Students’ and teachers’ perceptions of a good teacher of ESL in three different secondary schools in Malmö

Stephanie Jamei

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Examinator: Damon Tutunjian
Handledare: Björn Sundmark
Preface

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of the students and teachers who participated in this degree project, without their help this investigation would not exist. I want to as well extend my gratitude to my supervisor Björn Sundmark who had guided and supported me during this journey. I also want to give a special thanks to Bo Lundahl who guided me in the beginning and helped me construct the questionnaires.
Abstract

This research study investigates what 122 secondary students believe makes a good teacher of English as a second language. The students were randomly selected from three different schools in Malmö, Sweden. Six teachers’ views from the same schools will also be examined. The teachers and students answered questionnaires with open-ended and close-ended questions. Many researchers state that there are particular qualities that a teacher should possess to be considered a good teacher by the students. Qualities such as: being understanding, having a certain personality, being a motivator and a supporter, mastering the English language well, and listening to students wishes, are a few of many qualities that are being mentioned. The results indicate that the main quality that a teacher should possess is good knowledge of English. Other qualities that were mentioned were, varying work methods, the teacher’s personality, being supportive and encouraging etc. The students and the teachers opinions in comparison to what the researchers argue are not tremendously different.

Keywords: English teacher, good teacher, students’ perceptions, teachers’ perceptions, secondary school, ESL, teacher quality
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1. Introduction

During my time as a student teacher in the Swedish school system, I had the fortune of having a great supervisor who not only taught me the necessities on how to be a teacher, but also gave me great advice on how to become a good teacher. What was the most inspirational to me was the way she handled the students and the way she had a profound impact on her students. I knew then that this was not an ordinary teacher; this was a teacher with incredible teaching skills that the students appreciated. This encounter is the source of inspiration to this thesis, as well as the many requirements that a teacher of experience or a beginning teacher have to face today. After this degree project I will hopefully have a deeper understanding on how students and teachers perceive what makes a good teacher of English as a second language (ESL).

In today’s society being a teacher is not an easy task, since it requires being versatile, flexible and having too many irons in the fire. According to Hultqvist (2011) the demands and expectations on a teacher have increased greatly, and the teacher’s role and how a teacher should be have transformed over the past decades. As Hughes (2012) states: being a good teacher is not simply taking your briefcase and go to work, teaching is based on the students and their learning abilities, which was not the case 30 years ago. O’Sullivan (2012) argues that meeting these new demands can be problematic for some teachers. Beginning teachers may feel a lack of support from the schools. They may not get the amount of support and guidance that they would like to in terms of what they must take into consideration in the beginning of their teacher profession and for understanding what skills they must develop to become successful teachers. When the latest Swedish national curriculum (Skolverket, 2011) came into effect in Fall 2011, it brought with it some new insights on how a teacher should think, in general, regarding the teacher's role in the classroom. This relatively new curriculum demands that the teachers should “stimulate, guide and give special support to pupils that have difficulties” (p.16), increase the students’ willingness to learn more and to build up their confidence and that teachers should as well work with different methods and vary those, as well as, involve them more in planning the lessons.
The main goal in this thesis is to investigate teachers and students’ perceptions of important qualities for being a good teacher of English as a second language. In the current research study I distributed a questionnaire to teachers and secondary students in Malmö, Sweden to determine what they perceived as being important qualities that a teacher of ESL should possess. The following four categories developed from related research (Bakx et al. 2015; Miller, 2012; Stronge et al. 2011; Skolverket, 2011) were of particular interest: 1) mastery at the teaching subject, 2) being supportive and encouraging, 3) having varying work methods, 4) having a good personality. To preface the results, the responses indicated that the majority of the students claim that having a good knowledge of English is the absolute first quality that is the most important. Other important qualities that were stated were; being able to varying work methods, listening to the students wishes, and having a good personality. The teachers agreed that teachers must first and foremost have a mastery of the English language. The teachers’ and the students’ perception of the other tested qualities were also highly similar.

1.2 Purpose and research question

The purpose with this study is to mainly investigate if there are any specific characteristics that a good teacher of English as a second language should possesses, according to the students and the teachers. Therefore, my investigation is based on the following research questions:

- What qualities do students perceive as being important for teaching English as a second language?
- What qualities do teachers perceive as being important for teaching English as a second language?
2. Background

In this section I will present three different categories: “The role of a teacher in the classroom”, “What makes a good teacher good?” and “What makes a good teacher of English according to the curriculum?” The first category was mainly based on what roles a teacher in reality have. The second category was about what particular qualities make a teacher good, according to the researchers. The last category was to find out if the Swedish curriculum mentions anything about what makes a teacher good.

