Varieties of English in the Swedish Classroom

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# Table of contents

1. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................. 1

2. BACKGROUND .......................................................................................................................................... 2
   2.1 THE MATCHED-GUISE TECHNIQUE ................................................................................................. 2
   2.2 OTHER STUDIES ............................................................................................................................... 3
   2.3 RECENT STUDIES ON ACCENT ATTITUDES AND USER IDENTITY .................................................. 4
   2.4 STANDARD VERSUS NON-STANDARD SPEECH ................................................................................ 6
      2.4.1 Language attitudes (standard vs. non-standard) in educational settings .................................. 7
   2.5 STANDARD VARIETIES OF ENGLISH IN SWEDISH SCHOOLS .................................................. 9

3. METHOD .................................................................................................................................................. 10
   3.1 WHY A QUESTIONNAIRE? .................................................................................................................. 10
   3.2 THE QUESTIONS ............................................................................................................................... 11
      3.2.1 Part 1 of the questionnaire ......................................................................................................... 11
      3.2.2 Part 2 of the questionnaire ......................................................................................................... 13
   3.3 PROCEDURE ....................................................................................................................................... 13

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS ..................................................................................................................... 13
   4.1 USE OF AMERICAN ENGLISH OR BRITISH ENGLISH ................................................................. 14
      4.1.1 The reason for speaking a certain variety .................................................................................... 16
   4.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS BRITISH ENGLISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH ....................................... 16
      4.2.1 British English ............................................................................................................................ 16
      4.2.2 American English ....................................................................................................................... 17
      4.2.3 The participants’ attitudes towards AmE and BrE reflected in their teaching ......................... 18
   4.3 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VARIETIES OF ENGLISH ................................................................... 18
      4.3.1 Secondary school ....................................................................................................................... 19
      4.3.2 Upper Secondary School ........................................................................................................... 20
   4.4 MIXTURE OF VARIETIES OR CONSISTENT USE OF ONLY ONE? .................................................. 21
      4.4.1 The results ................................................................................................................................... 21
      4.4.2 Criteria for being a contradiction ............................................................................................... 22
      4.4.3 The contradictions ..................................................................................................................... 23
      4.4.4 Discussion: Question #5 ............................................................................................................. 23

5. CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................................................... 24

REFERENCES .............................................................................................................................................. 26

APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE ................................................................................................................... 27
   PART 1 ................................................................................................................................................... 27
   PART 2 ................................................................................................................................................... 29
1. Introduction

Many English teachers see British English as the standard variety and teach this variety in the classroom. Their students are, however, also exposed to a great deal of American English in today’s media. As a result, there are a lot of students who use a mixture of these varieties because of the double input, both from media and from the teachers in school. This may cause problems when it comes to the assessment of students’ oral skills in English. One problem is whether students who use a mixture of English varieties are assessed in the same way as students who use for example British English consistently. This is very important to find out since it would provide us with information on whether we can expect students to try to be consistent in their use of one variety. Another problem is whether the teachers’ predominant attitudes towards different varieties are reflected in their teaching or if students are allowed to use whatever variety they see fit. Yet another aspect of this is whether the variety that teachers claim they speak is the same as the one actually spoken. It is also important to find out whether teachers believe that students should know about the differences between the dialects even if they are not able to use one consistently.

In this paper I will interview teachers from Swedish secondary and upper secondary schools to find out what their attitudes towards British and American English are and whether these attitudes are reflected in their teaching. I will also examine whether the teachers actually speak the variety of English they think they do as well as what their views are on students using a mixture of varieties. The focus will be on American English and British English. My investigation will be in the form of a questionnaire-study.
2. Background

In this section I will explore what previous researchers have said about varieties of English. I will first discuss the revolutionizing matched-guise technique and then review what has been said about various aspects of standard versus non-standard language.

2.1 The matched-guise technique

One very important study regarding language attitudes was conducted by Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner and Fillenbaum as early as 1960 (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 33). Initially, Lambert was interested in language attitudes in inter-ethnic contexts, more specifically how French and English Canadian people in Montreal perceived each other. However, Lambert et al did not want to do a regular questionnaire study, since they felt that the results would not truthfully reflect the participants’ privately held attitudes towards each other. Lambert and his co-workers wanted to be able to assess the participants’ attitudes towards each others’ accents in a truthful and elegant way. Therefore, they came up with the matched-guise technique (MGT). The MGT is based on the assumption that speech style leads to social categorizations. These categorizations vary depending on which social group the listener belongs to and also on the listener’s attitudes towards the speech style which is presented to them. The participants in the study were asked to listen to a tape-recorder where the same passage was being read a number of times in different language varieties, by a person presented to the participants as different speakers. The fact that the speaker in the various recordings was the same person, only in different ‘guises’\(^1\), was not revealed to the participants. After listening to the recordings, the participants were asked to evaluate the, for them, different speakers regarding certain ‘person-perceptive’ attributes. Examples of the various attributes that were rated include competence traits such as intelligence, ambition and confidence, as well as social attractiveness/integrity traits such as sincerity, friendliness and generosity (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 33-34). The results of the MGT were then supposed to represent stereotypical reactions to the different language varieties (Edwards, 1982: 22-23).

