in the world in order for them to more adequately involve a range of varieties of English in the classrooms. Several of the teachers who participated in this study openly stated that they struggle to understand the current syllabus, and one even stated that she cannot teach her students about regional and social varieties of English as she does not have enough knowledge about varieties of English herself. I would argue that this is a failure from the participating teachers’ higher education institutions. In order for teachers who are already working at the upper secondary level to improve their teaching on varieties, in-service training should be provided in which teachers gain knowledge about World Englishes and currently available resources that they can use in their classrooms. Furthermore, the in-service training should educate the teachers about what the current syllabus says about varieties of English and what their students are expected to learn during their time in upper secondary school.

Teacher training programmes must also provide their students with courses about varieties of English as well as more help to understand the syllabus. Perhaps more important, however, is an internal analysis of the current programmes and whether or not they place a strong focus on BrSe and AmSe. The analysis should also look at what impact this has on the teacher students. Programmes which place a strong focus on BrSe and AmSe may be implicitly educating the students that BrSe and AmSe are the correct varieties of English and that they should, for example, tell their future upper secondary students to choose one of these two varieties in both writing and speaking. It is crucial that teacher-training students are made aware of current research

on non-native phonology and what impact the performance target in the English classroom can have on students. Finally, teacher training students should be made aware of their attitudes and learn how not to convey their own biases to their future students.

Future studies into this area would benefit from making a distinction between production and reception in terms of varieties of English. An auditory analysis of what students produce that compares its findings with students' self-expressed accent claims, similar to that of Rindal (2010), and their ideological values would be of interest. Another suggestion for future research is to look at what the teaching of varieties of English means to teachers. The teachers who participated in this study appeared to perceive the teaching of varieties differently, with some of the teachers actively trying to teach their students to produce several different varieties, while others simply wanted to make their students be able to understand or be aware of the existence of different varieties. Finally, this study has showed that there is a wide range of views and opinions amongst teachers in the upper secondary school in relation to varieties of English. A larger-scale study is necessary in order to find additional perceptions on the teaching of varieties, as well as generalizable findings related to the topic.

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Appendix 1

Questions about you

1. When did you graduate from the Teacher Education Program?
 - 1970-1979
 - 1980-1989
 - 1990-1999
 - 2000-2009
 - 2010-2017
 - I have not graduated from a teacher program

2. How old are you?
 - 20-29
 - 30-39
 - 40-49
 - 50-59
 - 60-69

3. How many years have you worked as an English teacher?

4. Do you use a textbook when you teach English?
 - Yes
 - No

Questions about varieties

5. Do you think about which variety/varieties of English to teach?
 - Constantly
 - Frequently
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never

6. What variety do you aim to teach?
 - British English
 - American English
 - British and American English
 - Another variety of English, please specify
 - Several different varieties
 - I do not aim to teach a particular variety

7. What variety do you think your students want to learn?
- British English
 - American English
 - Both British and American English
 - Another variety of English, please specify
 - Several different varieties
 - They do not care
8. What variety do you think your students produce?
- British English
 - American English
 - A mix of British and American English
 - Another variety of English, please specify
 - Swedish English
 - I do not know
9. What variety/varieties should you teach according to the curriculum?
- British English
 - American English
 - British and American English
 - Several different varieties
 - No particular variety
 - I do not know

Questions about accent

10. How important do you think it is for your students to have a nativelylike accent?
- Extremely important
 - Very important
 - Somewhat important
 - Not very important
 - Not important at all
11. How important do you think it is for an English teacher in Sweden to have a nativelylike accent?
- Extremely important
 - Very important
 - Somewhat important
 - Not very important
 - Not important at all

Questions about proficiency

12. How important are the following things in an English language teacher? Check one box in each column.

Proficiency in English

- Near-native or native
- Highly proficient
- Relatively proficient
- Somewhat proficient
- It does not matter

Education

- Completed a teacher education program at a university in Sweden (5 years)
- Completed a teacher education program at a university in another country (3-5 years)
- Attended some teacher education program at a university but not completed it
- Completed a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate (120 hours)
- It does not matter

Proficiency in Swedish

- Near-native or native
- Highly proficient
- Relatively proficient
- Somewhat proficient
- It does not matter

Appendix 2

1. How important is it for you to sound like a native speaker in English?
 - Extremely important
 - Very important
 - Somewhat important
 - Not very important
 - Not important at all

2. What accent (see glossary) do you most want to have when you speak English?
 - I want to sound British
 - I want to sound American
 - I want to sound Swedish
 - Other _____

3. Why do you want to have the accent you chose above? Use keywords to explain (e.g. “sounds better”, “more prestigious”, “cooler”, “more beautiful”, “more authentic”).

4. To what extent do you think that you have that accent now when you speak English?
 - I have the accent I want
 - I think I sound a bit like I have the accent I want but I need to work on it more
 - I’m trying to learn the accent I want to have but I haven’t learned it yet
 - I haven’t tried
 - I don’t know / I don’t care

5. How often do you talk about different varieties (see glossary) of English in class?
 - Constantly
 - Frequently
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never

6. Which of the following varieties of English do you think your teacher is trying to teach you?
 - British English
 - American English
 - British and American English
 - Another variety of English, please specify
 - Several different varieties

No particular variety / I don't know

7. Which variety of English do you think should be taught in Sweden?

- British English
- American English
- British and American English
- Another variety of English, please specify
- Several different varieties
- No particular variety
- I don't know

8. How good at English do you think someone needs to be to be a good teacher? See the glossary for explanations of *proficient* and *near-native*.

- Near-native or native
- Highly proficient
- Relatively proficient
- Somewhat proficient
- It does not matter

9. How important are the following things in an English language teacher? Check one box in each column.

Proficiency in English

Education

Proficiency in Swedish

- Near-native or native
- Highly proficient
- Relatively proficient
- Somewhat proficient
- It does not matter

- Completed a teacher education program at a university in Sweden (5 years)
- Completed a teacher education program at a university in another country (3-5 years)
- Attended some teacher education program at a university but not completed it
- Completed a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate (120 hours)
- It does not matter

- Near-native or native
- Highly proficient
- Relatively proficient
- Somewhat proficient
- It does not matter

10. What has taught you the most English? Rank the options from 1-9 with 1 being the thing you have learned the most from, and 9 the thing you have learned the least from.
- School
 - TV, movies
 - Games
 - Books, magazines
 - Internet
 - Travel
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Other
11. Do you have any other comments or do you want to clarify any of your answers?