2.1 The roles of a teacher in the classroom

This paper does not attempt to identify all the aspects of a teacher’s role, only those which seem to be most typical in a secondary and upper-secondary school. In other words, I will only indicate those teacher roles that are commonly portrayed in schools. According to Harmer (2007, p. 108-110) there are five roles of a teacher:

- Controller
- Prompter
- Participant
- Resource
- Tutor

Controller is when a teacher takes control of variety situations that occur inside the classroom. These can be matters such as, “…giving explanations, organizing questions and answer work, lecturing, marking announcements or bringing a class to order” (Harmer, 2007, p. 109) Harmer means that in these types of situations it is beneficial to have a controller in the classroom (2007). However, Brok, Bergen, Stahl, and Brekelmans (2004) indicate that overmuch control can also lead to teachers taking more responsibility upon themselves than what is necessary. The researchers mean that, sometimes it happens easily for teachers to get carried away by focusing everything on them or taking over, rather than to let the students have the opportunity to do it themselves. Example of this can be “highlighting main points” (p. 427) or giving them more information about a task than what is necessary. Brok, Bergen, Stahl, and
Brekelmans also mention that there should be a shared control between students and teachers. They mean that teachers should inspire and motivate their students and make them believe in themselves and their ability to solve different problems.

The second role of a teacher is prompter. According to Harmer (2007), students tend to seek help as soon as they encounter a problem with a task. Teachers then decide if they should help the students with the task, or let them try to solve it on their own. However, Harmer (2007) also claims that it is important for teachers to not give the direct answer to the task, unless it is necessary. Instead, it is better to provide the students different kind of tools, for instance, handing out a dictionary if they need to know a word. Another example that Harmer (2007) describes is a situation where students have a verbal-task and they in this case cannot remember a specific word in English. The teacher then has to help the student by giving a push into the right direction and make the student think creatively instead of giving up. Mare and Sohbat (2002) state that “when teachers were perceived as willing to help, students reported feeling comfortable, not left out, good about themselves, and pleased that their help would contribute to their learning” (p. 245). Mare and Sohbat (2002) mean that encouragement is the key as well as teachers’ guidance, in that way the teacher takes a “prompting role” (Harmer, 2007, p. 109).

The third role of a teacher is a participant. Harmer (2007) gives a few examples of when a teacher is considered being a participant. This could be in discussions, role-play or any other kind of oral activity. He also argues that teachers seldom take part of students’ discussions, but instead choose to be in the background and let the students be the ones who take charge of the discussions. Harmer (2007) claims that it is sometimes an advantage for the students if the teachers also participate in discussions, thus the students can learn and develop their discussion skills by listening and observing how the teacher discusses. Also, it can become more enjoyable and motivating for the students to see their teacher engaging in discussions. However, Harmer (2007) also argues that being a participant is not always an advantage, since teachers need to choose carefully when to step in and also be careful not to take over the discussions, since the main focus should be on the students.

The fourth role of a teacher is as a resource. According to Harmer (2007), teachers also function as a resource, in the sense that students might need some more information about a task or activity, or perhaps they want to know what a phrase means – These are some of the situations where the teacher functions as a resource. However,
being a resource for the students does not mean that every question has to be answered, especially if it is related to knowledge about certain facts. Harmer (2007) mean that a teacher can function as resource as well, just by giving them guidance to where they can find the information they are looking for, such as, the library, internet ect. It is also written in the curriculum that, “[t]eaching should help pupils to develop their skills in searching for, evaluating, choosing and assimilating the content of spoken language and texts from different sources.” (Skolverket, 2011, p. 31). Therefore, it is important they learn how to make use of different aids. Harmer (2007) also mentions that teachers should not be afraid to say “I don’t know the answer to that right now, but I’ll tell you tomorrow” (p. 110), if they occasionally end up in situations where they do not know the answer, since it is impossible as a teacher to know everything. Harmer (2007) describes being a resource also includes that the teacher has to find ways to help the student to become more independent and self-driven.

The fifth role of a teacher is a tutor. According to Harmer (2007) a tutor’s mission is to support the students and make sure that they are seen, otherwise they may feel that the teacher is neglecting them. Harmer (2007) means that being a tutor is the same as being a mentor, the teacher has a closer connection with the students and acts as a supporter and motivator to the students.

2.2 What makes a good teacher good?

According to Stronge, Ward and Grant (2011) a good teacher creates an environment that it motivating and intriguing for the students. A good teacher creates an atmosphere that is based on “respect, fairness, and trust wherein a positive climate is cultivated and maintained” (p. 341). Stronge, Ward & Grant (2011) mean that a teacher who genuinely has a good relation to his or her students will make them motivated to achieve their goals. Sowden (2012) shares the same view regarding the importance of teachers having a good relationship with student, thus the teacher can work as a good role model and the students will be more willing to learn English. Another quality that plays a tremendous part, according to Arnon and Reichel (2009) is the teacher’s personality, they describe it as a teacher who is “understanding and patien[t], caring, warm and considerat[e]” (p.
Patricia Miller (2012) argues in her article that there are ten characteristics that a teacher should acquire. The first characteristic is that a teacher should be passionate about the subject that he or she teaches, since students can easily see through a teacher who is indifferent. The second characteristic is that a teacher should be “creative” (p. 36), instead of working with the same English book every week, Miller (2012) states that teachers should not be afraid to vary the work methods and try new things. The third characteristic that Miller (2012) mentions is that teacher should use “humor” (p. 36) more frequently in class, because that creates an easy-going environment for the students and they feel like it is more fun to learn when the teacher uses humor. However Miller (2012) also argues that teachers should be careful if they use a lot of humor, since it can be interpreted as being unreliable. The fourth characteristic is to be able “challenge” (p.36) the students. A student that is good in English often wants to be challenged so he or she can evolve and not lose motivation and engagement. The fifth characteristic is that a teacher should always support and encourage the student, especially when the student experiences difficulties and setbacks along the way. The sixth characteristic that Miller (2012) mentions is that the teacher should show the students that he or she cares about the student’s background, “interest” and “hobbies” (p. 37). The seventh characteristic is an English teacher who knows “grammar well” (p. 37) and that can help students in need, they want to rely on the teacher and that the teacher can help the student whenever it is needed. The eight characteristic that a teacher should possess according to Miller’s (2012) study is that a teacher should have time for the student after the lessons as well, if they have any questions or if they want to talk to the teacher. The ninth characteristic is that the teacher has to be fair and respectful towards the students regardless the sex. Some students in Miller’s (2012) study stated that teachers often treat boys and girls differently. The tenth and last important characteristic that a teacher should possess is to not become too personal and to leave private matters outside the classroom.