\(^{1}\) Guise = the way someone or something appears to be. A person with a French guise is a person which is believed by others to be French.
In Lambert et al.’s original study the attitudes towards English and French guises in Montreal were evaluated. Generally, the English-speaking evaluators reacted more favorably towards the English guises than towards the French guises. This is interesting because this means that the English-speaking persons in the study favored speakers of their own language. Even more interesting, however, is that the French-speaking participants reacted more positively to the English guise as well. This indicates not only that the higher-status group favored their own speech variety, but also that members of the lower-status group had adopted the same attitude towards English. It also shows that the members of the lower-status group are conscious of the difference in social power between these two language varieties in general (Edwards, 1982: 22-23).

The initial MGT study by Lambert et al is of great importance for the following five reasons: firstly, Lambert et al presented an elegant and more accurate method (than for example a questionnaire) to assess people’s privately held attitudes towards various language varieties. Secondly, the results brought up the importance of language when creating impressions of persons. Thirdly, the MGT study contributed to the establishment of the new cross-disciplinary field of language attitudes. Fourthly, it produced the widely recognized judgment clusters of status traits versus solidarity traits. Fifthly, the original study resulted in an avalanche of further studies all over the world (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 35).

2.2 Other studies

Subsequently, researchers discovered that Lambert’s techniques were useful in other contexts as well. Strongman and Woosley, for example, conducted a study in 1967 using a similar approach (Edwards, 1982: 23). In this study, English psychology undergraduates listened to two speakers who read the same passage but with different accents: Yorkshire and London. With half of the participants being from southern England and half from northern England, it was shown that no large differences in attitudes towards the two accents existed. The results showed that the two groups of participants had similar attitudes towards the two accents, and did not regard one more favorably than the other. This indicates that, in contrast to Lambert et al’s study, neither of the language variety-groups could be labeled as minority or majority. This means that no ‘minority group reaction’ could be expected (Edwards, 1982: 23).
Another researcher who adopted some MGT principles was Cheyne. Cheyne conducted a study in 1970 which investigated reactions to Scottish versus other regional accents of English. Generally, the results indicated that both English and Scottish participants rated speakers with a Scottish accent as lower in status than speakers of English. However, there were a few anomalies in the study. For example, some Scottish participants rated male Scottish speakers more positively than English ones when it came to personality, suggesting that the accent signaled ‘warmth’. Also, both groups evaluated the Scottish accent as more friendly (Edwards, 1982: 23).

The same year as the Cheyne study (1970), Giles conducted a study of British secondary school children’s attitudes towards a number of English accents (Edwards, 1982: 23). The study included varieties such as the non-regional RP (Received Pronunciation), Irish, German and West Indian accents. The results showed that, in terms of aesthetic quality, communicative content and status, RP was considered the most favorable. The more regional accents such as, for example, Somerset and South Welsh were ranked somewhere in the middle of the scale, while the more urban ones such as Cockney and Birmingham accents were very low or at the bottom of the scale. These results support the conclusion of a previous study, conducted by Wilkinson in 1965, that there exists an accent prestige hierarchy in Britain. Just as in the study by Giles, Wilkinson’s result was that RP (along with some foreign accents) was at the top of the hierarchy, the more regional accents in the middle and the urbanized ones at the bottom (Edwards, 1982: 23).

2.3 Recent studies on accent attitudes and user identity

Lately, there have been a lot of studies conducted in the area of accents and pronunciation, with most of the research focusing on native versus non-native varieties of English. The research also illustrates how accent is intimately bound to our identity and personality. In this section, I will summarize what researchers say about varieties of English and how it reflects the identity of the users.

In a study conducted by Jennifer Jenkins (2005), eight non-native teachers of English were questioned in interviews as to their thoughts and attitudes regarding non-native and native accents of English. When asked if they liked their own accent, three of the participants
responded positively to the question, saying that they were happy with it. Four of the remaining participants said that they were not pleased with their accents and that they needed to improve themselves in some areas. The last participant said that she had never thought about it and could therefore not give an answer to the question. However, later in the interview, when asked how they would feel if their accent was mistaken for that of a native speaker of English, contradictions emerged. The majority of the participants said that they would feel flattered and happy since most of them considered a native accent the same thing as being proficient in English. One of the participants, who came from Poland, said that she would feel very pleased if she were mistaken for a native speaker. However, a little later she contradicted herself by saying “I feel Polish… I don’t want to sound like an English person, obviously not” (Jenkins, 2005: 538). Another participant, from Italy, gave a similar answer: “I am comfortable about it. I’m proud of it… I don’t want to be what I am not. I am Italian, I have my own culture, my roots are Italian” (Jenkins, 2005: 538). These answers tell us that there is ambiguity when it comes to attitudes towards native and non-native accents. To some extent, the participants want to sound like native speakers of English since a native-like accent is considered, by the participants, to be more “correct”, “proficient”, “competent”, “fluent” and “real” than a non-native accent. On the other hand, it seems that their attachment to their mother tongue reflects the crucial role it plays in their identity. The ambiguity that the participants displayed is what Bamgbose (1998) calls a “love-hate relationship” with the English language (Jenkins, 2005: 541-42).

Accent does not only have to do with geography but also with society. One of the reasons speakers speak the way they do is the social groups they belong to or wish to belong to. Accent brings a social group together, creating a common ground for the people who belong to it. Accents and other linguistic markers are important markers of social identity (Levis, 2005: 374-375). The accent shows who you are and where you come from. With this in mind, I will now show how non-standard pronunciation functions as a way to strengthen the social bonds within a group.

