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Authentic Authority: The Heart of Effective Teaching

Autentisk auktoritet: hjärtat i effektivt lärande

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“A heart is not judged by how much you love; but by how much you are loved by others.”

-The Wizard of Oz
Abstract

The purpose of this thesis paper is to explore the elements of effective teaching. The main research questions that are dealt with regard how teachers can establish themselves as authentic authorities in the classroom and what strategies are conducive to effective teaching. The thesis paper aims to identify specific strategies and techniques that can be employed to increase teachers’ authority and provide a learning environment conducive to cooperative, on-task learning.

This investigation will be in the form of a case study of an eighth grade English teacher at a secondary school in southern Sweden. The case study consists of two parts: an in-class observation of six English lessons forms the basis for a follow-up semi-structured interview. This thesis highlights the importance of teachers’ ability to establish referent and expert authority in their teaching role.

Keywords: Effective teaching, classroom management, referent power, expert power, on-task learning
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“No; you are all wrong,” said the little man meekly. “I have been making believe.”

“Making believe!” cried Dorothy. “Are you not a great Wizard?”

“Hush, my dear,” he said; “don’t speak so loud, or you will be overheard – and I should be ruined. I’m supposed to be a Great Wizard.”

“And aren’t you?” she asked.

“Not a bit of it, my dear; I’m just a common man.” (Baum, 1988, 125-126)

The above conversation, taken from the timeless classic, *The Wizard of Oz*, reflects the way teachers can sometimes feel when they are having trouble establishing their role in the classroom. The analogy of the teacher as the Great Wizard may seem a far-fetched one, but at a closer look, it is perhaps not so. The teacher is expected to make the students work and is expected to establish a working environment in the classroom of so-called “effective teaching”. The teacher is expected to perform the magic that makes students learn. Often times, however, this can be more difficult to establish than it might sound.

Having grown up abroad, attending international schools, my first visit to a Swedish school during my first teacher practice period left me in a state of shock. Chaos is the word that springs to mind. In comparing my experiences of international schools to my limited experiences of the Swedish school there seemed to be a clear difference where order, in the sense of providing a platform for effective teaching, is concerned. It seemed that Swedish teachers are less prone to make use of what Jacob Kounin refers to as “desists” (Kounin, 1970) in the event of disruptive behaviour such as tardiness or arriving unprepared (without materials) to class, missing assignments, and other similar improprieties which might lead to diminished learning time for the students. A desist refers to “a teacher’s doing something to stop a misbehaviour” (Kounin, 1970, p.2).

Currently, in Sweden, there is a heated debate regarding education. The current government, in power since the end of 2006, has set in motion a string of changes to the school system entailing a series of new, clearer rules. The movement towards tougher discipline is a direct
result of a perceived lack of discipline in schools today. An example of these critical reforms is the development of a new grading system. The new grading system is intended to help encourage better behaviour and reward hardworking students in the hopes that this will result in a better functioning education with fewer discipline problems. Additionally, guidelines recently released by the Swedish government for order and discipline in schools reflect an increased focus on classroom management in Sweden. “Trygghet och studier i skolan – information om nya bestämmelser” and “Ordningsregler för en trygg och lärande skolmiljö”, which have both been released by Skolverket, reflect the need for teachers’ authority to be acknowledged. Among other things, they stipulate that the teacher does have the authority to, for example, remove items that disturb the school activity (Skolverket, 2007, p.5) and that the teacher has the authority to expel a student from a lesson or even to give a student detention for exhibiting behaviour that is disturbing the lesson (Skolverket, 2006, p.4). The issuance of these guidelines can be seen as evidence of the need to focus on classroom management and how to establish one’s authority as a teacher.

However, contrary to my own initial impression of Swedish schools, I have found that students do learn and many teachers do have ways and techniques of enabling on-task behaviour and establishing their authority. How, then, is this accomplished? French and Raven (1959) introduced the concept of five different bases of social power that teachers can draw upon to establish their authority and its authenticity. How does this play into classroom management? Is it necessary for teachers to establish themselves as an authentic authority in the classroom? If so, how is this established?

**Purpose**

The initial idea for this degree project was to investigate through studying and trying to document the classroom management techniques that are currently used, how we teachers can establish ourselves as authentic authorities and create a setting for our students that is conducive to on-task, appropriate behaviour. Authentic authority refers to the kind of authority that is respected by the students because they can relate to the teacher and respect the teacher’s knowledge of their subject. These terms are discussed in greater detail in the literature review section of this paper.
The initial idea has led to a project that presents and investigates an English teacher’s lessons in a Swedish school. By connecting observation and interview of an English teacher to literature on the subject, the purpose of this project is to identify a number of management techniques and strategies as effective and useful.

**Research Questions**

The main research questions that this paper aims to answer are as follows:

1. How does the teacher establish herself as an authentic authority?
2. What techniques or strategies does the teacher employ in the English language classroom in order to create a setting that is conducive to on-task behaviour for the students?
“A sampling of more than fifty years of discipline articles repeatedly cites classroom management as a major worry of educators” (Tauber, 1999, p. 4). A quick look at some available titles on the subject of teaching published in only the last ten years, such as: *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001), *Handbook for Qualities of Effective Teachers* (Stronge, Tucker, & Hindman, 2004), *Winning Strategies for Classroom Management* (Cummings, 2000), would seem to echo this statement and give evidence of the fact that there is a necessity for effective teaching. Effective teaching, as Tauber explains it, is “a preventative discipline measure that keeps students so involved and interested that they are not inclined to cause problems” (1999, p.10). The above titles suggest that they will provide help for teachers in managing their students. The mere fact that we today talk about “classroom management” as in “managing” our students suggests that classroom management is a skill that teachers need to master.

At this point, it seems appropriate to define some terms that will be used. Above, the term *effective teaching* is used. What is effective teaching? Effective teaching cannot be defined as “first you do like so, and then you do like so”; there is not a perfect recipe. In this paper, the term *effective teaching* will be used to refer to when the teacher has managed to achieve an environment where students are exhibiting on-task behaviour, i.e. working with what they are expected to work with or paying attention to what is being presented during the lesson. The term *desist*, also mentioned above, is a term coined by Jacob Kounin in his book *Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms*, which is the result of a series of researches and experiments in classrooms in the late 1960s looking at the effect of a teacher’s reprimands or attention to misbehaviour and how these affect the other students in a classroom who were not the object of the reprimand or attention. Kounin uses the term *desist* to refer to “a teacher’s doing something to stop a misbehaviour” (1970, p.2). What, then, is misbehaviour, sometimes also referred to as “inappropriate behaviour” (Leibling & Prior, 2005, p.19)? For now, a basic definition of misbehaviour as off-task, undesired behaviour will have to suffice and hopefully, this paper will help clarify what actually constitutes inappropriate behaviour.
During my teacher education, I felt that the one area where we would need more theoretical preparation is classroom management. Here it would be appropriate to provide a standard definition of classroom management as described in the literature. Although the pertinent literature that I have found explains several different strategies and implementations of classroom management, I have yet to find a publication that gives an exact definition of what classroom management is. Perhaps this can be seen as that the theoretical concept is not established well enough to have a common definition. For the purposes of this paper, classroom management, unless otherwise stated, refers to the strategies and techniques that a teacher employs in order to avoid inappropriate behaviour and instead create an on-task working environment. The insufficiency of theoretical focus on classroom management instruction seems to be an insufficiency that teacher training in general faces. Tauber ascertains that “discipline skills can be taught, but [...] training in this critical area is inadequate” (1999, p.4).

There are numerous theories and strategies for classroom management. But how do we know which theory to follow or which technique to use? As Tauber puts it: “So it is with theories and techniques of classroom management. No theory or technique works with all children all the time in all situations” (1999, p.9). With this in mind it is important to have knowledge of the theories and techniques that are today suggested in striving to create an atmosphere of effective teaching.

If one intends to “manage” a classroom and create a setting that is conducive to on-task behaviour for students, a teacher must first somehow establish her or his leadership or authority. Therefore, it follows that if one aims to investigate classroom management techniques what one really needs to look at is a teacher’s authority and the techniques which the teacher makes use of to establish his or her authority. These leadership techniques are the strategies of classroom management. As such, it is clearer to speak of the teacher’s authority and how the teacher establishes his or her power.

French and Raven identified five specific types of social power “to account for the different effects found in studies of social influence” (French & Raven, 1959, p. 150). In other words, the way people respond to the power exerted upon them defines what kind of power or
authority the other person is using to influence them. These five types of power are: coercive, reward, legitimate, expert, and referent power.

According to French and Raven (1959), coercive power refers to power where the power wielding person (hereafter referred to as PWP) forces another person to do or behave as the PWP wishes. Although this power can be effective it will more likely yield fear than a genuine respect for the PWP. Reward power is when the PWP attempts to influence another person by enticing him or her with something that he or she desires. This can be effective, but often inadvertently sets the scene for a situation where the other person will only behave as desired if he or she is rewarded, or the expectation of rewards is successively increased and enhanced, and therefore reward power easily loses its efficiency. Legitimate power refers to power which is innate in a certain title or position, such as the power of a physician to diagnose a patient or the power of a teacher because he or she is the teacher. This kind of power can be short-lived as it can only be relied upon as far as first impressions go. If the PWP does not support or scaffold this power with additional types of power, the other person will lose the respect for the PWP’s legitimacy and as such the power that comes with it. Expert power is power that entails a respect for PWP’s due to their expert knowledge of something: in the case of teachers, their expert knowledge of their subject. Finally, referent power, which is often considered to be the most powerful type, is identified as power that comes from a person identifying with the PWP. A teacher who holds referent power has the respect of students because they identify with the teacher. It is as if the students are personally attracted to the teacher merely because they feel they can identify with the teacher. It is my experience that students are quite perceptive and can often feel when someone is insincere: as such, true referent power requires an honesty of intention. Both referent and expert power are most often considered to be the most authentic types of power in teaching, i.e. authentic authority, in the sense that what is needed to establish referent or expert power is genuine people skills or subject knowledge. They are considered to be the best types of power because they do not rely on fear, bribes or titles the way coercive, reward and legitimate power do (In French & Raven, 1959, pp. 150-167).

