Swedish Student Preferences Concerning the use of Native Speaker Norm English in Classroom Teaching
Abstract

This study is based on a previous study made by Ivor Timmis (2002). It explores how important Swedish students find learning English to be and to what extent Swedish student want to conform to native speaker English now that it has become a global language with a multitude of common variants. (Sweden formerly allowed only British and/or American native speaker varieties in English education but have now allowed for other variants as well). The focus of this study was the attitudes and preferences of 69 university students from Västmanlands län and the data was collected using questionnaires. The results suggest that a clear majority of students prefer to learn native speaker English in areas of pronunciation, formal grammar and informal grammar. Over half of the participants desire to master both formal and informal native speaker English grammar. The results also suggest that even though the students desire to learn informal native speaker English grammar, not all students understand what that means. Based on these results and Timmis’s, this study suggests that the majority of the Swedish university students that participated in the study would prefer to be taught native speaker English, but not all students. Some effort to teach more informal grammar might be wanted by the students since a great majority wish to learn it, but cannot identify it.

Keywords: native speaker norm English, Swedish English, English learning, attitudes, variants.
# Table of Contents

1. Introduction  
   1.1 Research Questions

2. Background  
   2.1 Variants  
   2.1.1 Swedish English
   2.2 Learning and Teaching English in Sweden
   2.3 Attitudes
   2.4 Native Speakers and Norms
   2.5 Previous Study by Timmis

3. Method  
   3.1 Attitudes Studied in the Questionnaire
   3.2 Ethical Considerations

4. Results  
   4.1 The Importance of English as a Subject
   4.2 Pronunciation
   4.3 Formal Grammar
   4.4 Informal Grammar

5. Discussion  
   5.1 Discussion of Results: The Importance of English as a Subject
   5.2 Discussion of Results: Pronunciation
   5.3 Discussion of Results: Formal Grammar
   5.4 Discussion of Results: Informal Grammar
   5.5 Discussion of Results: Comparing this Study’s Results to Timmis’s
   5.5.1 Comparing the Results: Pronunciation
   5.5.2 Comparing the Results: Formal Grammar
   5.5.3 Comparing the Results: Informal Grammar

6. Conclusion
   References
   Appendix
Swedish Student Preferences Concerning the use of Native Speaker Norm English in Classroom Teaching

1 Introduction

In the modern world, English is the predominantly used language. As such, it is the primary language used for international communication, and the learning (and teaching) of English has become a major concern for many (Crystal, 2003). Classroom teaching – the main method to learn a foreign language (Horwitz, 2008) – needs to be able to provide the best methods and results of teaching English to students.

In Sweden, English is a mandatory subject from the beginning of primary school to the end of secondary school, and the adult population is expected to have at least a passable knowledge of English; therefore the issue of English learning is of great concern. What kind of English are English teachers meant to teach their students in order to help them master the language most efficiently? Is native speaker norm English (henceforth referred to as NSN English) – which in Sweden means that teaching is based on either American or British English when it comes to formal and informal grammar and pronunciation – the best way to teach English, or should classroom activities be subjected to a modified approach that is more tolerant of different variants of English, including international variants?

Throughout my life, English has played an important role. Though I had earlier encounters with the language, my first true interaction with English occurred the same way it did for most of my peers: with the introduction of it as a subject in primary school. At that point, English simply was. I was not particularly good at it, and I did not particularly care either. This changed however, when my family and I moved to China. Not only was English suddenly my only method of communication with anyone outside of my family, the language itself was different. The school I attended was an international school which had English as its core language – more specifically, American English, which sounded rather different from how my Swedish teacher made the language sound. The next year, after gaining a shaky but grounding knowledge and skill of the language, I was transferred to another school closer to my home. This school was a British international school. And English once again became different. The year after that, we moved back home to Sweden again; by then the English my teachers used, which was once the only way for the language to sound, was now just one possibility of many. My English education would continue over the years and, having gained
a preference for the language paired together with my education, I chose to attend English speaking schools with an international student body.