According to Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005, ethnic group affiliation is a crucial factor regarding pronunciation accuracy. They believe that inaccuracy in pronunciation may not reflect a speaker’s lack of ability or interest, but rather the pressure coming from the social groups to which the speaker belongs, e.g. fellow students and friends as well as home communities. The primary ethnic group may even consider speakers who are too accurate in
speech and pronunciation as disloyal to the rest of the group. This indicates that adjusting one’s accent is not value free since accents are intimately tied to the speaker’s identity and group membership (Levis, 2005: 376). It also shows that having a very good and completely intelligible pronunciation may actually be evaluated negatively depending on the context.

By contrast, one can observe the opposite of this phenomenon among teachers in countries where English is not spoken as a first language. Many of these teachers believe that having a native-like pronunciation of English is “the yardstick for intelligibility” (Golombek & Jordan, 2005: 520). This indicates that teachers try to use an accent and pronunciation which sound as native-like as possible, which is the opposite of the phenomenon discussed in the previous paragraph (pronouncing words inaccurately in order to show group membership). In a study by Richard Humphries in 1995, where he investigated Japanese college students’ attitudes towards accents of English, it was shown that almost half of the students desired to acquire their teachers’ accents (Humphries, 1995), which means that these students look up to their teachers. This phenomenon was pointed out more clearly in another study, conducted by Sifakis & Sougari in 2005, where it was established that teachers of English want to use an accent that is as native-like as possible in order to be a good role model to their students pronunciation-wise (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005: 475).

### 2.4 Standard versus non-standard speech

In a lot of pronunciation materials, e.g. textbooks, in countries where English is a second language, prestige native speaker versions of English such as Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American are used. These standard varieties of English are seen as good and proper models for learning pronunciation. However, the majority of native speakers of English speak neither RP nor General American. This means that the materials may not satisfy the communicative needs of the learner, since it gives a skewed or incorrect view of pronunciation (Levis, 2005: 371). In fact, the non-standard varieties may actually be the ones which are the most useful to the learners. Despite this, there has been quite a lot of research over the years indicating that a standard variety of English still is the most favored one in school.
Giles and Coupland say that “[a] standard variety is the one that is most often associated with high socioeconomic status, power and media usage in a particular community” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 38). They also claim that the standard variety’s high status often is due to historical influence. The standard variety is, by both standard and non-standard speakers, much more favored as reflecting competence traits such as intelligence, confidence and ambition. This means that non-standard speakers who use the more low-status varieties actually downgrade their own speech variety (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 38). This phenomenon, where the speakers of the less prestigious variety also favor the higher status variety, can be witnessed in a lot of countries/areas. As mentioned above, this is the case with Scottish English and various other regional varieties of English, where Scottish English was seen as having lower status than the other regional varieties by both Scottish speakers and others (Edwards, 1982: 23). Another example (also mentioned above) of this is the first MGT study, where both French and English-speaking Canadians favored Canadian English (Edwards, 1982: 22-23). However, while the standard variety is favored for exhibiting competence traits, it is often downgraded for such traits as solidarity, benevolence, integrity and social attractiveness (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 40).

2.4.1 Language attitudes (standard vs. non-standard) in educational settings

So far, I have only discussed language attitudes in general terms. However, it is in the educational environment that these attitudes matter the most. Many teachers, if not all, share the attitudes towards language discussed above, i.e. that a standard variety is better than a non-standard one. Moreover, these favored varieties are very often their own. This phenomenon, according to Gumperz and Hernandez-Chavez, occurs because teachers tend to become influenced by what they themselves consider as ‘deviant speech’ (Edwards, 1982: 28). Another possible reason for why teachers have these language attitudes is presented in a study conducted by Basil Bernstein. In 1971, Bernstein presented a sociolinguistic theory which dealt with elaborated and restricted code. Elaborated code is a sentence or a phrase which can ‘stand on its own’ and does not need any background information or prior knowledge in order to be understood. Restricted code, however, is shorter and more condensed and would probably not be understood if heard out of context. This means that if a person overheard a conversation full of restricted code, he or she would probably not
understand very much of it. In his study, Bernstein saw a direct correlation between the use of either elaborated or restricted code and social class. He suggests that working class speakers are most likely to use restricted code, while middle class speakers are most likely to use both restricted and elaborated code (Young, 2002). This study was seen by many as a way of showing how non-standard varieties are inferior to the standard ones. As a reaction to this, many researchers, such as Labov in 1973, demonstrated that the non-standard varieties are not inferior to the standard ones (Edwards, 1982: 28). Labov showed that what was then known as ‘Negro Nonstandard English’ was just as capable of expressing original and complex ideas as any other standard variety (Atherton, 2003). Nevertheless, the impact of Bernstein’s study remains strong, affecting not only teachers in Britain and America but in many other countries as well (Edwards, 1982: 28).

Another study which dealt with teachers’ attitudes towards standard versus non-standard varieties of language is the one Choy and Dodd conducted in 1976. The study investigated teachers’ attitudes towards Standard English and Hawaiian English speakers, in this case fifth-grade students. The result was that the standard variety was consistently favored by the teachers. The speakers of this variety were seen by the teachers as less disruptive in class, more confident, more successful in school and more likely to succeed on an academic as well as social level. Some teachers even made far-reaching judgments regarding, for example, how happy the children’s future marriages most likely would be (Edwards, 1982: 28).