Power, regardless of the type, is one of the reoccurring elements referred to in the literature on classroom management. Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering state that “clearly, the research supports the notion that designing and implementing rules and procedures in class […] has a profound impact on student behaviour and on student learning” (2003, p.16). In Kounin’s
1970 *Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms*, he identifies the fact that “[T]he teacher failed to show that she had ‘eyes in the back of her head’” (Kounin, 1970, p.80) as the common denominator of two observed lessons, suggesting this to be a possible short-coming of each teacher. If a teacher is to implement rules and procedures successfully or appear to have “eyes in the back of her head”, the teacher must have established his or her authentic authority.

At this point, it seems fitting to comment on the sources used. The fact that theories that were new in 1959 (French & Raven) are referred to in this paper, might inspire the question of whether these are still relevant. The findings of this paper, discussed in the “Discussion” section, which can be clearly linked to French and Raven’s theory give substantial evidence to the fact that their writings on the bases of social power still are relevant. Providing further evidence for their relevance are the references to French and Raven’s bases of social power in more recent teaching related titles such as William Erchul’s *School Consultation. Conceptual and Empirical Bases of Practice* from 2001, which looks at the application of social power in three schools, Tauber’s *Classroom Management: Sound Theory and Effective Practice* from 1999 referred to earlier in this paper, and various dissertations, some as late as 2007 as that of Hyyon Palmer titled *Social power in school consultation relationships: Examining the roles of intercultural sensitivity and social dominance*.

Furthermore, there is the question of what might seem as a larger number of references to American literature as opposed to Swedish literature. One of the factors for this is that, upon searching for books in the online library catalogue, most titles that appear when the words “classroom management” are searched upon are American; only one Swedish title came up as a result of the use of this search word giving an indication of what would be useful literature. Further investigation of Swedish titles which indicate that they will be speaking of leadership in school more often than not revealed, upon reading, that they were actually aimed at developing the leadership of the decision makers in the school administration rather than the teachers and as such were of little use to my investigation. There are titles that aim to help develop and discuss elements of teachers’ leadership in the classroom, but these often proved to be very vague in reference to specific techniques. The books seem to prefer to refer to the ideals and/or thoughts behind teacher leadership: “Self knowledge is a prerequisite to develop one’s leadership” (Landin & Hellström, 2001, p.25, my translation) or methods in general rather than specifically: “Through the use of a certain voice-pitch, the sentence [can become]
authoritative” (Wikberg, 1998, p.26, my translation). In this case, the author talks about using different pitches of one’s voice, but she does not actually identify *which* pitch: whether it was a deep one or a high-pitch one, nor does she explain what either pitch will result in. Because these indications are less specific they were not deemed to be as useful for this paper’s investigation which was intended to identify specifics within teachers’ techniques of establishing power and as such managing their classrooms.
Method

Selection

The idea was to take a qualitative approach and find several English teachers to follow during one week documenting how they implemented effective teaching in their own different and similar ways. The main issue with this approach was the danger of the project taking a negative turn. If one is observing several teachers looking for the same techniques and strategies, there may be a tendency to compare them, eventually ranking them according to a standard of efficiency, as better or worse. In order to avoid this, it was decided that the project was to be pursued as a qualitative case study, following only one English teacher and documenting how the teacher managed to make the lessons work.

In the search for a teacher to observe, I asked my teacher education classmates as well as my supervisor for this degree project for teachers they might suggest for me to follow. In the end, my supervisor’s suggestion of a former student of hers, now working at a school in southern Sweden was selected. My supervisor’s description of this teacher as very competent coupled with the fact that the teacher in question was very positive when approached about the project were the two definitive factors in the selection of Rebecka (fictitious name) as the object of my case study.

Methods of data collection

In planning this case study, it was decided that the best way to gather material and information would be to first observe Rebecka during her six English lessons of the week, and then to do a semi-structured interview of about one hour. The idea was that the observations made would provide the basis for the interview where these observations would then be explored and discussed.

The initial phase of data collection was to observe Rebecka in class for the duration of one week, Tuesday, April 14th to Friday, April 17th (the Monday was a holiday), 2009. As I was there to observe to what extent and how effective teaching takes place in the classroom, I had
to have a background of knowledge as to what to look for. The preparation for the observational phase then, was to read about classroom management and effective teaching. The observational phase was then carried out in the following manner. I sat at the back of the room during a total of six English lessons, five hours. Rebecka teaches three different eighth grade English classes and I was able to observe all three classes; two lessons with each class. I was introduced during the first lesson of each class as a visitor who just wanted to look at what they do in class. The first two days’ observations (the first four lessons) were recorded by handwritten notes. A Dictaphone was used on Rebecka’s suggestion for the second two days’ observation (last two lessons), complemented by handwritten notes. Before each lesson I made a quick map of the basic setting (Hatch, 2002, p. 79). Then, as the students came in, I assigned each student as seated a letter for quick identification in my notes.

As the lesson began, I was looking for any routines that Rebecka might have in the “opening” and “closing” of each lesson. Also, I was looking for techniques used to keep the students interested and engaged, such as a change in dynamics and/or change of lesson focus during the lessons. And finally, I was looking for any specific techniques that Rebecka used as preventive of bad behaviour (as opposed to enabling engagement and interest). As Hatch explains, “the idea is to be there in the social setting, to make a careful record of what people say and do, and to make sense of how the participants make sense within that setting.” (2002, p.73) Because “researchers are limited in what they can see and hear, what they can pay attention to, what they can write down, and what they can remember” (ibid, 2002, p.78) I took five minutes after every lesson observed to read through my notes and attempted to complete them as best possible with what I might have missed recording during the in-class observation.

The second phase of my case study was the qualitative semi-structured interview with Rebecka which was held on the Tuesday of week 19, 2009. The general aim of a semi-structured interview is “to encourage people to talk at length and in their own way” (Drever, 1995, p.10). This is done by using open, prompting questions to encourage broad options, complementing this with probes, which are questions that explore answers in-depth, usually narrowing down the focus. Basically, a semi-structured interview is made up of a combination of open and closed questions. This combination is to avoid the common mistake of leading the interviewee too much; the open questions make sure that the interviewee is not being lead, whereas the closed questions that follow the open questions allow for some investigation into
an area or angle that the interviewee has already broached. Although Rebecka and I spoke mostly Swedish during our informal talks before and after her lessons, the interview was conducted in English to ensure precise quoting, where applicable, further on in this paper. The interview lasted for 50 minutes and 50 seconds, just 9 minutes and 10 seconds shy of the 60 minutes agreed upon with Rebecka. The interview was recorded on a Dictaphone with Rebecka’s permission, to enable me to focus on the interview rather than attempt a simultaneous transcription of our conversation. Rebecka was first asked to fill in an information sheet as a means of encouraging some simultaneous small talk, as recommended by Hatch (2002, p.114). After Rebecka had filled in the information sheet, the questions were asked and Rebecka was encouraged to give as exhaustive answers as possible, as suggested by Johansson and Svedner (2006, p.25). With the help of the carefully implemented prompts and probes (Drever, 1995, p.10), Rebecka was encouraged to explore her thoughts on the subjects discussed. Finally, Rebecka was asked to share any other thoughts which had presented themselves as a result of the interview.

A transcription of the interview (Appendix 2) was done the same evening to make sure that any “nonverbal indicators or contextual influences” (Hatch, 2002, p.112) during the interview were included and accounted for.

Ethics

At every stage of this project and specifically during the observational and interview stages, care has been taken to ensure the ethical correctness of the project. Any informants’ names have been changed. Careful steps have also been taken to respect the vulnerability of informants. When a teacher opens up their classroom for observation it follows that the party that has been given this observational privilege must respect this openness and make sure to avoid unnecessary criticisms or judgements of the teacher. Permission to conduct observations and the interview was requested and granted by the school principal.
Results

This section accounts for the results of the observation of six different English lessons: two lessons each with three different classes, and the semi-structured interview.

Observations

Following is a detailed description of routines observed during every one of Rebecka’s lessons. As standard routines, they will be referred to in the present tense except where there is an occurrence that is not general but rather pertaining to the specific time when my observations took place. In this case, the occurrence(s) will be referred to in the past tense.

On the way to the classroom, Rebecka consistently greets the students in English in the corridors, regardless of whether the students greet her in English or in Swedish. Rebecka attempts to arrive early to every lesson, allowing herself 3-5 minutes to set up in the classroom before allowing the students in, on time. Rebecka usually stands at the door while letting her students in, calming any students down if needed prior to their entering the classroom.

As the students settle into their seats, Rebecka resumes her position at the front of the classroom (where the whiteboard is located) and proceeds to greet the students, ‘good morning’ or ‘good afternoon’ as appropriate. The students usually reply in the same manner, but on occasions when they do not, Rebecka repeats the greeting in a louder voice. Upon this second greeting, most students react and return the greeting and then the class is silent and focused on Rebecka. Rebecka then begins every lesson by explaining to the class what they are going to be doing during the lesson and what the intended learning outcome of the lesson is. As my observations took place the week after the students had been on Easter holiday for a week, Rebecka began the first lesson with every new class by asking the students about their week off and then giving the students an anecdote of her own inabilities to sleep in the morning during the holiday because of the early chirping of the birds. This anecdote was consistently received with laughter from the class and recognition from some students.
During the course of every lesson that I observed, without fail, at least one student arrived late to class. If the student(s) arrives only a few minutes late, i.e. before the lesson has properly begun, or if the student(s) arrives at a point in the lesson when the other students are working individually, Rebecka takes the time to ask the student to go back outside and knock on the door. The student(s) then has to knock on the door and wait for someone to open the door. At which point the student is expected to apologize for his/her tardiness. This is a system which Rebecka has implemented consistently and at the point in time when I was doing my observations, a simple stare from Rebecka was usually enough to make the late student(s) go back outside and complete the routine.