Bakx, Koopman, Kruijf and Brok (2015) carried out a research project re “Primary school pupils’ view of characteristics of good primary schools teachers” (p. 543) and conducted questionnaires with 3086 secondary students in the Netherlands. The results indicate that there are 143 different qualities that a teacher should possess, according to the students. The study also points out that the most crucial quality is the teacher’s personality and his/hers professional role. Furthermore, other qualities that are
commonly mentioned are the teachers’ pedagogic skills and how the teacher support and encourage the students. A teacher that can take control of the classroom and be an “authority” figure (p. 543) is, moreover, highly valued by the students. Bakx, Koopman, Kruijf and Brok (2015) also argue that teachers nowadays have higher requirements than ever, by the society but also the government. The results in schools have decreased during the past years, which the researchers claim can be transformed with teachers with good qualities.

2.3 What makes a good teacher of English according to the curriculum?

The curriculum (Lgr11) does not mention any specific details about the features that a good teacher of English should possess; however, it does mention how a teacher in general should think regarding different points. A few of them will be mentioned here.

When it comes to the section ‘Knowledge’, the curriculum (Skolverket, 2011) states that a teacher should “stimulate, guide and give special support to pupils that have difficulties” (p. 16), the teacher should as well “reinforce the pupils’ desire to learn as well as the pupil’s confidence in their own ability” (p.16). In terms of the section ‘Responsibility and influence’, the curriculum (Skolverket, 2011) says that teachers have to be “responsible for pupils having opportunities to try different working methods and forms” (p. 17) and also that they should “work towards ensuring that both girls and boys have equally great influence over and scope in the education”.

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3. Methods

In this section the different procedures of the degree project will be explained. The methods that were used how the data acquisition was carried out, and how I selected my groups of respondents to this degree project. I will also explain why I chose to use a mixed methods approach and how I conducted the questionnaires. Lastly, I will mention how the ethical principles were thoughtful considered during the writing of this paper.

3.1 Data acquisition

After coming to the conclusion what I wanted to investigate, “Teachers’ and students’ perceptions of a good teacher in English”, it was rather easy to decide that I wanted to do questionnaires. Since I wanted to reach a wide range of people, I considered that this specific type of method was the most appropriate for the degree project.

Thus Walliman (2011) data is information that might have been collected by the researcher. When the researcher has sufficient information about the specific topic, then he or she can draw a conclusion based on the findings. Walliman (2011) also argues that the data’s reliability can sometimes be questioned. People can answer a survey today and the answers’ outcome will depend on how they feel, what they have seen and heard until that day. Walliman (2011) states that if the same survey is given to the same people a month after they might answer it differently because of what they have experienced the past month. Walliman (2011) concludes that the collected data is not meaningless “only that it is not absolutely certain, like most things in life” (p.65). The data acquisition method that was chosen for this research is questionnaire. I wanted to reach out to a wide range of students and teachers, as it would have been impossible for me to conduct more than a hundred interviews. Therefore I considered that this specific method was the most suitable for this degree project.
3.2 Sample and procedure

Three secondary schools (7th-9th grade) were chosen in different districts in Malmö. The schools were selected randomly with no particular view to it. I went to Malmö municipality’s website to investigate what secondary schools there were in Malmö, and found ten schools that I found interesting. I contacted the ten schools and e-mailed the head teachers where I explained about my research and asked them if they could give me a list of the English teacher’s e-mail addresses. Six of the ten head teachers responded, I then chose to contact three of the schools, since I did not want far too many questionnaires.

I spoke to the English teachers in each school and we decided on a date when we could meet and where I could carry out the questionnaires with the students. I wanted two classes in each school to answer the questionnaires. When I visited the three schools I handed out forms to six English teachers, since I knew that they did not have time to do an interview, and it was important to me to have their perspective on the topic as well. I received a total of 122 questionnaires from the students and six responses from the teachers. It is important to acknowledge that neither the students nor the teachers represent the opinions of the whole Malmö city in this degree project. They were all anonymous while answering the questionnaires.