As it turns out, the English language and its many variations are not just of interest for me. The study of this global language and its variants, as well as the speakers’ preferences for it, is of interest to the academic world. In 2002, linguist Ivor Timmis performed an international study concerning attitudes and preferences amongst students learning English to see if the current NSN should continue, or if a change in teaching methods was needed. In Timmis’s study, the majority of the participants at the time expressed a desire or expectation to conform to NSN English, with the reasoning that it was considered a benchmark of achievement (p. 242). However, the results from students from India, Pakistan and South Africa indicated that many of them would like to at least keep their country’s style of pronunciation, as they considered it to be a part of their identity. Then, in 2010, He & Zhang replicated Timmis’s study in China to see if his results had any relevance for Chinese students. Their results were in many ways similar to Timmis’s. However, in He & Zhang’s study there was a much larger group which had results similar to Timmis’s group of Indian, Pakistani and South African participants, who wished to be less native speaker like. As the results indicated that there might be a need for some changes in the teaching models which favor NSN English, a case could be made for an investigation into the student preferences of English learning.

According to Widdowson (1994), English no longer solely belongs to the inner circle (see 2.1: ‘Variants’ below), but rather to the world as a whole, and according to Prodromou (1997) who claims that as much as 80% of communication in English take place between non-native speakers of the language, it might be relevant to replicate Timmis’s study once again, this time in Sweden, in order to observe if the results found in the previous studies are true here as well.

This study’s purpose is to see how important English learning is for Swedish students and to answer if they prefer NSN English or non-NSN English, by asking the students, and seeing what the results are. This study does not strive to create a different method of teaching, but rather to answer the questions: How important is English and learning English for students in Sweden? What kind of English would the students prefer to learn: NSN English or non-NSN English?
1.1 Research Questions

In the study there are four research questions which focus on basic areas of language, which will help to determine if students prefer NSN English or not. The questions address pronunciation, formal grammar, and informal grammar. Formal grammar refers to the traditional written-based grammar, and informal grammar refers to the grammar highlighted by informal speech, such as ellipsis or non-canonical reported speech forms (Timmis, 2002, p. 241).

How important do Swedish university students think it is to learn English?

How far do Swedish university students want to conform to/follow native speaker English in pronunciation?

How far do Swedish university students want to conform to/follow native speaker English in formal grammar?

How far do Swedish university students want to conform to/follow native speaker English in informal grammar?

2 Background

Before this study can progress it is important to ensure that there is no unknown terminology and that the formerly mentioned concepts are explained. Previous research into this area of study also needs to be inspected and surveyed in order to ensure that the subject of the study is clearly understood and outlined.

2.1 Variants

In this study, a variant means a variation of the English language, that is, a certain type of English, such as American or British English (or Australian or Caribbean English etc.) or even English from one of the outer or expanding circles, such as Swedish English (but not Swenglish, which is an ungrammatical mixture of Swedish and English).

English has different roles across the world. In some countries, English, as a first language, has a major role for both official matters of the state and unofficial matters of everyday people. In other regions, where English is not the official language but still used as a
secondary or minor language, it has a relatively minor role of much less importance for both official and unofficial matters. Melchers and Shaw (2011), based on Kachru (1985), wrote that English could be put into three categories: the inner, outer, and expanding circle of World English, which is sometimes also referred to as international English or global English (p. 12).

The inner circle consists of speech communities in which speakers use English as their native language and have English as their primary official language, as defined by Melchers and Shaw. English-speaking countries like the USA and Ireland belong to the inner circle. According to Kachru, the outer circle was formed during the colonial period when English spread across the globe. In the outer circle, English is not the native language but it is still used as an official language in matters such as law and education. Places such as India, Nigeria and the Philippines are members of Kachru’s outer circle. Finally, the expanding circle is where English is not as historically important or has any major governmental role compared to the other circles, yet nevertheless has a prevalent role as a medium of international education.