Throughout the lessons, Rebecka insists on talking to the students and answering any questions in English, oftentimes, even suggesting that the students ‘try again, in English’, which the students more often than not proceed to do. Whether the students do ask their questions in English or in Swedish, Rebecka consistently answers the students in English. If it appears to Rebecka that several students have not understood something, then Rebecka will first ask if any other student can explain for their fellow classmates, and when all else fails, Rebecka will switch to Swedish to explain. However, once the point in question has been clarified, Rebecka immediately returns to English.

Rebecka continually reminds the students to raise their hands if they have answers, questions or thoughts when they begin to blurt something out without raising their hands. The students most times realize their mistake and apologize and then raise their hands in the accepted fashion. Rebecka then calls on each student by name to indicate that it is their turn to talk.

As the lessons proceed and if students are working individually at their desks, Rebecka constantly circles the room, stopping at the students’ desks. Sometimes Rebecka stops because a student has a question and other times she merely comments on or discusses the work that a student is doing, checking that he or she is on target with the exercise at hand.

Rebecka not only scans the room with her body, walking around from desk to desk, but also with her eyes. Both during the presentation of the day’s lesson and also during the rest of the lesson, Rebecka makes eye contact with most of the students in the room at one point or other.
Finally, as the lesson comes to an end, Rebecka closes the lesson by bringing the students’ attention back to her. She alerts the class to the fact that the lesson is ending by loudly proclaiming “Ok, time to round it off everybody” or something similar and then asks the students to stand up behind their desks. She waits until the students are quiet. If the students need reminding of anything, Rebecka reminds them and then lets the students know that they have worked well (if they have) and sends them off with a “Good bye, have a nice day!"

During all the lessons that I observed, the students worked fairly well and generally, there was never any reason for Rebecka to implement any greater disciplinary action to stop or avoid misbehaviour. The only misbehaviour observed was the tardiness which was dealt with in the manner described above and students talking to each other when they should be working. As long as the volume level was low, Rebecka allowed a certain amount of chit-chat, provided that the students were working simultaneously. At any point in time, if the students’ talking grew too loud and interfered visibly with their work, Rebecka would employ a desist: Rebecka would call in a loud, low-pitch, firm tone of voice on the students who were misbehaving by name and ask them to stop talking - at which point the students immediately stopped talking and resumed their work.

**Interview**

Rebecka was first asked to give a short account for how she began to work at her current place of employment, a secondary school in southern Sweden where she teaches English to eighth graders and Spanish to seventh, eighth and ninth graders. Rebecka explained that she had worked several part-time substituting jobs and that she also had previous experience of working at an upper secondary school. Rebecka feels that the main expected difference between secondary and upper secondary that students are much more mature and self-contained, is a myth. Basically, the students are not really more mature at the Upper secondary school, as one would expect, and the only difference, really, is that in Secondary school the teacher has a greater responsibility to care for the students’ social development which means that administratively, secondary school involves more work (Appendix 2, 2009, p.1).
Rebecka feels that she only has a few established rules in her classroom. She listed the following as rules that she implements in her classroom:

- Class always begins with a greeting. Rebecka greets the students and they return the greeting.
- In the event of tardiness, the students must follow the standard procedure of knocking on the door and apologizing for their tardiness.
- Students must raise their hands when they want to speak. Exceptions are made during brain-storming activities which require fast thinking and speaking.
- Rebecka always speaks English and she encourages the students to try as well.
- If a student misses a lesson it is his or her responsibility to find out what they missed and request any papers necessary from the teacher.
- At the end of a lesson, the students must push in their chairs, stand behind their desks and when they are quiet and ready, Rebecka bids them “Good bye and have a nice day” which the students are expected to reply to with a similar greeting.

Rebecka feels that these rules are both understood and accepted. In the event that a student breaks a rule and Rebecka reminds them of the rule, the students always apologize. Rebecka feels that the students do not break any rules because they aim to be disrespectful, but rather that they, as well as she, at times forget to think. And in certain cases, for example, when students get so eager that they forget to raise their hands, it reflects the fact that the students are really engaged in the lesson at hand, which to some extent can be seen as a positive thing.

It is Rebecka’s observation that, in general, the students that had no trouble in following the rules in the first place know what is expected of them and do not need reminding, but then there are students who lack the drive to look out for themselves and keep track of what they need to do and these students have difficulties in following the established rules. But there are moments of hope when the students do make progress and for example remember to ask for a paper themselves without having to be reminded by the teacher.

Rebecka concurs that to learn students’ names at once and continually use their names and also to constantly follow up on students with questions regarding their progress are two core elements for keeping students on-task or cooperative. She agrees that these two elements,
together with being open and honest with your students, are the keys to effective teaching. The students “read you like an open book, no matter what you do, you can’t hide anything [...] so they can feel your energy” (Appendix 2, 2009, p.4). Rebecka explains that quite simply, the students respect a teacher’s honesty.

When Rebecka was asked whether she considered herself an authority, she was unsure how to answer but agreed that she did feel that the students do listen to her and respect her. When asked about her thoughts on the use of threats and rewards (coercive and reward power, see literature review section), Rebecka thought she did perhaps make some use of threats and rewards, but on a closer look into the matter, she explained that she does not have any reward to give the students other than verbal commendations for a job well done. And in the matter of threats, Rebecka explained that she explains to the students how it is they, not she, who will suffer in the bigger picture if they do not do the work.

Rebecka does not believe that the title of teacher carries any sort of legitimate power whatsoever. She attributes much of this to society which in Sweden today has in many ways undermined the teaching profession, giving it little or no status. This is reflected in the attitude that Rebecka feels some students exhibit: “[S]ome of them think: ‘you’re not my mother and father…so…you can’t tell me what to do,’” (Appendix 2, 2009, p.5). It can be argued that the government’s recently issued documents on discipline are an attempt to give back some legitimate power to the teaching profession by sanctioning actions that teachers “were sort of doing […] anyway” (ibid, 2009, p.9). However, if the teachers themselves aren’t overly impressed: “What they did now, was just giving us the right to do it” (ibid, 2009, p.9), the guidelines might not have the impact that they are intended to have.

Upon being asked about the importance of sharing personal anecdotes with the class, Rebecka explained that it is a way of establishing a common ground between her and the students, to remind them that she is human as well, making the students aware that she and they can be on “the same emotional level” (Appendix 2, 2009, p.5). Rebecka also makes sure to take the time after her lessons to talk with any students who approach her, whether it be for private or school-related matters. Rebecka believes that it is a necessity to establish a solid relationship with her students and hates it when she for some reason or other is pressed for time and cannot take care of the student(s) then and there.
It is interesting to note that Rebecka comments on the fact that “[...] some teachers don’t like their students being that personal with them” (Appendix 2, 2009, p.6). It would have been interesting to hear other teachers’ thoughts on being personal. Rebecka says that “I mean, I don’t tell private things about myself” (ibid, 2009, p.6) but she also says that being personal is an important part of building the crucial relationship with one’s students. Perhaps it is this difficulty of differentiating between private and personal that keeps some teachers from being personal with their students?

Rebecka believes that speaking English at all times possible with her students is self-evident. Insisting on always approaching her students in English helps them accept it as a more natural setting and helps to encourage the students to eventually try it themselves. Also, Rebecka believes that switching to Swedish for serious, non-subject matters undermines the authority of the language and thus, she refrains from doing so. The students have come to expect English from Rebecka. In fact, on the few occasions when Rebecka has forgotten to speak English, the students have made a point to make her aware of this.

Rebecka definitely believes that eye-contact, body language and manipulating one’s tone of voice are useful and necessary tools for teachers to use to keep students on-task and cooperative.

We briefly discussed the recent disciplinary guidelines issued by the government. Rebecka felt that the guidelines did little more than simply sanction actions that teachers were already implementing anyway.

Rebecka outlined her definition of misbehaviour as the following:

- Opening the door abruptly and not apologizing for tardiness.
- Arriving late and chatting with fellow students rather than getting to work immediately.
- Disrespecting fellow students or the teacher, by for example, speaking when somebody else is speaking, rather than listening and allowing that person to finish speaking first.

Failing to do the assigned work, however, Rebecka sees as misbehaviour towards oneself rather than to the teacher or the class. Rebecka explained that the only person who really
misses out is the student and mentioned that this is also exactly what she explains to the students on such occasions.

Although I did not enter into this case study with a gender perspective, it is noteworthy to mention that Rebecka makes an interesting distinction between the genders. During the interview, when discussing students that have trouble following the rules, she explains that she is sometimes forced to “[…] kind of pamper them a bit. Even though I don’t like it, […] it’s something […] Maternal” (Appendix 2, 2009, p.3). Whereas, when she notices that the students are losing focus, she lowers her voice and uses “[…] a bit of a masculine voice” (ibid, 2009, p.8), and that she will often adopt “the real ‘alpha’ position” (ibid, 2009, p.9), when she finds that the class is ‘too excited’. Equally interesting is the instinctive identification of problematic students as male; on page 3 of Appendix 2, when discussing the need to pamper students, she mentions how happy she gets if “[…] he asked for the paper” meaning that she for once didn’t need to ‘pamper’ the student. Although these gender issues are not pursued in this paper, they are interesting and could be an angle to pursue in future qualitative research.