3.3 Mixed methods

According to Grazianiano & Raulin (2010) the best way to do empirical research is to combine the analysis of facts made by researchers, and as the authors say “rational thinking” (p.10). Two different methods have been applied in this paper, qualitative and quantitative. Silverman (2005) discusses that qualitative research is often associated with good research and it is considered a better method, while quantitative research, on the other hand, often has a bad status and is considered a worse method. Silverman (2005) means this it is not the case since it mainly depends what the researcher wants to investigate. If a researcher wants to determine how many people in the US voted for the republicans, then a quantitative method would be more suitable. However, if a researcher wants to know more about people’s experiences of health care then a qualitative method would be better. Silverman (2005) emphasizes that none of the
methods are better nor worse than the other, it strictly depends on what the researcher wants to investigate.

According to Eliasson (2010) the difference between quantitative research and qualitative research is that the former often has to do with numbers, if the researcher for instance wants to see if there are any differences between X and Y in percentage. It can easily be investigated by carrying out questionnaires. While qualitative research is used by researchers who conduct interviews or observe, along with comparing other scholars’ findings and results, in other words, using secondary data. In this degree project I have chosen to apply mixed methods, I will do research about other scholar’s findings and then compare it with my own results from the questionnaires that the students and teachers have carried out.

3.4 The design of the questionnaires

I decided to make two different questionnaires – one for the teachers and one for the students. The questionnaire that the teachers responded had six open-ended questions, in which the respondent could answer the question freely and give his or her perspective on the topic (See appendix 1). The goal with the questionnaires was to gather as much material and opinions on what make a good teacher of ESL, from both the teachers and the students. In the beginning my purpose was to conduct interviews with the teachers, but since the teachers often do not have enough time it was impossible to find a day to meet. Therefore, I considered that the better option would be if they answered the questionnaire when they were not in a stressed environment and in their own given pace, but before the given final date. The students’ questionnaire contained five questions (see appendix 2), unlike the teachers’ questionnaire, the questions were close ended, except the final one which was open-ended. Gillham (2007) describes that close-ended questions are simpler to analyze, because the respondents only have few options to choose from, which makes it more adaptable for the researcher when he or she later gathers the statistics. The questions that were selected from two different angles: 1. Background/Teaching context data. 2. Questions were designed so the respondents easily could answer the question on what makes a good teacher of ESL. The inspiration for the questions came from Miller’s (2012) article, as well as, Harmer’s (2007) five teacher roles, which were mentioned in the previous section. Gladly, I had a supervisor
that also helped me.

The outcomes of the both questionnaires will be presented under the section “Results”, where the teachers’ answers will be presented with text and quotes, while the students’ results will be presented with bar charts.

3.5 Ethical principles

According to Bell (2010) there are two terms that researchers come across while conducting questionnaires. One of them is “confidentially” and the other is “anonymity” (p.49). Bell (2010) indicates that “confidentially” signify that the respondents of the questionnaires are assured not to be identified by any circumstances, while “anonymity” will not only assure that the respondents will be anonymous, but that the responses cannot be traced back to the respondents. Walliman (2011) describes that not only do ethical principles in research concern that the researcher need to be respectful towards the participants who contributes to the study, but that the researcher as well must be respectful towards other researchers. Walliman (2011) emphasizes the importance of referring to the sources that are being used in the research correctly, and to carefully distinguish between what is one’s own work and other researcher’s work. Walliman (2011) also mentions that it is crucial for a researcher to render the responses from the participants as correctly as possible to avoid any misinterpretations.

Regarding my inquiry I have tried to be as specific and clear as I possibly could towards the participants who responded to questionnaires and I made sure that they respondents remained anonymous and that their identities would not be revealed. The teachers’ names are invented and they are not called by their real names in this study. I am also making sure that I use my sources in a correct manner to avoid any plagiarism. I have tried to be accurate when I quote the participants responses as well.
4. Results

In this section the results from both of the questionnaires will be presented. First I will summarize the teachers’ and students’ responses about what qualities makes a good teacher of ESL, and then I will present the results based on teaching context and background information (see 4.3 for further clarification). Almost the entire questionnaire that was carried out by the students will be presented in tables. The teachers’ names are to protect their identities.

4.1 The teachers’ perceptions of what makes a good teacher of ESL

A good teacher of English

All of the six teachers have evidently their own perceptions on how a good teacher in English should be, still there were some qualities that were frequently mentioned. Most of the teachers were in agreement that an essential quality a teacher should possess is good English language proficiency, in other words, a good teacher must be good at their subject area. Another quality that they mentioned was being able to encourage and engage students to have the willingness to learn English, this how Isabel explained it:

A good English teacher is a teacher who encourages her students to use English, get her students to believe in themselves and their ability to learn and to get students to see the usefulness of the subject. At the same time, a good English teacher should obviously possess good knowledge of the language and know when and how she/he should correct and reach out to each and every student (my translation).

Other important qualities that were mentioned as well were, that a good teacher in English should be sensitive and perceptive towards students’ wishes - For instance if they would like to work with something particular, they will be more motivated. Another thing that was also mentioned a few times was the importance to vary the teacher’s teaching and the lessons, to avoid making it monotonous. And the last
important quality a good teacher in English should possess is clarity. Another teacher, Maria, states this as follows:

Being good at your subject and being able to speak English easily [are two crucial qualities]. It is important with rehearsals and follow everything up of what the students really are learning. Vary work methods. Being a good listener and doing things that actually interest them. In that way one will gain motivated students. Even being clear is a good quality of a teacher (my translation).