Furthermore, regarding the expanding circle, Davis (2013) has made the observation that in some areas in the expanding circle, the speakers are developing their own distinct ways of using English, meaning that they are slowly developing their own distinct variants of English. This is important, Davis notes, as it means that English gains the important role of an identity marker for the speakers (identity markers are different expressions of how people choose to express who they are; this means that in the expanding circle English is becoming a means of identification, just like religion, ethnicity and/or any other significant trait might be used for identifying oneself [Bessant and Watts, 2002, chapter 5]). Countries like Sweden, China and Denmark are members of the expanding circle.

2.1.1 Swedish English

Swedish English is not an official variant of English as it is not codified and has not been acknowledged by any notable language association as a distinct variant of English. This, however, does not lessen the fact that it is an applicable term to use, much in the same way that Mid-Atlantic English (which is the mixing of American and British English used with the intent to communicate [Modiano, 1996]) is (Lavelle, 2002). In this study, Swedish English is used to distinguish a particular variant of Mid-Atlantic English used and developed by people in Sweden, with Swedish English pronunciation and grammar. Swedish pronunciation
especially can be very distinct, and while Swedish English grammar is not very different from its classic Mid-Atlantic roots with an American and British mixture, there are terms and sentence formations using informal grammar that are understood by the Swedish population, even though a native speaker of English might deem them grammatically incorrect.

2.2 Learning and Teaching English in Sweden

In Sweden, the manner in which English is taught to students must follow the guidelines created by the National Agency of Education (Skolverket). Skolverket decides the level of knowledge the students are expected to have by the end of their English courses, and the method of how English should be taught as a subject. Skolverket deems English to be of such importance to international communication that all students should attain fluency in it (Skolverket, 2000). According to Skolverket (n.d), English should be a core subject for students from primary school until the end of their obligatory education.

Skolverket also decides what kind of English should be taught to students at a higher level, which is of interest to this study as the participants will be university level students. Skolverket has insisted on a British (and more recently the possible alternative of an American) variant being used in English teaching since they implemented English as a compulsory core subject in 1950 (Mobärg, 1997). In their directive (grundföreskrift) for higher education of 1994 it is specifically mentioned twice that the teaching of English must have a British or American approach. It is first mentioned in the section concerning pronunciation: “The model for the students' own pronunciation should be polite British or American English” (Skolverket, 2012). ¹ It is mentioned again in the directive on the list of goals to be met by the students studying English: “The student shall understand clearly spoken British and American English…” (Skolverket, 2012). ² These rules and regulations have helped shape how English is perceived and used in Sweden for a number of years. As the grundföreskrift left the option of which style of English to teach (British or American) up to the teachers there was a mixture of British and American English used by the population. This might be one of the reasons for how Sweden came to develop its Mid-Atlantic Swedish English. Other reasons could be influences from social media and television series. In Sweden

---

¹ Self-translated quote. The original Swedish quote was “Förebilden för elevernas eget uttal bör vara vårdad brittisk eller amerikansk engelska.”

² Self-translated quote. The original Swedish quote was “…förstå tydligt brittiskt och amerikanskt tal”
English TV series are subbed instead of dubbed and the many shows are often American or British (Rindal and Piercy, 2013).

However, in 2012 this regulation of teaching English was revoked. Skolverket updated a new regulation which does not specify what variant of that English that should be taught and instead simply mention that the students should be able to understand English from “different regions” (Skolverket, 2000). This does not mean, however, that students are still not taught the American or British variation as no new variant is mentioned and Swedish students still use and identify with these two variants more than other ones (Skibdahl and Svensäter, 2012). This specific change in the regulation of English teaching makes the use of university students as participants in this study pertinent. They have been taught English using the old system since primary school, yet are now, technically, allowed to freely choose whatever variation of English they prefer in their everyday life and in their English studies.