Rebecka concluded by mentioning the fact that motivation is at least 50% of the job. The students need to be motivated, and in order to be motivated they must understand what they are doing and why. Rebecka spends a great deal of time reminding the students of why they are doing what they are doing and encouraging the students to keep asking her if they are unsure of why they are doing a certain exercise.
Discussion

[I]t’s all about maintaining these relationships. Otherwise, if you don’t have a relationship with […] the student, then you will lose your authority. If they don’t know you, especially with these students, if they don’t know you and you come in there, start telling them what to do, you’re gonna have a rebellion. (Appendix 2, 2009, p.6)

In reviewing my findings, the results seem to lend support to the issues brought up in the literature review. A common theme throughout the interview with Rebecka seemed to be the importance of establishing one’s authority. Rebecka also makes a clear distinction between authority and authentic authority. She is quite clear on the fact that unless the students respect and acknowledge your authority, you do not have any, as evident in the above quote.

So how does one establish one’s authentic authority? The key points that emerged in the observation of Rebecka’s teaching and discussion with Rebecka are discussed below.

First of all, one must establish a clear set of rules. They do not have to be extensive, but it is important to be consistent. Rebecka has a set of rules that pertain to inter-personal behaviour: the class begins and ends with a respectful greeting between teacher and students, there is a system of hand-raising to ensure that every person is given the chance to speak and be heard, in the event of tardiness, there is a simple respectful procedure to follow, the language spoken in class is English at all times, and finally the students are expected to take responsibility for their own actions. I believe many would agree that these rules are plain common sense and courtesy. The presence and implementation of these rules is, however, a crucial part of establishing one’s authentic authority. If rules are established but not consistently adhered to by the teacher, there is little reason for students to respect these rules or the teacher.

It is interesting to note that Rebecka herself comments on her own inconsistency: “Sometimes, I perhaps wish I was a bit more consistent” (Appendix 2, 2009, p.2). She proceeds to describe how she does have established rules about tardiness, but that when students are too late, “perhaps if they’re twenty minutes late” (ibid, 2009, p.2), she will
refrain from enforcing the rules. It was my own observation, however, that this depended more on the situation in class when an exceptionally late student arrived. If the students in class were busy working on their own, Rebecka would take the time to enforce her rules. If, however, the student entered the classroom late while Rebecka was in the middle of explaining something to the whole class, she would not stop in the middle of the explanation to focus her own and the class’ attention on the late student. In such a case she would merely give the student a harsh look and continue with the lesson.

Another strategy is to build an honest relationship with one’s students, both on a personal level and on a general level:

**KN:** [...] I noticed, on several occasions, that you take the time, after a lesson, to talk [...] with [...] your students for varying reasons. Some have personal issues; some just want help with their work. Can you comment on this?

**REBECKA:** I don’t think that’s optional, I mean, I think, it’s a necessity. (Appendix 2, 2009, p.6)

*The A-Z of Learning: Tips and Techniques for Teachers,* echoes this as very important in a tip to “- develop a habit of being available for one-on-one question and answering” (Leibling & Prior, 2005, p.20). Continuing on the subject of establishing a personal relationship, Rebecka also explains, upon being asked about a personal anecdote that she shared with the class, that it is necessary to find some way of getting the students to associate with you as a teacher, to let them know that you are human as well. Additionally, the anecdote has to be honest because “…they can feel your energy” (Appendix 2, 2009, p.4). These strategies of honesty and providing a basis for the students to associate with the teacher are clear descriptions of the use of referent power (French & Raven, 1959, p. 156). The students can easily forget that the teacher is human (Appendix 2, 2009, p.4) and in such cases, it follows that the referent power is diminished. Making sure that the students associate with the teacher ensures that the referent authority remains strong.

A further strategy that has emerged as important is that of getting to know the names of your students. “Well, calling their name! Knowing their name is a major key to at least getting their attention” (Appendix 2, 2009, p.3). This strategy together with establishing a personal relationship, as mentioned above, are also referred to in the literature:
Some behaviours that communicate personal interest:

• Talking informally with students before, during, and after class […]
• Meeting students at the door as they come into class and saying hello to each child, making sure to use his or her first name. (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003, p.53)

The power of the knowledge of a student’s name is a form of expert power (French & Raven, 1959, p. 163). This can be seen in the response that Rebecka describes in a difficult class when she had learned all the students’ names within a couple of days, “[…] they go like ‘how do you know my name?!’ (Appendix 2, 2009, p.4). The students are incredulous and impressed and they have gained some respect for the teacher’s expert power. Had Rebecka failed to establish this key element of expert power in the early stages of taking on the class, it would most likely have been more difficult for Rebecka to establish her authority as the scholastic year continued.

Another strategy, which is also a form of expert power, is that of always speaking English. Rebecka explained that using Swedish for ‘serious matters’, undermines the authority of the English language (Appendix 2, 2009, p.7), as such, this would also undermine the authority of the English language teacher. Rebecka also touches upon this in the interview, “I feel that they don’t value the classes as much if we don’t speak English or if I don’t speak English” (ibid, 2009, p.7). It can be argued that unless a teacher believes in his or her subject and, in the case of an L2 (second language) teacher, uses it with conviction, the students will never recognize the language’s validity and importance.

Along with the expert power of knowing the students’ names, Rebecka identified keeping an open dialogue with one’s students about their work as an important strategy. Primarily, through the teacher circulating around the room, observing the students’ work and then questioning them about it, the students understand that the teacher is ‘on top of things’. Not only does this strengthen the teacher’s expert authority, but it also works in boosting the referent authority, by indicating to the students that the teacher is interested and is available for help or suggestions.
Rebecka mentions that “I think I do a combination of, for example, after I call their name to keep them on-task, I’m asking them, so how’s it going? What happened, what have you done so far?” (Appendix 2, 2009, p.4). Rebecka considers it to be a combination of proactive and reactive teaching. The students are proactively encouraged to stay on-task when their names are called and then further when the teacher takes an interest in their work. If the teacher then notices that many students have misunderstood something or are confused, there is a reactive situation on the part of the teacher: the teacher must then take a time-out to clarify the task, allowing for the students to stay on-task, rather than going off-task due to a failure to understand the exercise.

Here it seems appropriate to continue with a further strategy indicated in Rebecka’s interview as well as noted in my observations. A key strategy to establishing one’s authority and keeping students on-task is to make sure that students understand why they are doing the task that they are doing. During the observations, Rebecka made sure to begin each lesson by clearly explaining the intended learning outcomes of the lesson. Furthermore, Rebecka makes sure to remind the students of why they are doing a task and that if they do not do the task, that they are the ones missing out, not the teacher.

If you do not understand that, ask me again and I’ll explain it to you again, I’ll talk to you about it again. Remind me to remind you. Cause I will forget sometimes as well, not why we’re doing it, but I will have it up here (points to brain) so you need to tell me as well, […] If you do not know why we are doing something, then it’s very hard to feel motivated. Motivation is at least 50%. (Appendix 2, 2009, p.11)

Making sure to explain to the students the value of the exercise is a large step towards improving their motivation. This can also be seen in the literature: “Research by Eccles and her colleagues clearly indicates that when students value an academic task, they are more likely to choose to engage in the task” (Alexander & Winne, 2006, p.379). Increasing the students’ motivation, by explaining the value of the exercise, is an important part of effective teaching; it increases the chances of keeping the students cooperative and on-task.

Something which Rebecka identified as an important key to effective teaching is to stay positive. “[S]tay positive, stay positive, and I mean, of course! Sometimes you have like really bad days, and you can’t help it. And you do things, that you regret, but I believe, it’s
important to be open” (Appendix 2, 2009, p.4). Personally, I believe this to be a key to keeping a teacher’s own motivation and passion alive.

Several physical techniques were observed as well as discussed with Rebecka during the interview: eye-contact, body-language and tone of voice. All of these were discussed as techniques for establishing or maintaining the teacher’s authority. Making eye-contact with as many students as possible throughout a lesson and sweeping the room with one’s eyes is a way to let the students know that the teacher has seen them. This can be important both as a ‘preventative’ measure of misbehaviour of any kind, and as a student-teacher relationship builder:

I have classes and days when I sort of think about “ok, so now I haven’t paid attention ‘visually’ with this student, so now I have to make sure that they understand, that they know that I see them too.’ Even though they may not speak in the classroom, perhaps they’re not that active, so I at least look at them, or maybe a nod, […] [So] they know that I have seen them, […] [T]hat’s part of maintaining perhaps the trust, and trying to maintain, well […] the relationship again. (Appendix 2, 2009, p.8)

Again, the above quote shows the referent authoritarian aspect as well as a measure aimed at preventing bad behaviour. Eye-contact, then, can be an effective desist, used when the teacher sees that students are straying from the task and heading towards misbehaviour as they have ceased to pay attention. Giving the students a stare can suffice to bring their focus back and ensure continued on-task behaviour.

Body-language functions in much the same way as eye-contact. As Rebecka hinted, the teacher can stand at the front of the room in a position that demands attention. In this way, the teacher is indicating that he or she is in charge; is the authority. The teacher should also make use of motion, moving back and forth and around the room, avoiding the students’ monotony of staring at the teacher in just one place. In this way, the teacher also keeps the students ‘on their toes’, because they are never sure in which direction the teacher is going to head and so they must stay focused and on-task.
Equally important and useful is the manipulation of tone of voice. Altering the loudness of one’s voice ensures variability. Equally important is speaking with a low-pitched voice. *The A-Z of Learning: Tips and Techniques for Teachers*, labels this *classroom stagecraft*: “when you talk, imagine your voice coming from your belly” (Leibling & Prior, 2005, p.33). Rebecka, in the interview echoes this sentiment,

I begin with […] a louder voice and then I go down a bit as I realise I have their attention and perhaps I have to raise it again when I notice that they lose focus. So it probably goes up and down, […] but I always try to keep it as low as possible. Like, perhaps sometimes a bit of a masculine voice where you really try to speak from the diaphragm area. (Appendix 2, 2009, p.8)

Body-language, eye-contact, and tone of voice have all emerged as effective techniques to use in the classroom along with establishing a personal relationship and a clear set of rules, knowing the names of the students, always speaking English, keeping an open dialogue with the students: asking them questions and encouraging them to ask questions to make sure that they understand why they are doing what they are doing, and finally staying positive to establish and maintain authentic authority in the classroom.