**Self-formation as an English teacher**

Since I was given very different answers by the six individual teachers, it is almost impossible to summarize them all in a good and fair way, therefore I will present their answers directly with their own words on what they think have shaped them to be the English teachers that they are today. One of the teachers, Rosa, says that her interest and her students have formed her as a teacher “My interest in English and England and my students throughout the ages.” (my translation). Another teacher, Hanna, also says that a big part of the teacher she is today, I mainly because of her students. She also mentions that the curriculum also played its part:

Working with students is what has shaped me the most, to test my way to what works and what does not work. It is also clear in the curriculum which direction one should have when working with language and that has shaped me as well, of course. (my translation).

The third teacher, Diana, mentions that old teachers have influenced her in a good way. She also explains that her own experience has formed her as a teacher:

My own experience. I feel one becomes a better teacher every year. But yes, it happens that you think back to old English teachers that you have had, and copy what you thought was good in their teaching (my translation).

Teachers often reflect on how their old teachers were and why some of them stood out from the rest. Teachers take that quality and try to make it their own and apply these
qualities in their own teaching. The forth teacher, Isabel, is one of them, she also claims that keeping oneself updated to what is going on in teenagers life and looking back on her old teachers as well has formed her of being the teacher that she is today:

My own teachers, both those I have had that have been good and those who were less good. I have also looked at my own life ... thought about when, where and how I have had use of the language. At the same time, I try to obviously follow how the youths’ everyday life look like today and see in what situations students might encounter with the English language (my translation).

The fifth teacher says that what has formed her as a teacher is her “…appreciation of the English language, culture and literature.” (Macey, 2012, my translation). This makes the English subject more interesting and intriguing to teach. The sixth teacher mentions that being a Swedish teacher has helped her become the teacher she is today. She does not feel as much independent of textbooks as other teachers and can plan lessons creativity. This is how she answered regarding what formed her as a teacher, “Perhaps because I am also a Swedish teacher. I do not feel so attached to textbooks and teaching aids” (Sara, 2012, my translation)

**How one knows if a teacher is a good English teacher**

The majority of the six teachers are in agreement that the first sign to see if one is a good teacher in English is by looking at the students’ results, grades and if the teacher receives great feedback and appreciation from her/his students. One of the teachers, Hannah, explained how she feels concerning how one knows if you are a good teacher:

It is always hard to know if you are a good teacher or not, but I guess it is when I feel I have the students with me and it seems like they are having fun or are engaged in a task, or when I notice that the students really have progress or learn something new (my translation).
4.2 The students’ perceptions of what makes a good teacher of ESL

A total of 58% of the students consider that the first important quality a teacher most possesses is good knowledge of English (see table 1). The second important thing a teacher in English should do according to 56% of the students is to vary work methods. The third quality that teachers in English should have according to 50% of the students is that they should be keen and listen to the students wishes. On fourth and fifth place with the results of 49% respectively 48% on how a good English teacher should be came the alternatives, “…a good personality” and “give good encouragement when you have done something good and support you as soon as you do not understand”. Fully 33% of the students want an English teacher that is fair. The least popular alternative for the students with 4% was that a teacher should give a lot of homework.

**How would you describe a good English teacher in your own words? Think of the different qualities you think that a teacher of English should have. Also about how such teachers teach.**

Before presenting the results of this open-ended question, one must know that the outcome might have influenced the students by the question seen in table 1.
There were a few qualities that the students frequently mentioned regarding how a good teacher of English should be. Something that a lot of students mentioned was that a good teacher of English has to master the English language well and preferably have either a British English accent or an American English accent: A boy in 7th grade said: “I think that an English teacher should have very good knowledge of English. Preferably, that the teacher has lived in England or USA…” (Boy 7th grade, my translation). Another boy in 9th grade said, “A good English teacher should be good at English and have a god pronunciation, and talk in a correct and modern way” (Boy, 9th grade, my translation). A third student mentions that “A good English teacher should have good knowledge of English and being able to help students that need more help in English…” (Boy, 7th grade, my translation). A forth student mentions what types of accents a teacher should have: “… It is also important that the teacher has some kind of British or American accents.” (Boy, 9th grade, my translation). There are other qualities that a teacher should possess as well. According to the students a good teacher of English also has to be funny, strict and give a lot of support and encouragement. A girl in 9th grade said as follows:

She should be able to joke with the students, but still be serious. The teacher should throw out the students who are annoying. She should tell me what I need to practice. She should give me feedback and help me so I can reach my goals… (my translation).

Another student in 9th grade also thinks that a teacher should use humor during classes and at the same time being the one who calls the shots in the classroom: “First and foremost she/he should be strict but also being able to joke with the students. He/she should throw out troublesome students. [The teacher] should have the “killer-look”, I promise, everyone will then be quiet” (my translation). A third student also agrees with the previous students; …A good English teacher should be kind but also a bit strict, because if the teacher is too nice the students will do whatever they want, but if the teacher is a bit strict then you will show more respect.” (my translation). In other words, if the teacher is not a strong leader in the classroom then the students will not follow.