2.3 Attitudes

In this study, the participants’ attitudes towards the English language will be studied and therefore the term ‘attitude’ needs to be clearly explained. According to Hogg and Vaughan (2005), an attitude is a “relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols” (p. 150). An attitude is commonly considered to consist of three components: the cognitive, the affective, and the behavioral component. Eagly and Chaiken (1993) refer to these three components as the CAB model, in which the cognitive component is a person’s belief/knowledge of an object or concept, the affective component is a person’s emotions about an object or concept, and the behavioral component is the way a person’s past experiences or behavior influences how an object or concept is treated. In this study, the object/concept is the English language. The participants’ attitudes will be studied by giving them a choice between different examples of English and having them choose one (see: 3.1 ‘Attitudes Studied in the Questionnaire’), which will help show what their attitudes and preferences towards a particular variant of English are.

2.4 Native Speakers and Norms

The goal for students in Sweden is to attain fluency in English (Skolverket, 2000), and for many years this has meant to attempt to mimic British English or American English (see
Learning and Teaching English in Sweden). When English was first introduced as a subject in Sweden in 1946, ousting German as the new obligatory secondary language (Sörensen, 1999), the goal for the students was to attain NSN mastery. Mimicking native speakers of the language (i.e. the British) was seen as the most appropriate method for them to achieve that goal. Chomsky (1965) introduced the idea of an ‘idealized native speaker’ or an ‘ideal speaker-listener’: a person who embodied a perfect native-like mastery of English (p. 3). After this paradigm was introduced NSN English, which was already seen as the desirable goal, was further centralized in English teaching (Saniei, 2011).

Despite this, the term ‘native speaker-like’ is not very well defined for second language learners. Many students of the language feel that despite the fact that they would prefer to learn NSN English, it is not feasible (Timmis, 2002, p. 243). The idea that there exists an ‘ideal’ English speaker can be traced back even further than Chomsky however, back to the distinction of native and non-native speakers, along with the notion of a ‘superior’ English (Saniei, 2011, p. 74).

The concepts of ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speakers were introduced during the colonial era. Mufwene (1994) writes that the colonists considered colonized people as incompetent speakers and their usage of English as a type of illegitimate offspring of the language (p. 22). He also states that during the time a native speaker of the language was defined as someone who was born in that language’s country learned the language during childhood, and used it as their first language (similar to how it is defined today).

Some of these ideas and definitions live on today while others are no longer considered valid. The important part is that some of these definitions were considered valid long enough to influence the foundation of English education in Sweden. According to Chomsky the native speaker is the authority of their native language (in the theoretical aspects such as grammar) who “knows what the language is […] and what the language isn’t […]” (Chomsky, 1965 in, Davies, 1991, p. 1). According to Chomsky’s logic, native speakers are infallible masters of their native tongues and have perfect command over their language. That there is an optimal grammar which reflects the competence of a speaker, and that native speakers are the only people whose opinion about and manner of speaking English matters. This idea was not introduced today, but when it was back in 1965, it was both accepted and used as an example, integrating these values of a superior English into English learning in Swedish education.
Chomsky’s idea of an ideal speaker-listener was later challenged, which also made for a shift in Swedish language education towards a broader acceptance of different variants of English. Widdowson (1998) for example, claims that the language which is considered real for native speakers would not be considered the same for non-native speakers.

For language to be authentic in its routine pragmatic\(^3\) functioning, it needs to be localized within a particular discourse\(^4\) community. In other words, the more the language is localized for the learners, the more they can engage with it as discourse. (In: Saniei, 2011, p. 75)

Widdowson (2003) also addressed Chomsky’s ideal speaker-listener theory directly and argued that it “leaves out of account what real speaker-listeners actually do with their language. In effect, it eliminates the variable of human agency altogether in order to identify the invariant properties which are intrinsic to language itself” (p. 57). As such, Widdowson notes that Chomsky’s ideal-listener/speaker is just that, an ideal, and that if too much value is put on the utopian pinnacle, the English which the second language learners do use will be made irrelevant and pointless.