Referring back to the research questions then, teachers establish themselves as authentic authorities mainly by exerting *expert* and *referent* power. There are several techniques that are used to establish this authority and as such create a setting that is conducive to on-task behaviour for the students. The teacher must build a solid relationship with the students and must establish a set of rules which are observed at all times. What about *coercive*, *reward* and *legitimate* power? *Legitimate* power seems to be fairly non-existent in Sweden, according to Rebecka. Society does not value the teaching profession enough and therefore, relying on an inherent authority that comes with the title of ‘teacher’ is useless, perhaps even non-existent. In the case of *coercive* and *reward* power, Rebecka does begin to explain that she perhaps might use both at times, but her ensuing explanation of the two, show that they really are not present in their true meaning. Explaining that the threats used are those of ‘explaining the bigger picture’ of how the students are the big losers if they do not do their work can hardly classify as *coercive*. Equally, Rebecka realizes herself as she begins to explain and perceived *reward* power on her part that:
Well, I, the thing is…I don’t know what to reward the students with, […] what can I reward them with? I can say like you know “I’m so impressed by the debates and the presentations that you made, and you should be really proud of yourselves for doing this, ‘cause I’m very proud and I’m so impressed and […] it was, […] a great job done. And […] you can see that this is the reward as well. (Appendix 2, 2009, p.5)

The above quote does not reflect a reward which can lose its power because they will come to expect a greater and greater reward. The quote rather describes the important job that teachers have in strengthening students’ self-confidence in their own knowledge and work.

Although the case study undertaken gave some results that indicate possible successful techniques of classroom management, there are limitations to this case study. It would, for example, have been interesting perhaps be able to observe more teachers to see how their techniques differed or altered or were similar to Rebecka’s. Rebecka mentions that in her ‘teaching team’, they do discuss techniques of classroom management: “we talk about it as well, we say, how do you begin class?” (Appendix 2, 2009, p.3). It can be seen that this is encouraged by the government:

The milieu of studies [should be] characterized by order, safety, and the tranquillity to study. Employing preventative measures is central to creating the right prerequisites, […] Employing preventative measures that permeate the entire school is a natural starting point. Everyone should be well acquainted with the school’s values and morals. […] The school’s rules of conduct and plan of equality should be characterized by a holistic view. […] It is also crucial that the rules are discussed on a regular basis, that they are employed consistently and followed up upon. These are the prerequisites required in order to create and retain a good milieu of studies. (Skolverket, 2007, p.3, my translation)

So, how would this be reflected in an investigation that followed several teachers at the same school? A future study could follow a set number of classes with different teachers in a more longitudinal study. In this case it would be interesting to find a class considered to be difficult to manage with a lot of discipline problems, a class considered easy to manage with few
discipline problems, and perhaps one in between the two extremes to observe how similarly or differently effective teaching is achieved in each.

I find that the issue of the teaching profession’s low status touches on a core issue for teachers. In Sweden particularly, but perhaps everywhere, the teaching profession is generally not very well paid. In my own case, when I reveal to people that I’m studying to be a teacher, the general response is something along the lines of: “Oh! You poor thing! I admire you for wanting to educate the coming generations, but I don’t envy you.” Therefore, I feel that it is important that those of us who do want to pursue the profession must have a passion to teach and to care for our students. To be successful, we have to be willing to go the extra mile: to give up time after class for our students, to be consistent in upholding established rules, to be willing and able to properly build up the authority that we need to teach effectively.
References

Primary Sources

Interview with Rebecka (alias) an eighth grade English teacher.

Secondary Sources


Appendices

Appendix 1

Original questions for interview with Rebecka
Malmö, Tuesday, May 5th, 2009.

Questions:
1. How long have you worked at your current employment?
2. How did you end up at this school?
3. Is this your first place of employment as a teacher?
4. What are the established rules in your classroom? Are they the same for all your classes?
5. How well do you find that the students are aware of the established rules and regulations?
6. What do you believe is the best way to keep students on-task or cooperative?
7. Can you describe what you consider to be misbehaviour?
8. What do you consider to be the core elements of effective teaching? Is this a concern for you?
9. Do you consider yourself an authority in the classroom?
10. How would you describe your authority?
11. Do you believe that you achieve more through threats or rewards? (coercive vs reward power)
12. In your experience, is it possibly to rely on the authority that comes with simply being the teachers? Can you explain? (legitimate power)
13. Can you describe the specific routines you employ at the opening of your lessons?
14. Do you find that these routines work for all of your classes? If not, what changes & why?

15. I noticed that during the first lessons after the Easter break, you took the time to chat informally with your students before officially beginning the lesson. During this time you chose to give a personal anecdote about yourself (the not sleeping due to the birds). How deliberate was this?

16. Can you explain why you chose to begin with the informal chat & a personal anecdote?

The following five questions (17-21) where skipped during the interview.

17. Can you describe the specific routines you employ at the closing of your lessons?

18. Do you find that this/these routines work(s) for all of your classes? If not, what changes & why?

19. How important do you consider these routines for the class?

20. Do you have any specific personal routines to prepare yourself before a lesson?

21. How important do you consider these routines to be for yourself?

22. I noticed on several different occasions that you take the time after a lesson to talk with students for varying reasons, some have personal issues, and some want help with their work. Can you comment on this? (referent power)

23. Can you explain why you insist on speaking English with the students? Is this important for your credibility as an English teacher? (expert power)

24. To what extent do you consider and make use of your body language during a lesson? (The way you stand, move around the room, etc)

25. To what extent do you consider and make use of eye contact during a lesson?

26. To what extent do you consider and manipulate the tone of your voice during a lesson?
27. The new guidelines issued by Skolverket to help teachers maintain order by giving them more power e.g. to confiscate mobile phones. Are you familiar with these guidelines? What are your thoughts on these guidelines?

28. The guide states that: “Det är viktigt att skolans lärare och övrig personal markerar gränserna om en elev bryter mot ordningsreglerna. Personalen på skolan måste ha ett gemensamt förhållningssätt till de situationer då en elev kan tänkas bryta mot dessa. Det är därför viktigt att reglerna diskuteras regelbundet inom lärargruppen.” Do you find that this is the case at your school? Have these been discussed? Are they discussed at a regular basis?

29. Do you have any other comments?

Thank you for your time and cooperation!
Appendix 2

Transcription of interview with case study teacher Rebecka
Malmö, Tuesday, May 5th, 2009

KN: Now it seems to be recording, and I have to resist…
REBECKA: And it’s red, yeah
KN: Oh right, ok perfect!
REBECKA: Ok, so we’re gonna take the interview in English so that I can quote directly and I don’t have to translate.
REBECKA: Alright that’s perfect.
KN: Ok, so, ehh how long have you worked at your current employment, here?
REBECKA: Uh, for about, approximately two years.
KN: Ok, and how did you end up at this school?
REBECKA: Well. I applied a number of, to a number of jobs. I’ve had a lot of itinerary work at different schools, part-time employments... uhm, been working as a substitute teacher for a while as well...although it was at one particular school, but still...so but this was one that, they offered me 100% and both English and Spanish and even though the...the pay isn’t that good, I still thought that it was most beneficiary for me and my development, as a teacher.
KN: Excellent. Ok, uh, and this, but this is not your first place, of full time, teaching…
REBECKA: No. I’ve been working...also...I began working at Upper-secondary schools actually and I had English conversation with one student, a blind student..
KN: Oh, wow!
REBECKA: uh very...uhm educational and uh then I continued a bit as a private tutor, as well, in English and in Spanish and also I did some substitute teaching at the Upper secondary school – English and Spanish… a bit of French as well, and then I continued to another school as well, in Svedala.
KN: Oh wow! Do you have a preference between upper secondary or eh middle school? Or is, you know there’s a big difference, isn’t there?
REBECKA: Yes, uh well…nowadays I wouldn’t say there is a big difference between Upper secondary and Secondary school.
KN: Ok?
REBECKA: I would not say that because when I met some of the students at upper secondary school, who still had, you know they had chosen their…uhm….uh, you know, courses and so on, what they would like to study and so on..uhm…they still lacked that kind of maturity that I …eh…expected.
KN: Yeah.
REBECKA: And so, uh still, if not…
KN: Yeah.
REBECKA: The difference is the administrative work.
KN: Ok…
REBECKA: All the papers around one student and the social follow up and the social development. Because in Upper secondary school, uh, well you do not have to, you do not have to uh, pay that much attention to the students’, social development.
KN: Yeah, yeah.
REBECKA: You, you look at the academic and you evaluate that on a course, if there are any issues or troubles and so on. I mean you expect the parent, and you can have, you, you,
you expect one conversation with a student or one correction from the teacher, that that would be enough.

KN: Yeah…

REBECKA: And if not, of course you will contact the parents, but still.

KN: Yeah…so that’s the difference…

REBECKA: So, it’s a lot more work, at Secondary school regarding the students’ social development.

KN: Right, ok, and, well, yeah speaking of work in the classroom, do you have, and if so, what are the established rules in your classroom, and are they the same for all your classes, would you say?

REBECKA: (Thinking)

KN: Do you have sort of…

REBECKA: Do you mean like, disciplinary rules or…?

KN: yeah…uh…yeah, more or less…

REBECKA: Everything…?

KN: Yeah, everything…

REBECKA: Ok..

KN: Sort of what parameters do you have, for…

REBECKA: Yeah, ok, well…

KN: for your students and for yourself…?