Other important qualities that good teachers of English should possess, according to the students, are being a supportive and encouraging teacher. A boy and a girl in 9th
grade think that encouragement plays a huge part in a student’s learning, “…[A] teacher should give you commendation like – god job!...But is also good if the teacher is nice and someone you can turn to if you need to talk to someone” (my translation). In this case, the girl thinks that giving commendation and being there for the students are important qualities. The other student, the boy in 9th grade believes as well that encouragement and support are crucial: “…The teacher should know how to encourage the student if the student does not understand” (my translation). The students mean that they want support if they come across any struggles with learning English or if there is something they do not understand, to motivate them is the key. They also say if they something good then they want to know, and if they need to improve something then the teacher can give them feedback. This is what another boy commented: “The student should be encouraged to speak English and to do his best... It is important that the teacher gives a lot of constructive criticism.....” (my translation). The students also mention that a teacher should be helpful and understand students that have difficulties in learning English. Teachers should also vary their work of methods. A boy in 7th grade mentioned as follows: “[The teacher] should let the students be a part of the decisions regarding on what we are going to learn. You should sometimes do funny activities outside the classroom as well. Also watch English movies without any subtitles. Maybe we can avoid having tests that often as well. (my translation). In other words – The boy thinks that the students should be more involved in the decision making of the lesson plans and also that they teacher vary the work methods. This specific part regarding teachers varies. Their work methods were often mentioned by the students in the questionnaires: “…[Teachers should] vary the work of methods, I mean, ask the students what they want to work with…” (my translation). Another 7th grade boy agrees: “…He/she should vary the ways to work... Sometime it’s good if we watch English movies. “(my translation).

Another quality that is acquired by the teachers, according to the students, is to listen to the students and be responsive, and also support and guide the students if they come across any particular difficulties in English. This is what a boy in 9th grade said: “The teacher has to help the students, if the students have any difficulties in English and give tip on how the students can improve their English.” (my translation). Another 9th grade boy agrees and thinks that a supportive teacher would be very helpful along the way, “A good English teacher should be responsive and listen to the students if they
have any difficulties, so he/she can make it easier for the student. [The teacher] should be helpful…”(my translation).

4.3 Teaching context and background

Note that the following results in this section (4.3) are based on the background information from both the teachers’ and the students’ questionnaires, as well as, more general information about students’ and teachers’ opinions towards students learning ESL. These do not specifically answer the two main research questions; nevertheless, they are still important parts and will function as supplement elements to the thesis.

4.3.1 Teachers’ perceptions concerning:

The amount of English that should be spoken during English lessons

The majority of the teachers’ agree that it is crucial to speak as much English as possible during the English lessons. However, four of the six teachers think it is better to teach grammar in Swedish so the students will understand it better. Diana, one of the teachers answered the question as follows:

It is the best, but in terms of grammar briefings, I usually take it in Swedish as there are some difficult terms that are too difficult for the students. In the case of weak students I usually check if they have understood what I said instead of taking everything in Swedish in front of everyone (2012, my translation).

Most of the teachers mentioned that they do not only use Swedish when they teach grammar, but also when they give instructions to different tasks. Another teacher, Rose, tells that some of the students have difficulties with the Swedish language, which makes it harder for teachers to use Swedish when they need to translate phrases when the students do not understand it in English. All though, the teachers feel the need to use Swedish during grammar teaching, giving instructions or other difficult parts where they have to speak Swedish, they still agree that English should be the fundamental principle and should be spoken as much as possible during the lessons.
The importance of English teaching

Good ESL teachers promote and facilitate student oral skill development and work to overcome unwillingness to communicate. They mean that as long as students are able to speak English, and are able to express themselves, than the rest does not matter. Here is how one of the teachers, Isabel, explained it:

[The importance of English teaching is] to make them speak and express their thoughts and opinions in English. To first of all use English to communicate, orally and in writing with other English speaking people as well as to use it as a common language with those who speak another language. I think it's important to let students see the connection between their English lessons and real life – you have to make it meaningful to them (my translation).

The teachers emphasized especially the speaking part, but agreed on that the absolutely most important part are students who are able to master the English language and also being able to make themselves understood in such a way that they can use the language anywhere.

Students’ attitudes towards the English language

All the six teachers state that their students have a positive attitude towards the English language. As one teacher, Hanna indicated: “[t]he vast majority of students are positive towards the English subject. I think it is because English is always so present in their lives in a positive way through film, music, internet, computer games, etc.” (my translation). Another teacher, Diana, also agrees that the students appreciate the English subject since it is so present in their lives, “most students think it is fun because they think it is something that is constantly around them. It becomes an "easier" subject, it is not so unfamiliar such as chemistry for example” (my translation).

However, some of the teachers argue that students in general often have the wrong apprehensions on how much amount of English they can master. Some of them overestimate their capacity to speak English, while other underestimates their ability to
use the language. One of the teachers, Rose, explains that her students does not make enough of an effort to learn English, since they overestimate their skills in English, “[t]hey often think that they already master the subject, through music, computer games etc and have a hard time accepting the effort to learn properly. [They think it is] "unnecessary" to learn synonyms, for example” (my translation). Another teacher, Isabel, also agrees that students sometimes are not really aware of their own capacity, “I feel that many students have a slight "warped" image of their own English skills, in that way that that they consider themselves to be better/worse than they really are.” (2012, my translation). A third teacher, Sara, shares partly the same opinion as the other two teachers as well, “[the students] think they know English well because they have a good understanding. They often have good verbal skills but cannot perform as well in writing. There are huge differences between these [two] abilities” (my translation).