A year later (1977), Granger, Mathews, Quay and Verner conducted a study which yielded similar results as the Choy and Dodd study. The study focused on reactions to black versus white children’s speech in the United States. The children who participated in the study were asked to describe a picture (the same picture was used in all cases) while being recorded. This method was used in order to give the participants the opportunity to give more spontaneous descriptions than they would have if another method (for example reading a text) was used. These recorded samples were presented to teachers who then evaluated what they heard. The participants’ ratings of the black children’s speech samples reflected both racial bias and perceived social class differences when compared to the ratings of white children’s speech. Granger et al. suggest that the teachers in this study focused more on the form than on the content in these speech samples. In other words, they did not focus much on what the child said in the recording, but rather on how he or she said it. This shift of focus, from content to form, is one of the dangers with stereotypical perceptions (Edwards, 1982: 29).
Although there have been a great number of studies which show that teachers downgrade non-standard varieties of language, we should also note that there have been studies which show a more positive attitude to non-standard language. One of those studies was conducted by Crowll and Nurss in 1976. The study included black and white teachers from the southern United States. Crowll and Nurss found that both the white and the black teachers rated speech samples from black boys more favorable than those of white boys. From this, the authors of the study concluded that the relationship between speech characteristics of speakers from different ethnic groups on the one hand, and listener behavior on the other is far more complex than what had been indicated by previous research (Edwards, 1982: 29-30). Another of these studies was conducted by Taylor in 1973 where he surveyed black and white teachers all over the United States, asking them about their views on various aspects of Black English. With a few exceptions, Taylor’s results showed a majority of positive reactions towards language variation in general, as well as towards Black English (Edwards, 1982: 29-30). If we remember Lambert et al, however, a simple questionnaire-study is not trustworthy enough to display the participants’ true attitudes towards the language variation in question (Giles and Coupland, 1991: 33).

2.5 Standard varieties of English in Swedish schools

British English has been the standard variety in Swedish schools ever since the old curriculum from the 1970’s, Läroplan för gymnasieskolan 70 (Lgy 70), was replaced by the new Läroplan för de frivilliga skolformerna 94 (Lpf 94) in 1994. In Lgy 70, the only ‘standard’ that is mentioned is Received Pronunciation and nothing about grammar and lexis. However, it does say that the pronunciation and intonation of ‘General American’ should be explained to the students, but that they must not be trained to use it (Lgy 70:274). This curriculum, Lgy 70, can be one of the reasons why teachers have preconceived opinions about certain language varieties even today.
3. Method

My aim with this study was to find out what attitudes Swedish teachers of English have towards the different varieties of English, especially American English and British English, as well as to determine whether or not these attitudes are reflected in their teaching and if so, how. The study was conducted among teachers in secondary and upper secondary school. The teachers in my study came from four different schools, two secondary schools and two upper secondary schools, of which one secondary and one upper secondary school were located in Dalarna and the other two in Värmland. The total number of participants in my study was fifteen. In Dalarna, six secondary school teachers and two upper secondary school teachers participated in my study. In Värmland, the secondary school teachers were five and the upper secondary school teachers two. The number of years teaching English varied from only three months up to 36 years, which means that the range of experience among the participants was very diverse.

3.1 Why a questionnaire?

According to Lambert et al, questionnaires are not reliable enough to display the participants’ true attitudes towards the speakers of the language variety in question (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 33). However, since my study was aimed at investigating teachers’ attitudes towards the language variety itself and not the people who speak it (as in the Lambert et al study), I believed that using a questionnaire would be sufficient to yield reliable results.

Another reason for why I preferred to use a questionnaire in my study, instead of another method, was time. Since the participants were exclusively teachers, I wanted to use a test which did not take very much time for them to do. As I know from my own experience, teachers usually do not have very much spare time since they spend a lot of time not only teaching in class but also planning for the upcoming lessons. Therefore, using a questionnaire made it possible for me to get a larger number of willing participants for my study than I would have if I had used another, more time-consuming method.
Another important consideration with respect to time was the form of the questions. I tried to formulate my questions in such a way as to make them quick and easy for the teachers to answer. Accordingly, I tried to make as many questions as possible yes/no questions. This made the questionnaire very easy to complete since the participants had only to mark their answers and, in some instances, add comments. The reason for simplifying the questions was basically the same as the reason for choosing to do a questionnaire survey in the first place: to get as many teachers as possible interested in participating in my study. An easy questionnaire which takes only about 5-10 minutes to fill in is something which I believe most busy teachers find acceptable.

3.2 The questions

In this section, I will go through the questions in my questionnaire to show what purpose they have and why I formulated them the way I did. I will also discuss the structure of the questionnaire, explaining the reason for dividing it into two parts.

3.2.1 Part 1 of the questionnaire

Part 1 consisted of multiple choice questions where the participants could simply mark their answer and give additional comments (see appendix, part 1).

Q. 1-2
The first two questions were background questions about the level at which the participant taught English and for how long he or she had been doing it.

Q. 3-6
Questions three to six were questions that were meant to show how the participants perceived themselves as English-teachers, what variety of English they taught in the classroom, the reason for why they spoke a specific variety etc. Perhaps the two most important questions were numbers three and six. These questions asked what variety the teachers considered themselves to be using and if they consciously taught a specific variety in the classroom. The
reason these questions were important for my investigation was that I based my test questions numbers twelve and thirteen, which will be described further on, on these two.

Q. 7-9
The purpose of questions seven, eight and nine was to show whether the participants integrated the different varieties of English into their teaching and if so, how this was done and how much time was spent on them. It was hoped that the answers would reflect what the teachers’ opinions were regarding teaching dialect differences to their students.

Q. 10-11
Question ten was meant to elicit the participants’ views regarding the acceptability of students using a mixture of different varieties of English when speaking. Question eleven, on the other hand, was meant to determine whether a student who uses one variety consistently is graded higher than one who uses a mixture. The answers to question ten were then compared with those to question eleven in order to see if any contradictions occurred.