REBECKA: exactly, well. Sometimes, I perhaps wish I was a bit more consistent, but they normally know that I begin class with… a lot of the students are normally late, ok? But I do not tend to focus too much on their tardiness, but ehm, I just say like, you know, you need to knock on the door if you want to come in. You know that rule, right? And sometimes of course, I forget, as well, because I mean we’re doing something else, and I don’t wanna pay like, I don’t wanna waste time if they’re, perhaps if they’re twenty minutes late, I will not waste time on asking the students to go out, knock on the door. If they’re five minutes late, we have barely gotten started, and then, I would ask the student to knock on the door and wait for someone to open of course…and then they would, they always have to apologize for being late.

KN: Yeah…

REBECKA: That is just a, I mean the least they can do, and also, uh, we begin together normally by saying good morning, even thought, I’m not demanding that they’re standing behind they’re benches, I know, some teachers have that rule and that’s fine by me, uh, but I don’t do that, because I feel that my classroom is functioning without that rule, but I always uh and of course I would, when they want to say something, I would expect them to raise their hand, I demand that, I will not… Sometimes, it depends on what we’re doing, if we’re doing like a, perhaps for example like a mind map or a word map on the board or something, together, of course, they do not have to raise they’re hand all the time, and also, sometimes if we’re having a discussion, we need to remind ourselves that yes, we need to raise our hand because, we can’t interrupt others and so on.. But uh, yeah and then… yeah what else do I have?

KN: Yeah, any, any, sort of…

REBECKA: Well, I always want us to when we finish class, they stand behind their benches and we need to say good bye properly. Wish each other a good day, whatever, even if they don’t answer, I want them to have that last focus before I send them off and I will not let them go until I get what I want. Uhm.

KN: And do you find that the students, you know, are aware of these few rules that you have and respect them and…?
REBECKA: Yes, I think so...I never felt like, because normally when you say, oh you need to raise your hand, and they go like, yeah! You know, they know and they forget sometimes and uh, you can feel that that is something positive as well, because they get very excited so they forget the rule, right?

KN: Yeah…

REBECKA: and they’re not doing it out of disrespect because when they have done something wrong they always apologize. Or they say like Oh sorry, you know. They always, so they do not mean to be disrespectful.

KN: And these, these rules that you have, are they, where have they come from? Is that from you know just general experience, or is this something that you have thought about very much or does it just come natural?

REBECKA: Yes, well, I think it’s all of the aforementioned, actually, it’s both from experience, and actually I think we, we also, in our… I don’t know what to call it actually “teaching team”? In our group, all of the eighth grade teachers, I mean we talk about it as well, we say, how do you begin class? You begin like this? And normally, most of us do the same thing, we expect that you raise you hand, and we expect that you to, if you’re late, you apologize.

KN: Yeah…

REBECKA: Because it still is your responsibility as a student…

KN: Yeah, sure

REBECKA: Mmm, it’s part of that responsibility and you talk about it all the time when you talk about, you remind them…because we had talks during our…uh… well, class appointments, when we discuss class.

KN: Uh-hmm…

REBECKA: …questions or issues or whatever it may be, like general rules and so on, we talk about how much they lose in being late. That it is their responsibility. “If you are late, you need to find out what you missed. It’s not my job actually to do that. I will hand out papers, but it’s your job, if you don’t have that paper, you try to get a hold of it.”

KN: And are they sort of learning that system?

REBECKA: Some yes, others no. (laughs) I mean it’s very individual. Those students that had no trouble following the rules, those are the students that are responsible for their own learning and what they need to do. And they know what is expected of them. And yes, those students who most of the time come late,…uh… that can be a bit disrespectful, they do not have that drive, themselves. So sometimes you do have to kind of pamper them a bit. Even though I don’t like it but automatically you do it anyway. I don’t know, it’s something in…

KN: Inherent in…?

REBECKA: Maternal…(laughs)

KN: yes, yes, exactly…

REBECKA: you go like Oh…whatever… I’ll give you the paper again. And then if they do something out of their own…

KN: initiative…?

REBECKA: Exactly you get like “Oh, he asked for the paper, and I didn’t have to [inaudible]…!” (laughs)…something! There is always a progress, I mean you see a progress, at least, in some students…so that’s good.

KN: Uhm, ok, switching a little bit here…ehm, what so you believe is the best way, to keep students “on-task” or “cooperative”?

REBECKA: (paus)

KN: You can see that as two different things or as the same thing…

REBECKA: …Mmmm…
KN: Do you have certain…?
REBECKA: Well, calling their name! Knowing their name is a major key to at least getting
their attention. I know I had…uh about two years ago I had a very…a very difficult class.
And, the key there was for me know their names, after one or two days, I knew all their
names, everybody’s name and they go like “how do you know my name?!” you know…Well,
you’ve done everything…for me to, to remember it...(laughs)…
KN: (laughs), yes, funny how some names …
REBECKA: Well, I mean, it’s uh, not that difficult! And also, I mean, to keep them…you
uh…and also, instead of like…I think I do a combination of, for example, after I call their
name to keep them on-task, I’m asking them, so how’s it going? What happened, what have
you done, so far? Uhm, do you have any questions, so when you’ve gotten this far, how do
you feel that you should move on? What should you do next? What are you going to do?
What’s your plan…So I see you’ve done a mind map, good, how are you going to…what are
you going to begin with? Ok?
KN: so…
REBECKA: And then I can give them some pointers, so uhm, I mean I ask questions, I ask
questions and I, well at least I hope I do, I think I do…I mean you have this idea perhaps and
then in reality perhaps, it’s not as much as you hope or believe or whatever…but I ask
questions, and also then, for example, when I notice that the students have a lot of questions,
uhm, and perhaps maybe the same question, and then I remind myself, or then I understand
that, ok this is something that they haven’t understood, so get their attention, then you go over
just a small segment together, so it’s both, perhaps a bit proactive, and reactive.
KN: Would you say those are the core elements of effective teaching?
REBECKA: Well, it works for me…it works for me. And also, I mean, stay positive, stay
positive, and I mean, of course! Sometimes you have like really bad days, and you can’t help
it. And you do things, that you regret, but I believe, it’s important to be open, as well, because
they know, they read you like an open book, no matter what you do, you can’t hide anything,
they know and sense when something is off, or I mean, so they can feel your energy. I mean,
you uhm, it’s very, uhm…so you might as well be open. I mean, perhaps you don’t start the
class by saying…you know “I woke up on the wrong side”, but, you know, you just say like,
uhm, “well I’m not feeling…
KN:…top?
REBECKA: yeah, top-notch today, uh, please keep that in mind, uhm, and I want you to be,
work as effectively and as efficiently as possible, and well you know if you need to ask a
question, please raise your hand and I’ll come to you, please don’t scream and don’t, you
know, so, try to remember the rules that we have.
KN: Ok, so do you consider yourself an authority in the classroom?
REBECKA: I don’t know! (laughter)
KN: (laughs), it’s not a trick question…
REBECKA: I ask… The thing is like, I mean of course, I feel that they listen to me, they
take in what I say, I mean perhaps, even when they don’t listen, at least they are respectful
enough, to… hmmm… to not disturb as much, or you know, and I always try to, “come on
now, you need to get working, and you don’t have much time…let’s see what do you need to
do now? Let me help you, we can work this out and so on…so I, I never had where, you
know, students don’t listen to me…but you know, it’s very different between classes as well.
Perhaps you need to scream sometimes and you need to raise your voice, but it works in the
end… I don’t know…
KN: I have, I have… a few questions on authority in different ways…ehm
REBECKA: Yeah, sure…
KN: So, do you believe that you achieve more, through threats and or rewards?
REBECKA: (paus) hmmm… well…
KN: Are they effective authoritarian techniques?
REBECKA: Well, I, the thing is…I don’t know what to reward the students with. And perhaps, yes I threaten sometimes, but it’s not like you know, well, I try to make them see… I’m more into talking to them about seeing the bigger picture, I mean, I say to them “of course, no one is going to get graded on not working in the classroom, but, you need to keep in mind, that when you are here, I look at, I observe you all the time. Everything you do is something that I take into account, when I later try to see, have you developed? Have you improved your English? Have you, uhm… found new ways of working, and so on, so everything you do, in the classroom, if you choose not to work, I mean of course that’s not going to be positive for your development in English. You cannot expect, to develop your English by not working. It’s not something that comes automatically”, so I’m not threatening them saying like “you know, if you do not work, you will not get a pass”, I, I can’t say that, and also, with rewards, what can I reward them with? I can say like you know “I’m so impressed by the debates and the presentations that you made, and you should be really proud of yourselves for doing this, ‘cause I’m very proud and I’m so impressed and you know it was, you know, a great job done. And you know, and you can see that this is the reward as well. I don’t say like, yeah so that’s perhaps the reward, but that’s you know, because they’ve been working hard.
KN: yeah, so and would you say, in your experience, that it’s possible to rely on the authority that comes with just being the teacher?
REBECKA: You mean professionally?
KN: Yeah…
REBECKA: No. I mean anyone can say like “I’m the teacher.” – “So?!” (laughs) I mean it’s uhm, our profession does not have that authority, I mean since we’re not valued in the community, uhm how can you expect the students to…?
KN: So maybe it’s a reflection of society?
REBECKA: Yes. And I mean, (sigh), a lot of these students are very context bound, I mean they’re very…some of them think: “you’re not my mother and father…so…you can’t tell me what to do”… “NO, but I’m your teacher!” So, it’s a kind of a mix in between, so both yes and no. Yes and no. Depends how you look at it.
KN: Right Eh…I’m just checking here, we’ve covered that and that. Eh, I noticed that during the first lessons after your Easter break, you took the time to chat informally with your students before beginning the lesson, and you chose to give a personal anecdote: the one about the not sleeping because of the birds…
REBECKA: Yes! (laughs)
KN: Yes, so, I was thinking, how deliberate was this?
REBECKA: Uhm…
KN: What were your thoughts behind, sort of beginning with a personal anecdote?
REBECKA: Well, because, I mean since it was the first time we met and I mean, it should be perhaps a bit light, you should set the mood. You set the mood, I mean, it’s something that they might laughs about and they might feel like, you know, cause I know that some people may say that they have been sleeping, but no, I know they haven’t so, uhm, I can understand if they’re tired…And I we, we kind of set like the …ok, so we’re both on the same emotional level perhaps, or uhm, yeah, so it’s just, I think it’s just to, to relax a bit, to relax a bit, and then you hit them hard with what you need to do. (laughs)
KN: (laughs)
REBECKA: So, after you’ve done that, so it’s more like, you know, yes, I mean of course you can be personal with your students, but I mean, I don’t tell private things about myself, I just say… this is something like, and they go like “Oh, yeah, the birds, oh, they’re… killing you, aren’t they!”