4.3.2 Students’ perceptions:

Now the results of the students’ perceptions will be presented below with bar charts and comments.

I started by asking the question “How important is it to learn English?” (see table 2) to form an opinion regarding the students attitudes towards English. The majority of the students think it is very important to learn English (82%) . The rest of the students, 18%, found that learning English is “fairly important”. There were no students who considered that learning English is not important.
My second question was “Where do you learn the most English?” - to find out what students themselves think about where they learn the most English. More than half of the students consider that they learn most of their English at school (see table 3), while the rest of the students think that they learn most of their English in their spare time. There was no prominent difference on percentage between those who chose “At school” and “In my spare time”.

A total of 66 % of the students believe that the best way of learning English is if the teacher mixes English and Swedish during class (see table 4). However, 28 % of the students think it is very important that the teacher only speaks English in class. A total of 2 % think that most of the lesson should be in Swedish, while of the 4 % of the
students it does not matter if the lessons are mostly in English or in Swedish.

I wanted the students to motivate their choice of alternative as well. A 7th grade girl who selected the first alternative, that the teacher only should speak English said, “If the teacher speaks English all the time, then you get used to listening and speaking in English as well” (my translation). A 9th grade boy said: “You learn more if you hear the teacher speak English all the time” (my translation). A number of students who indicated that they wanted the teacher to mix English and Swedish for that they wanted most of the lesson to be in Swedish. For example, a 9th grade girl said: “Sometimes you do not understand everything that the teacher say, so it is better if she mix both languages” (my translation). And a 7th grade boy responded that, “It is good if the teacher speaks English most of the time, except when she give us instructions, then I want it in Swedish.” (my translation). Finally, a 7th grade boy commented that “I do not understand English, therefore I want the teacher to explain the words in Swedish” (my translation).
5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Learning English
The results show that the majority of the students think that learning English is important and that they learn most of their English at school rather than at home. A highly amount of the students (66%) who answered the questionnaires, also believes that the best way to learn English in school is if the teacher mixes English and Swedish. Some of the students mention that they in some occasions have difficulties understanding what the teacher say and mean, because of the language barrier. The majority of the teachers who answered the questionnaire agrees with the students, and argues that teaching grammar or giving instructions in Swedish will make sure that everyone has understood the task. However, the teachers emphasized the importance of speaking as much English as possible during lessons. The curriculum (Skolverket, 2011) states that a teacher should “stimulate, guide and give special support to pupils that have difficulties” (p. 16), which means that if a student do struggle with the language then the teacher must find ways to help the student so that the student does not lose motivation just because he or she does not master the English language well. In this case the students and the teachers discuss that using Swedish as a tool or complement can help them move forward in their learning.

5.2 What makes a good teacher of ESL?
According to Harmer (2007) a teacher possesses five different roles. 1. Controller, which means that the teacher takes control in the classroom and lead the students. 2. Prompter, is when a teacher is being supportive and help the student in difficult situations that may occur while doing tasks, among other things. 3. Participant, means when the teacher participates in exercises, such as group discussion or role play, to make sure of what is expected from them and to help them go forward. 4. Resource, denote a teacher to work as a source of information when questions appear in the classroom. This can be questions about a particular task or if they want to find out facts about something. 5. Tutor works essentially as a mentor to the student. The main purpose with a tutor is to be supportive and make the student feel seen.
The main purpose of this degree project was to investigate what - according to the secondary students and teacher in three different schools in Malmö - makes a good teacher of English as a second language. According to the 122 students that have participated this study, a good teacher of English should firstly have good knowledge of the English language. Some students mention as well that they prefer teachers speaking with a British or American accent. Baleghizadeha & Shahria (2014) argue that this can be due to the students being very familiar with these accents in their spare time. A lot of students encounter the English language when they play video or computer games, when they watch movies or listen to music. These things are normally in American English or in British English and what the students are accustom to in real life. Evidently English teachers most master the English language well, since the main task is to teach English to the students. Baleghizadeha & Shahria (2014) state that ESL teachers have an enormously pressure from the students to speak English fluently. The first thing that a student often encounter in an English class is how the teacher speaks. Baleghizadeha & Shahria (2014) also states that students usually think that the teacher’s speaking competence has a higher rank than any other skill. Regarding students wanting teachers to speak in American or British, is often related to that students are very familiar with these accents and they find it easier to understand what the teacher is saying. The six teacher who participated in this study also think being good at speaking English is, for obvious reasons, a crucial element.

Another quality that is required in what make a good teacher of ESL is the ability to vary the work methods and avoid doing the same thing repeatedly. Miller (2012) indicates that teacher should not be afraid to go outside their comfort zone and try new methods. Obviously all the students are unique and different, and learn English in different ways, which makes it even more crucial to vary the work methods. One or two methods normally do not fit everybody. The students usually get bored and need to be enthused with a variation of different tasks. The curriculum (Lgr11) also states that, students must be involved and allowed to give ideas of what they want to do in their English lessons. The majority of the six teachers state as well the importance of varying the work methods, so the teacher does not lose the students motivation.