Q. 12-13
The aim of questions twelve and thirteen was to determine which variety the participants actually taught their students. The questions were formulated in such a way as to allow only one answer. In question twelve, this was done by presenting sample sentences where the participants had to choose between one American English alternative and one British English alternative. However, which alternative was American English and which British English was not revealed to the participants for obvious reasons. The alternatives included differences in spelling, choice between past participles (got/gotten) and differing use of prepositions. Question thirteen, however, focused explicitly on vocabulary. A set of word-pairs was presented to the participants, one word being typically British English and the other American English. The participants were to circle the word which they would first teach to their students. The main reason for why I included these two test questions in my questionnaire was to see if the test results corresponded to the answers to question three (what variety the participants consider themselves to be using) and six (if they consciously teach a specific variety of English). By doing this I was able to determine if and how, as the case may be, the teachers’ attitudes towards American English and British English were reflected in their teaching. When constructing the examples of word-pairs and sentences in questions twelve and thirteen I used English: One Tongue, Many Voices (Svartvik & Leech, 2006), the
3.2.2 Part 2 of the questionnaire

Part 2 consisted of a free writing section where the participants were asked to write what they thought about British English and American English. In order to get the participants to evaluate the two varieties as truthfully as possible, anonymity was assured. This part of the questionnaire was meant to present the participants’ attitudes towards the two most common varieties of English taught in Swedish schools: American and British English. By comparing what was said in part 2 with the results from questions twelve and thirteen in part 1, it could be investigated if, and how, the participants’ attitudes were reflected in their teaching. It would also give an indication of which variety that seemed to be the most common one in Swedish secondary and upper secondary schools today.

3.3 Procedure

Since this was a questionnaire study, the implementation of it was not very complicated. I contacted the headmasters of the schools I wanted to participate in my study and asked them if this was acceptable. Fortunately, and I think that the fact that I used a simple questionnaire played a role in this, all four schools had English-teachers who wanted to participate in my study. After getting clearance to conduct my study at these schools, I sent out the questionnaires by either e-mail or regular mail to the teachers in question. After about a week, I went out to the schools and collected the material.

4. Analysis and Results

This section will present and analyze the results from the questionnaire. However, the results from the questions will not be presented in the order of which they appear in the questionnaire, but rather be divided into specific categories in order to prevent confusion.
4.1 Use of American English or British English

In questions twelve and thirteen, I tested the participants on which variety they would first teach their students. I wanted to see whether the answers corresponded with the answers previously given in questions three and six, that is, whether the variety of English the participants claimed to speak and teach was the same as the variety they actually used and taught in class.

As the right-hand column in Table 1 shows, the teacher’s preferred spelling and grammar were predominantly British, even for those who claimed to speak American English in question three. This means that there was a disconnect in these cases between the variety the teachers thought they spoke and the one they actually used. The answers marked in bold print in the right-hand column indicate where there is a disconnect between the results and what was said in questions three and six. In order for a participant to be classified as using either British English or American English, the percentage of the answers has to be 75 or above. If either of the two varieties scored between 50% and 62.5% (4-5 answers out of 8 possible), the teacher’s variety is classified as a mixture.

Table 1. Results: Question #12 (spelling and grammar)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Variety claimed to be spoken (Q. #3)</th>
<th>Do you teach a specific variety? (Q. #6)</th>
<th>% of answers being BrE</th>
<th>% of answers being AmE</th>
<th>Variety actually used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>AmE</td>
<td>AmE</td>
<td>87,5</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>87,5</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>87,5</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>87,5</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>87,5</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>AmE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>AmE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>87,5</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>87,5</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>87,5</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>87,5</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Mixture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The answers to question thirteen in Table 2 also show a preference for the British variety of English among the participants. Here the participants were required to choose between British and American English words such as ‘boot/trunk’, which have the same referent in both dialects. In order for a participant to be classified as using either of the two varieties, the percentage of the answers has to be 73% or above (8-11 answers out of 11 possible). The criterion for using a mixture is that either variety scored between 55% and 64% (7-6 answers out of 11). Once again, the answers marked in bold print indicate where a disconnect occurred between the results and what was said in questions three and six.

**Table 2. Results: Question #13 (word-pairs)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Variety claimed to be spoken (Q. 3)</th>
<th>Do you teach a specific variety? (Q. 6)</th>
<th>BrE %</th>
<th>AmE %</th>
<th>Variety actually used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>AmE</td>
<td>AmE</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>AmE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>AmE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>AmE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Mixture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Mixture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>BrE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15</td>
<td>BrE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Mixture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the statistics show that many teachers display these discrepancies, it must be pointed out that the results of questions twelve and thirteen may be somewhat misleading since it is possible for a teacher to for example speak American English but teach British English in class. However, this exception is only possible if the participant answered ‘No’ to question six.
A very interesting observation that I made while analyzing the results from this part of the study was that not a single participant displayed a disconnect between claiming to use British English and actually using American English. There were examples where participants who claimed to speak American English actually used the British English variety, but not a single example of the opposite. This indicates that the British English variety is much more commonly used among Swedish secondary and upper secondary school teachers than the American English variety.

4.1.1 The reason for speaking a certain variety

In question four, the teachers were asked the reason for why they speak a certain variety. As many as ten participants said it was because they were influenced by their teachers. Three others marked ‘influenced by media’, whereof one added that he/she used to live in USA. The two remaining participants marked ‘other reason’ and added the following comments: “Have lived in England for a period of time” and “Visits to England”. The first alternative, influenced by teacher, was by far the most common answer among the participants.