KN: Yeah, would you say that’s a way of getting them to associate with you as well? To, you know…

REBECKA: Yeah… perhaps it is! Perhaps it is!

KN: “We’re all human, and we all have sleeping problems” or… whichever it is.

REBECKA: Yes, and I’m trying to… perhaps not undermine my authority, but showing I’m a human just as you, because they do forget that. They forget that we are humans; of course we have a profession that requires a lot from you. More than a lot, and eh, but of course, we can have a crappy day, just as they do, that does not mean that they can speak in any kind of way to us, we are humans, we have feelings, we have sleep deprivation, (laughs) we have, I mean, perhaps we haven’t had time to have breakfast, you know, and, so uhm, yeah.

KN: Yeah, uhm, I’m gonna skip these questions and come back to them, ehm, Also, I noticed, on several occasions, that you take the time, after a lesson, to talk to -eh with- your students for varying reasons. Some have personal issues, some just want help with their work. Can you comment on this?

REBECKA: I don’t think that’s optional, I mean, I think, it’s a necessity. I hate when I have to rush to another class, of course I need to tell them, “I’m sorry, please, come to me later if there’s something, but if it has to do with work, if they need to have a pointer or something, that normally goes very quickly. Uhm, if it’s something personal, and I know I have a bit of time, of course, I’m gonna stay and listen, and then I say, “Oh dear, you have to you know, you have to get to class. Aren’t you gonna be late?” So, “I really appreciate you sharing this with me” and you try to round it off as sensitively as possible, so yeah. (paus)

KN: It’s just a part of…

REBECKA: Yeah, it’s just a part of, I mean, some, some teachers don’t like their students being that personal with them. But it depends, I mean, some of the students, that I need to talk to, it’s because I need to talk to them about something. I mean there is, what you saw is probably, situations that happened before, and it was very important that we had that kind of ice-breaker and, we needed to do that, to establish our relationship again. Cause we hadn’t had that for quite some time. So, it’s all about maintaining these relationships. Otherwise, if you don’t have a relationship with the, I mean a relation with the student, then you will lose your authority. If they don’t know you, especially with these students, if they don’t know you and you come in there, start telling them what to do, you’re gonna have a rebellion, you know, you’re gonna be…you’re gonna have a…

KN: Once again, going back, that ties into your authority, then, having this time for the students.

REBECKA: Yes, yes, perhaps.

KN: Eh, and then, can you explain why you insist on speaking English with the students? Is this important for your credibility as an English teacher, even sort of, eh, with things that are not related to, eh, what you’re teaching, you know, if they come in late, you’ll still speak English to them and when they ask questions, and you sort of insist “try again”…

REBECKA: Yes, I think it’s very important. I think they should hear it as much as possible. I know they hear it on television everyday, but it’s not the same kind of English, and it should be in an environment, I believe that perhaps they do not feel that it comes natural to them right now, on all occasions, but at least, perhaps, the last semester or something, they start answering back, I mean, some students they say in Spanish or in English, you know they say “Hello” or “Hola”.
KN: Yes, I noticed in the corridor…
REBECKA: Yes, in the corridor, they’re always interested in seeing like “how do you say that?”, so it’s more like maintaining an interest as well. You hear it, you hear it all the time, it should be like, a more natural environment. Because if you switch, I believe, then you say that, well the Swedish, is the authority language, I mean cause normally, perhaps, if you want to be serious, you switch to Swedish, and then you keep everything else, that has to do with the subject, you keep that with English. And normally, and normally? I don’t know, I’m just assuming here but, perhaps some teachers, when they teach, uh, grammar, they use Swedish instead. I try to do, I begin with English, and perhaps, if it might be too difficult for them, and they don’t understand, I’m asking perhaps one of the students to translate “so what do you think this means? How can you explain this in Swedish? What are the rules? Let’s try to create some rules together and, so then we try to do both parts if it’s perhaps a bit too difficult. You can see it in their faces, (laughs), yeah.
KN: But I mean, they come to expect you to insist on English as well?
REBECKA: Yes! They tell me sometimes. Sometimes I forget, and or, or yeah. They don’t value. I don’t know, I feel that they don’t value the classes as much if we don’t speak English or if I don’t speak English. Yes, so. It’s supposed to be natural to them.
KN: and the fact that they sort of “give in” and that they do eventually answer in English…
REBECKA: Well, yes, hopefully (laughter), they try in the beginning and then perhaps they feel, they they and they say either in Swedish or in English, but if they try in English and then perhaps I haven’t heard them. I say “Oh, I’m sorry I just didn’t hear what you were saying.” And then they may switch back to English. So that’s, then you can see how sensitive they are to using the language and the uncertainty, but I mean it’s very different in the classroom as well, the difference between different students, how much they want to use the language as well. But they should at least hear it.
KN: Yeah and getting them comfortable with the language.
REBECKA: Exactly. I said like “if you don’t understand everything at once, that’s ok, I’m not expecting you to understand every word I say, but you try to understand as much as possible, you know and as time goes by, you will understand more and more.” You know?
KN: It’s interesting, I just, thought of a situation, with, noticing how they also want you to notice that they’re using their English or understanding. I just remember two girls that spoke to you after class one day, they had personal issues, and but, what they first mentioned was that “yeah I understood everything that you were saying, I just have trouble speaking.” And of course, I was sitting behind them, and I noticed that they were on and off paying attention, and one was saying, “I don’t know what she’s saying”. So it’s interesting, they just want to say that to you?
REBECKA: Well, in that case, these girls, I think, they are very, well, they are more in it for the attention. So I knew, that when they said “Oh, I understood but it’s hard for me to speak…” I knew that they didn’t understand everything, and perhaps they didn’t understand as much as I would have wanted them to, but still and I said “Yeah, that’s great, that’s wonderful!” Because I mean, what can I say? I know, it will show, it will show.
KN: And would you agree that, perhaps, you said that it’s because they want attention. But perhaps it’s also because they respect you? And they want you to sort of, be happy with them? Or do you think that they actually believe that you don’t have a clue as to how their English is or isn’t? that was a twisted sentence! Did you understand what I mean?
REBECKA: No, yes, but I understand, I understand. I’m thinking, I’m thinking, it’s a good question. I, I don’t think they did it out of respect, because they are not aware of… I don’t know, I mean, these two girls are very self focused at the moment. And, uh, they are struggling a lot. So…
KN: But somewhere there, isn’t there maybe the will…to…?
REBECKA: Of course, of course, I mean, otherwise, they probably wouldn’t have said anything! And I know that one of the girls didn’t understand, she doesn’t, because her level of English, I mean she hasn’t been to school, I mean she has…
KN: Personal issues…?
REBECKA: Yes, yes, so I mean, there is no. She hasn’t been to school on a regular basis, I mean, since maybe, fourth grade? Yeah, so she’s missed out on a lot and I mean her level of English is, I mean she can say “Hello, my name is…” and you know that’s probably it, you know “a white house” perhaps. Things like that. So she doesn’t understand a word I say. And of course, that is of course very frustrating. But still this is the level I keep, and I have given her a very basic book that she is supposed to bring and work with. Of course, well, unfortunately, she doesn’t. But, so I, well, I mean the girl who said that “yes I understand, I understand everything, but I have trouble talking.” I’m like…hmmm…but I said, like, that’s very normal, because you have kind of like, you take in, you take in, you take in, and sometimes you use it. And uhm, but it’s important that you at least try, I mean it doesn’t have to be the longest sentence in the world, or that you use the longest words or anything I mean it can be a sentence like this (motions with hands), just saying “yes, I understand.” That’s fine. So don’t…I don’t know.
KN: Ok, here’s another question. To what extent do you consider and make use of eye contact during a lesson? How important is that, and do you sort of, think about that a lot?
REBECKA: It’s important to look at the students and eye contact. But it depends. I mean you have like, you keep the eye contact a little longer if you want they’re attention and if you’re pissed off about something(laughs). Then you go do “the stare”!
KN: Do you have days when you sort of think about it more?
REBECKA: Well, I have, I have, I have classes and days when I sort of think about “ok, so now I haven’t paid attention ‘visually’ with this student, so now I have to make sure that they understand, that they know that I see them too.” Even though they may not speak in the classroom, perhaps they’re not that active, so I at least look at them, or maybe a nod and I go like “Yeah? You agree?” And they go like… (makes a face of incomprehension) (laughs) but still they know that I have seen them, ok? So that’s part of maintaining perhaps the trust, and trying to maintain, well some kind of, well, the relationship again, knowing that…
KN: And…same kind of question with, how do you… To what extent do you manipulate your tone of voice during the lesson?
REBECKA: A lot. Yeah, I…
KN: Do you have a system, sort of “begin with this tone of voice and then if I have to, I’ll go this or this way…?”
REBECKA: I, I think I begin with uhm, uhm, like a high, a louder voice and then I go down a bit as I realise I have their attention and perhaps I have to raise it again when I notice that they lose focus. So it probably goes up and down, but I , I always try to keep it as low as possible. Like, perhaps sometimes a bit of a masculine voice where you really try to speak from the diaphragm area.
KN: would you say that that’s part of uh…uh… what’s the word I’m looking for? Is it important for them to feel that you’re in control. It’s a part of showing them that even if I raise my voice and I’m sort of (snaps fingers twice) doing this to you… I haven’t lost it… I…
REBECKA: No exactly, you’re in control. Yes. That’s part of it, so even though you may be yelling at them, you yell at them in a controlled voice, showing that you are balanced, you are in control and meaning that you are serious. And I mean I use a lot of body language as well, using my hands.
KN: Yeah, body language was my next one.
REBECKA: Oh, good.
KN: To extent do you sort of think about where you’re standing, how you are standing…?
REBECKA: I think about it. I think about it. I mean, it depends on, cause all the classes are different, I mean I have with my own class, I stand on the side, which I hate and I also hate standing behind the… the… well, the teacher’s desk. Eh... So sometimes, I’ve moved it. And eh.. so I can stand in the middle of the room, but then I hate that the whiteboard is on the left, so I have to stand on the left, which is good for one student that I have to control, still, it keeps you a bit off you know. So that’s why I keep most of the students on this side (motions to the left), so...
KN: And moving around the room…?
REBECKA: Yeah, moving around the room as well, I need to move around the room to keep them, because I mean it’s really boring to stand in front of a class, all the time, just standing there and sometimes I stand at the back of the room, perhaps I need to get a clear picture of the white board, uhm, and yeah, and get in contact with those who are in the back. So I use a lot of that positioning and also, well, it depends on how I stand as well, sometimes I’m more relaxed or sometimes if I come in I stand with you know broad legs and like the real “alpha” position and you know it’s like (deepens voice) “Uuuhh…speaking from my stomach!” (laughs)
KN: Yeah, is that something you sort of feel on the way into the classroom, this is gonna be one of those days, I’m gonna have to…
REBECKA: Yes! Yeah, yeah. Sometimes you know I have, some of the students are really excited before they go into the classroom, I don’t let them in. I, I stand in the way and I say, “Ok, I need you to calm down before you go in there, I do not want you to go in and be all over the place. And just sit down.” And also, they do remember some of the rules, that for example, going back to the rules actually, they do remember some of the rules, that for example, I said from the beginning: “What do you do when you come into the classroom?” “We sit down and we shut up.” “Yes, exactly”. If you wanna ask questions, What do you need to do?” “Ok, so we wait and listen to what you have to say, then we ask questions.” “Good. Cause you don’t know what I’m gonna say” “You don’t have any idea what I’m gonna say. Perhaps I’m going to answer your question. It’s good that you have questions, but don’t just ‘bluuuuaaaaauuu’ blurt them out” I have no, I have no, there’s no possibility for me to answer them if everybody is coming from every direction, so. Yeah.
KN: and then I sort of have a different direction here. The new guidelines issued by Skolverket to help maintain order by giving them more power, for example, to confiscate mobile phone etc. Are you and sort of the other teachers very familiar with these guidelines…
REBECKA: Mm-hmm.
KN: And, what are your thoughts on the guidelines?
REBECKA: Well, I mean, (sigh), the thing is I mean you know they’re sort of…of course you have the right, you have the right, in that case to confiscate cell phones, but that is, in that case if they do not put them in their pockets. You have no right to, uhm, to take a student’s cell phone from their pocket or you know, I would never ever take a cell phone out of a student’s hand. Never ever, do that because that’s a big risk, I mean both for me both for the student. That’s not good. You say: “I’m waiting, I’m waiting…” (motions with hand, palm up) “Give me your cell phone. You’ll get it back after class.”
KN: Would you say, sort of, the guidelines in general, are they helpful, are they sort of obvious or is it…?
REBECKA: I mean, before the guidelines came, we were sort of doing it anyway. Because I mean, what were you supposed to do? What they did now, was just giving us the right to do it.
KN: Right, I have a passage from the guide, it states, in Swedish: “Det är viktig att skolans lärare och övrig personal markerar gränserna om eleverna bryter mot ordningsreglerna. Personalen på skolan måste ha, ett gemensamt förhållningssätt till de situationer då en elev kan tänkas bryta mot dessa. Det är därför viktigt att reglerna diskuteras regelbundet inom lärargruppen.” Do you find that this is the case at this school?