Other qualities that are required are being understanding and keen as a teacher, listen to the students and having a sense of humor, being strict, in other words, the teacher’s personality is one of the important qualities. The students need to feel that they are being heard, that what they say and their opinions really matter. In that way
they do not feel neglected or misunderstood. Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk & Smith (2006) also states, as Miller (2012), that the teacher’s persona has a huge impact on the students. The researchers mean that not only do the learning increases when (for example) humor is being used in class, but it also build bridges between the teacher and the students. The relation between the two often becomes stronger the dynamic in the classroom changes and becomes more easy-going. Regarding being a strict teacher, Corbett & Wilson’s (2002) study indicate that students often require strict teachers, because they can “maintain order” (p. 2) in the classroom. A strict teacher often makes students pay more attention and also motivates them to learn more.

The students mention that a teacher, who is present, encouraging, motivating and supportive, improves their ability and willingness to learn more in school. Every student will in some occasions lose hope or feel like a particular task is impossible to solve – that is where the teacher has to act as a “Prompter” (Harmer, 2007), a motivator, and support the student and give the right tools to move forward. Mare and Sohbat (2002) state that “when teachers were perceived as willing to help, students reported feeling comfortable, not left out, good about themselves, and pleased that their help would contribute to their learning” (p. 245). According to the curriculum (Lgr11) the teacher must find ways to facilitate the learning for the students, consequently in order to help the students teacher have to listen to them and guide them through their difficulties. Having a supportive teacher who helps and give constructive criticism when needed, is an absolute must according to the students. As long as the students are aware that the teacher see and believe in them, than that itself will help them to be more confident, and hopefully make them believe in themselves. The six teachers who answered the questionnaires also mention that what they thought was a good teacher of English is someone who encourages and motives his/her students. This was how one of the teachers, Maria, responded:

[Being a good teacher is] [b]eing good at your subject and being able to speak English easily. It is important with rehearsals and follow everything up of what the students really are learning. Vary work methods. Being a good listener and doing things that actually interest them. In that way one will gain motivated students. Even being clear is a good quality of a teacher (my translation).
Lastly, according to the 122 students, a good teacher should always involve the students in lesson plans, when designing a task or the selection of methods to use while testing them on different criterion. The curriculum (Lgr11) emphasizes this particular part, and that the teacher should let the students have a say regarding their lessons. This is an important part, since the students are the ones who are going to do the task and often know in what way they can learn the best. At the same time they will enjoy themselves and be more motivated, since they have been a huge part of the decision – making process.

To conclude this degree project, one can say that the learning experience during this study has been enthralling. What the students' requires of what makes a good teacher of English are truly not impossible or imaginative qualities that they feel a teacher must have. In fact, all of the qualities that have been mentioned are well-founded, and there are certainly many teachers who already possess these qualities. By the end of the day the teachers, students and the researchers answers and research studies are quite identical to what they think makes a good teacher of ESL.
References


Appendix 1

☐ Man
☐ Kvinna

Jag har varit lärare i ______år.

ämnen jag undervisar i är:__________________________

Hur är en bra lärare i engelska?

1. Vad anser du om att enbart tala engelska på engelsk蹩ktionerna?

2. Kan du berätta vad du tycker är viktigast att lära ut i engelska? Vad vill du framförallt att dina elever ska lära sig?

3. Hur uppfattar du dina elevers inställning till engelska?

4. Hur skulle du beskriva en bra lärare i engelska? (Vilka egenskaper har en sådan lärare? Vad utmärker hens undervisning?)
5. Vad anser du har format dig till den lärare i engelska som du är idag? (Vad är det som varit mest betydelsefullt i formandet av dig som engelsklärare?)

6. Hur vet man om en lärare är bra som lärare i engelska?

Tack för din medverkan!
Appendix 2

Tjej ____            Årskurs_______
Kille ____

Elevers uppfattningar om en bra lärare i engelska

1. Hur viktigt är det att lära sig engelska?
   - □ Mycket viktigt
   - □ Ganska viktigt
   - □ Inte så viktigt

2. Var lär du dig engelska mest?
   - □ I skolan
   - □ På fritiden

3. Tycker du att en lärare bara ska tala engelska under engelsklektionen?
   - □ Ja, det är mycket viktigt att hon/han bara talar engelska under lektionerna
   - □ Nja, jag tycker att det är bäst om hon blandar engelska och svenska
   - □ Nej, jag vill ha det mesta av lektionen på svenska
   - □ Mig spelar det ingen roll

   Varför? Utveckla gärna ditt svar.

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

4. En bra lärare i engelska ska....
   (Kryssa i TRE av de sju svarsalternative som du tycker är viktigast)
   - ___ vara lyhörd (lyssna på eleven)
   - ___ kunna bra engelska
   - ___ ge bra uppmuntran när man har gjort något bra och uppmuntra när man inte förstår
   - ___ ge en mycket läxor
   - ___ variera arbetsätten (grupparbete, enskilt arbete, olika uppgifter och övningar m.m.)
   - ___ vara rättvis
   - ___ ha en bra personlighet (snäll, rolig, m.m.)

Tack för dina svar!