4.2 Attitudes towards British English and American English

This section covers questions fourteen and fifteen, showing what teachers said about the two most common varieties of English in Swedish schools: British and American English.

4.2.1 British English

The most frequent remarks made by the participants regarding British English had to do with formality. As many as eight of the participants, out of fifteen, made some kind of comment to the effect that British English was more formal than American English. Comments like “Definitely more formal” and “…maybe it sounds more formal than AmE” occurred very frequently in the subjects’ answers.

The most frequent positive comment regarding British English was that it sounded “correct”. One participant described British English as follows: “BE sounds very ‘pure’.” The different
words seem to be pronounced in a perfect way. That is to say, they are used very clearly.”

Another comment that occurred with some frequency was that British English sounded more intelligent than American English. Four out of fifteen teachers wrote this. One of the participants said that he/she preferred British English, but had problems giving an explanation why. He/she simply said that “I think British English sounds better than American. I can’t say why, but I have always liked British better than American. It sounds better.”

The most frequent negative remarks that the subjects had about British English were that they thought it sounded “snobbish” and “uptight” at times. "Uptight but correct” and “strict and a bit snobbish” are examples of typical comments.

**4.2.2 American English**

As previously mentioned, the most common remark with British English was that it was seen as more formal than American English. With this in mind, one can easily draw the conclusion that the subjects thought of American English as informal. However, the remark that American English was more informal was not at all as frequent as one might have guessed by looking at what was said about British English being formal. Only two out of fifteen participants wrote that American English is informal. The comments that these participants gave were: “The words are often used and pronounced in a way which may sound a bit informal” and “Some southern accents sound informal. This gives the impression of being uneducated.” One teacher commented that “AmE is more accepted in formal speech now” while another said that “BE is the English I learned in school. Maybe it sounds more formal than AmE. There are more TV-shows and movies from USA, so I think it’ll be more accepted to use in formal speech in the future.” This indicates that the subjects do not think of American English as particularly informal. This conclusion follows from the fact that these teachers have acknowledged that American English is more accepted in formal contexts now.

The positive comments about American English varied considerably. One participant said that it “reflects confidence”. Two other teachers considered American English as “friendlier” than British English and said that it also sounded “softer”. Other comments were “expresses a more intimate atmosphere” and “more at ease”. Four of the fifteen participants thought that American English was easier to understand than British English. One of them said that
“Spoken American English is often easier to understand, but the more complex way of expressing things in writing is often underestimated by the students.”

In comparison to the positive comments on American English, the negative ones were few. Except for the remark about southern accents of American English sounding informal, and therefore uneducated, the only others were two remarks about arrogance. These were “sometimes AmE can sound arrogant” and simply “Arrogant”.

4.2.3 The participants’ attitudes towards AmE and BrE reflected in their teaching

As my results show, more than half of the teachers think of BrE as more formal as well as more intelligent and correct than AmE. I believe that the positive qualities of BrE, that it sounds more intelligent and correct, are more favorable by the teachers than those of American English. This conclusion is very easy to understand when one looks at it from the perspective of the teachers. They want to teach their students a variety of English that reflects intelligence and correctness rather than teaching one just because it sounds friendlier and softer. And since these observations correspond with the results from questions twelve and thirteen, which showed that British English was the most used variety among the subjects, the attitudes that these teachers have towards American English and British English may very well be the reason for why British English is the most common variety in Swedish schools today.

4.3 Differences between varieties of English

This section covers questions seven, eight and nine of the questionnaire, showing the participants’ thoughts about whether they think it is important for their students to know about the differences between the English varieties or not. It also shows which varieties are integrated in their teaching as well as how much time they dedicate to studying different varieties of English.
I have divided this section into one secondary school section and one upper secondary school section. This way, I can distinguish whether there are differences between what secondary and upper secondary teachers answered. I can also determine whether teachers from one or the other level spend more time studying differences between varieties of English.

4.3.1 Secondary school

Question seven asked whether the teachers thought it was important for their students to know about the differences between the varieties of English. To this question, eight of the secondary school teachers answered that they thought that it was important for their students to know about the differences. The rest thought it was not important. The most frequent answer to why it is important for the students to know the differences was that various words can have different meanings depending on the variety in which it occurs. Another reason was that it may be useful to be able to recognize from where in the world a person who uses a specific variety comes from. One of the participants said that “English is a global language and it is important to know that it can be expressed in different ways” (sic). One of the teachers who said that they did not think it was important for their students to know the differences gave the following reason: “No, because even natives mix.”

When asked if they devoted any classroom time to teaching these differences and in that case how much time (question eight), all of those who answered yes to the previous question (eight out of eleven teachers) also answered yes to this one. The problem with this question was that the majority of the participants could not give an answer to how much time they spent on teaching varieties in the classroom. However, those who did give an answer to this question said that they taught the differences “Whenever it comes up in the course book”, “a few hours per group” and “very little”.

Question nine asked which varieties of English were presented in the course books. All of the participants marked both American English and British English. Other varieties that were mentioned were Australian, Indian, Irish, Scottish, South African and various dialects of BrE. Hence there seems to be a great deal of material on more than one English dialect in their course books. In my opinion, this is something positive since I personally think that it is not only important for the students to know the differences but interesting as well. However, the
comments in response to the previous question (question eight) indicate that the time spent on studying these varieties was very limited.