REBECKA: We talked about it a lot, I mean, we talked about all kinds of disciplinary actions…

KN: You sort of do you in an ongoing process or did you have sort of one big discussion about it?

REBECKA: No, it was an ongoing process, because we talked about “Ok, so what can we do?” But the thing is, what we can do, is that it’s a situation that is solved in the classroom. If it’s not solved in the classroom, you call their parents. Ok? And, well, if it still doesn’t work, then perhaps the parents should come for a meeting with the principal. Uhm, but that’s about it. I mean, that’s what we have, but of course it’s important because we talked about, not having jackets and coats and, or caps on or anything like that, but still, not everybody follows these rules. And should you allow chewing gum? I do not allow candy but at some points I do allow chewing gum, because I said, it helps you think. Because you’re doing something at the same time, but I said, I do not want to see you sit there and chewing and letting me hear all your slurping and argh! Disgusting sounds. You know, things like that, so then they need to spit it out, because then they can’t control it. So it’s freedom under limitations. But I don’t know.

KN: Yeah, so, my last question, I think you have sort of an idea of my areas of interest here so do you have any final ideas or thoughts?

REBECKA: Oh, no…I think I pretty much said everything I needed to say, unless you have anything that is unclear…

KN: No…let me just have a quick look back… Oh, I have one question, actually that I missed, we’ve sort of covered it, but not in specifics. Can you describe what you consider to be misbehaviour?

REBECKA: Misbehaviour? Well, in the classroom, misbehaviour is when you…you uh, open the door abruptly and not saying that you’re sorry that you’re late, or just entering and or perhaps if you’re late, and you come in and you start talking to your friends, that’s misbehaving. And also if you are being disrespectful to me to anyone else in the classroom, that’s misbehaving. If you talk, when I’m talking, or someone else is talking, out loud, then that’s also misbehaving. Well, if you disturb others, that’s also misbehaving.

KN: How about, not bringing your work, or not having done what was expected of you. Is that also, would you consider that misbehaviour?

REBECKA: No that’s not misbehaviour. Uhm.

KN: Would you, do you consider it disrespectful of the students not to have done the work?

REBECKA: Yes, it’s disrespectful, but not to me, to themselves.

KN: And how do you tackle, or what do you do…?

REBECKA: Well, if I notice that a lot of students haven’t done their homework, then I have a general convers…or talk with them, when I say that, “I’m saying that it’s not this will not fall on me. That you haven’t done your homework. My life will go on. I know English. I have other ways of learning and developing my language than doing what we’re doing here, because I already have the bases that we are studying here. I know English, I can go to any country and speak to whomever I want, I can read any kind of text and I can understand, I can write any kind of letter or document or whatever. I know these things, if you do not do what I, the assignments that I give you, then, it’s your development that suffers. You will not learn what you need to learn to move on and go on to the next step. You will not learn the basic
rules. Also, in that case, how can you expect to get a grade? If you haven’t… If you haven’t shown me anything. If you haven’t shown me any of your work, and shown me that you have developed in any kind of way, besides speaking. I look at everything. I look at speaking, reading, that you understand what you hear, speaking and writing. I look at all these components, if you just have one part, you cannot get a grade. Or perhaps the grade that you deserve, so it’s all connected.” So I say like, you know, “I’m not the one that suffers from it. It’s you. It’s not me.” But I get disappointed. I do get disappointed.

KN: And how important do you think it is, or how big a part of your job is it to keep them aware of why they are, why it’s actually important for themselves.

REBECKA: It’s important for them to be reminded. If they do not know why they are doing it, then of course they won’t do it. I mean, it’s human nature, if I don’t know why I’m doing something, I’m probably gonna, sooner or later, I’m gonna stop doing it. There’s no reason for me doing it. And the same goes for them, but they work on an even faster level. I mean, if they can’t see it immediately, they go like “yeah, whatever”. (laughs) “there’s no reason, I can’t see it” So you need to help them see the bigger picture. It’s not only about grades, you know, it’s about. I always say, you know, I’m aiming for… I’m not only thinking about that you are going to earn your grades in the ninth grade. I’m looking at Upper secondary, I’m looking at University. That’s what I’m looking at. I’m preparing you for that. I’m not looking at next week. I’m preparing you for that.

KN: And do you find that take that in, they accept that explanation?

REBECKA: Yeah, they accept it. I have students who go like, “why…?” But they more do it to try to undermine my authority. They go like “Why are we doing this…?” Then I explain. “Because this is something that will be required of you later.”

KN: They’re sort of checking up on you? Do you know why we’re doing this?

REBECKA: Yeah, yeah. But I also tell them, I tell them in the beginning. If you do not know why we are doing something, ask me! I said in the beginning, like, every time we start a new project, I want to be as specific as possible, explaining to you, why we are doing this, what you will learn. What I expect you to learn with this task, and uhm trying to keep that as open as possible. And I said, “If you do not understand that, ask me again and I’ll explain it to you again, I’ll talk to you about if again. Remind me to remind you. Cause I will forget sometimes as well, not why we’re doing it, but I will have it up here (points to brain) so you need to tell me as well, if there’s something you don’t understand why we’re doing this, ask me. If you do not know why we are doing something, then it’s very hard to feel motivated.” Motivation is at least 50%. So that’s normally, but of course you realize, I don’t know, it’s this dialogue, you notice when you need to cover up areas that you need to remind them. When you realise that ok, so now they kind of lost the, the understanding of it, why we’re doing something, what they’re supposed to do, what is expected of them, what is expected of me. So then you need to remind them of it.

KN: Alright, well, thank you very much. Thanks for having me observe and…

REBECKA: Thank you! Love talking about myself (laughs), my profession…

KN: Yeah, well, I’ll send you a copy, once it’s done in June.

REBECKA: Yes! It’s gonna be so interesting to see.