4.3.2 Upper Secondary School

In answer to question seven, all of the participants said that they thought it was important for the students to know about the differences between varieties of English. The reasons given include the following: “According to kursplanen\(^2\) they should know the differences” and “Because words can mean different things e.g. ‘thongs’.”

Although all of the teachers in upper secondary school said that they thought it was important for their students to be familiar with dialect differences, only half of them answered that they dedicated any time to teaching such differences. One participant wrote: “I just mention it while listening to different dialects.” The rest could not give an estimate and therefore skipped the question.

When answering question nine about dialects in the course materials, the participants mentioned fewer varieties of English than were mentioned by the secondary school teachers. The only varieties that were mentioned were British, American and Australian English. The low number of varieties included in the course book might thus be the reason why only half of the upper secondary school teachers dedicated any time teaching the differences between the varieties in class.

If one looks at the statistics, one might think that teachers from upper secondary school find it more important for their students to know about the differences between varieties of English than do secondary school teachers. However, the statistics in this section can be a little misleading since the majority of my participants were secondary school teachers. Only four out of fifteen teachers were teachers from upper secondary school. Therefore, I would like to emphasize that the statistics in this section may not completely reflect the general view on the importance of teaching differences at upper secondary school level.

\(^2\) Kursplanen = the curriculum
4.4 Mixture of varieties or consistent use of only one?

In this section I will discuss the answers to questions ten and eleven: whether the participants thought that it is acceptable for their students to use a mixture of varieties or if they should try to stick with only one and also whether a student who uses one variety consistently is graded higher than a student who uses a mixture. The answers to these questions are then compared to see if any inconsistencies occur. Later in this section, I will also include a short discussion of the results from question five (which variety the participants prefer their students to use).

When analyzing the answers, I noticed that there was not a very big difference between those of the secondary school teachers and those of the upper secondary school teachers. Therefore, I will not divide the results into separate sections.

4.4.1 The results

According to question ten, eight of the participants think that it is not acceptable to use a mixture of varieties and that the students should try to stick to only one. Question eleven shows that eight of the teachers would grade a student who consistently uses one variety higher than one who uses a mixture. These results are displayed more clearly in Table 3.

The secondary purpose with these two questions was to show if any of the participants contradicted themselves when answering them. This was done by comparing the answers with each other. The contradictions are marked in bold print in Table 3 and will be described further on.
Table 3. Results: Question #10 and #11 (+ contradictions marked in bold print)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Is it ok to use a mixture? (Q. #10)</th>
<th>Is consistent use of one variety graded higher? (Q. #11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.2 Criteria for being a contradiction

In this section, I will give the criteria and motivation for why certain combinations of answers contradict each other. In order to understand the different combinations, the answers to question ten and eleven will be presented in pairs. For example the combination *Yes*-*No* means that the participant answered *yes* to question ten but *no* to question eleven.

The combination *Yes*-*No* to questions ten and eleven is consistent since it means that the teacher thinks that it is fine to use a mixture of two varieties both in general and when assessing students’ oral skills of English. Another combination that would work fine is *No*-*Yes*, which means that the teacher in question wants his/her students to try to use one variety
consistently since this will be rewarded in grading when assessing the students’ oral skills. A third combination is *No-No*. This combination means that the participant thinks that the students should try to stick with one variety consistently though failure to do so does not adversely affect the grade.

However, the combination *Yes-Yes* clearly reflects a contradiction. The *Yes-Yes* combination means that the participant thinks that it is fine to use a mixture of varieties but at the same time he/she says that a student using one variety consistently will be graded higher than one who uses a mixture. By saying that it is fine to use a mixture, one is also saying that students do not have to stick with only one variety, which means that the teacher should not grade a student who uses one variety consistently higher than one who uses a mixture.

**4.4.3 The contradictions**

As table 3 shows, the majority of the participants gave non-contradictory combinations of answers. However, a third of the participants contradicted themselves by answering “Yes” to both questions.

Two of the five who answered “yes” to both questions added comments which shed some light on their views. These participants answered question ten as follows: “Yes, it is ok but not fine. I also think that they should be aware of what they are using” and “Not fine, but ok”. By adding these comments, they weakened the contradiction. To clarify, since their answers were changed from “fine” to “ok but *not* fine”, the conditions for the apparent contradiction changed.

**4.4.4 Discussion: Question #5**

The main reason for why I asked the participants which variety they prefer their students to speak was to see whether the answers could strengthen the contradictions discussed above or even create new contradictions. However, all of the participants answered that it does not matter which variety they use, which means that no further conclusions could be made regarding the previous contradictions in Table 3.
5. Conclusion

We live in a multicultural world where a number of English dialects coexist, all different in various ways. Many young students are exposed to more than one of these varieties as often as on a daily basis. This means that the input of different varieties of English is huge, which suggests that the chance of students using a mixture of these varieties is very great. Since the differences between varieties of English are many, complications may arise in communication in the form of misunderstandings etc. Therefore, it is very interesting to see what teachers of English have to say about these issues. Accordingly, the purpose of my study was to investigate the attitudes of Swedish secondary and upper secondary school teachers of English regarding English dialects, particularly American and British, and how these attitudes are reflected in their teaching.

I first looked into whether the teachers actually speak the variety they think they do as well as which variety was the most common one in Swedish secondary and upper secondary schools. This was done by asking the participants which variety use and teach and then testing them with sample sentences and word-pairs with British and American alternatives. The results showed that British English was the variety that was taught almost exclusively by the participants, even by those who claimed to speak American English. This leads to the conclusion that British English appears to be the most common variety in Swedish secondary and upper secondary schools.

Next I examined what the participants’ attitudes towards these two varieties were by having them write what their thoughts were on the two. In order to get the participants to evaluate the varieties as truthfully as possible, anonymity was assured. The results showed that the teachers considered British English as more formal, intelligent, strict and correct than American English. On the other hand, American English was seen as friendlier and softer than British English. I concluded that the teachers regard the features of British English as preferable for educational purposes to those of American English. This conclusion is consistent with the previous observation that British English is the most common variety in Swedish schools. The most important conclusion of my study is therefore that British English seems to be the most common and favored variety in Swedish schools today. Nevertheless, my study indicates that American English is becoming more and more accepted in formal
contexts, very much because of the media. This suggests that American English may become more integrated in educational settings in the future.

Another question regarding the varieties of English was whether the subjects thought that it was important for their students to know about the dialect differences. It turned out that eight of the teachers in secondary school thought that it was important for their students to know about these differences while in upper secondary school all of the teachers considered it as important. These figures suggest that the teachers in upper secondary school think that teaching their students about the differences between varieties is more important than the teachers in secondary school. However, since the majority of my participants were secondary school teachers and only four participants upper secondary school teachers, it may not be possible to generalize from these statistics.

The participants were also asked if they thought that it was acceptable for their students to use a mixture of varieties or if they preferred them to stick to one variety. I also asked them if a student who used one variety consistently would be graded higher than one who used a mixture. The results showed that 53% of the participants thought that it was not acceptable to use a mixture of varieties and that the students should try to stick to one. According to the results, 53% of the teachers would also grade a student who uses one variety consistently higher than one who uses a mixture. Since in this case there was no clear majority preference, one cannot say whether teachers in general think one way or the other. By comparing the answers to these two questions, I noticed that five out of fifteen participants contradicted themselves by answering yes to both. However, two these participants added comments to their answers which weakened the contradiction.

As I was doing my investigation, I came across a few questions which were not covered in my questionnaire. I will now present those research questions in case future students would also like to do their research on attitudes towards language variations in general or English dialects in particular. Firstly, it would be interesting to see whether teachers’ attitudes are reflected in those of their students. Another suggestion is that a similar investigation be performed, this time focusing on pronunciation instead of word-pairs and prepositions etc. A final suggestion would be an investigation into how much students at different levels know about the differences between English varieties: what the differences are and if they can identify the different varieties by looking at examples.
References


Läroplan för gymnasieskolan 70. 1970.


Appendix: Questionnaire

Hi and thank you for participating! You are more than welcome to write comments on the back of this questionnaire if you need more space. Just remember to put the number of the question in front of your comment.

Part 1
1. At what level do you teach English?
   □ Secondary School (högstadiet)
   □ Upper Secondary School (gymnasiet)

2. For how long have you been teaching English?
   _________________________

3. What variety of English do you speak?
   □ British English
   □ American English
   □ Other variety: ________________________

4. How come you speak this variety?
   □ Influenced by my teacher
   □ Influenced by media (TV, music etc)
   □ Influenced by parents
   □ Influenced by friends
   □ Other reason: ___________________________________________________

5. Which variety do you prefer your students to speak?
   □ British English
   □ American English
   □ Other variety: ________________________
   □ Doesn’t matter

6. Do you teach a specific variety of English?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   If Yes, which one? _____________________________________________

7. Do you think it is important that your students know about the differences between dialects of English?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   Why/Why not? _____________________________________________
8. Do you devote any classroom time to studying different varieties of English such as for example British English, American English, Irish English, Scottish English etc?

□ Yes
□ No
If Yes, how much time (approximately)? _______________________________

9. Which variety of English is presented in the text books?

□ British English
□ American English
□ Both
Other varieties: ______________________________________________________

10. Is it ok for students to use a mixture of different varieties of English when speaking?

□ Yes, it’s fine to use a mixture
□ No, they should try to stick with only one
Comment: _______________________________________________________

11. If a student successfully uses one variety consistently in his/her speech, would you take that into consideration when assessing the student’s oral skills in English?

□ Yes, using one variety consistently shows that you master that variety
□ No
Comment: _______________________________________________________

12. In these examples, what form would you teach your students first? (Circle your answer)

a) I live in/on King Street
b) He has got/gotten fat recently
c) He is in/on good form
d) Stand in the center/centre of the circle
e) We don’t appreciate that kind of behavior/behaviour
f) We couldn’t go because of a flat tyre/tire
g) I ordered a few things from the catalog/catalogue
h) The tour lasted from May through/to August

13. Which of these words would you teach your students first? (Circle your answer)

a) windscreen/windshield
b) boot/trunk
c) sidewalk/pavement
d) gas/petrol
e) caravan/trailer
f) elevator/lift
g) purse/handbag
h) dustbin/refuse bin/trash can
i) truck/lorry
j) garden/yard
k) crosswalk/pedestrian crossing
Part 2

In this part of the investigation I would like you to write a little about what you think of British and American English. Feel free to write whatever you want. It could be things like for example: does the variety sound more formal than other varieties? More intelligent? Does it reflect confidence? Friendliness? Cockiness? And so on. *(Keep in mind that your name will not be mentioned neither on this questionnaire nor in my C-paper. Therefore, feel free to write whatever you want :-D)*

14. British English:

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

15. American English:

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Once again, thank you for participating!

/ Markus