Today, the common definition of a native speaker (which can easily be found in a Cambridge or Oxford dictionary) is someone who has spoken a particular language (in this case English) since they were a small child and identifies it as their first language.

2.5 Previous Study by Timmis

This study was inspired by Ivor Timmis’s study, “Native-speaker norms and international English: a classroom view,” which was conducted in 2002. This large-scale study had over 500 participants from across the globe and involved both students and teachers of the English language. Timmis’s study focused both on finding if there was an interest in different models of teaching English and if the opinion differed between students and teachers. Timmis’s findings suggested that there was at the time an interest in trying to learn other variants but that the students still had some desire to “conform to native speaker norms”(p. 248) and that it was the teachers who had a greater interest in moving away from the standard method of teaching.

---

3 Pragmatics: the way context contributes to meaning
4 Discourse: words used to exchange thoughts and ideas/conversation
Timmis was inspired to conduct his study when he came across several opposing ideas on how to best teach English (p. 240-241). Carther and McCarthy (1997) wrote that English was more than just formal grammar and highlighted the importance of the informal corpora spoken by native speakers. Prodromou (1996) and Willis (1999) however, instead argued that there was a low need for NSN English and that more effort should be put into teaching international English. It was Jenkins (1998) who finally convinced Timmis that further research was needed into the field in order to find out not just how far students might want to conform to NSN English in pronunciation, but also in both formal and informal grammar (which he calls traditional written based grammar and informal grammar highlighted by spoken corpora) (p. 241). He also wanted to find if there was any agreement on this issue among teachers, and if their views harmonized with the students’ views.

…it is important that we should all guard against political correctness in the sense of telling our students what their goals should be: in particular that they should not want to sound like native speakers if they clearly wish to do so. (Jenkins 1998, in Timmis’s 2002 study, p. 241)

In Timmis’s study, both questionnaires (a student questionnaire and a teacher questionnaire) and interviews were utilized (p. 241). The student questionnaire had 400 participants from 14 countries. The teachers’ questionnaire was modeled closely after the student questionnaire and had over 180 participants from 45 countries. There were 15 student interviews conducted (p. 241). Timmis did not report how many teacher interviews were conducted, however, in the teacher questionnaire, there were boxes meant for comments after many of the questions, so every teacher had the opportunity to further explain why they made their choices.

This study modeled its questionnaire after Timmis’s student questionnaire with a few differences. In this study a minor section with basic information (such as age and gender) was included at the beginning of the questionnaire (see: ‘Appendix’). At the end of the questionnaire some of the questions in the ‘Personal information’ section were also changed. This was done in in order to adjust the survey for its participants, as some of the questions, for example, “In which country are you studying English now?” were deemed irrelevant for its Swedish participants (for this study’s questionnaire, see: ‘Appendix’, for Timmis’s questionnaire, see: Timmis (2003) ‘Appendix 1.4 Student Questionnaire Final Version’).

One of the questions in the main part of the questionnaire was changed from Timmis’s original one. The original question was: “It is better for me to use the kind of English in
Example A than the kind of English used in Example B”. The examples (A/B) were about grammar and the follow-up question was about grammar preferences (see: ‘Appendix’). As the previous section had already covered this area in a very similar manner this question was instead changed to: “I want to learn to use the kind of English that native speakers use.”

In Timmis’s 2002 study not all of his results were discussed and he instead focused on the questions he deemed to be the most relevant (p. 241). Those questions were the three example questions on pronunciation, formal grammar and informal grammar (Students A-E and Example A/B) as well as the questions on if the participant spoke more with (or will speak with in the next three years) native or non-native English speakers (p 241-247). As such, this study also focused on these questions but decided to include the follow-up questions for each example in order to get to the students reasons behind the participants choices. This was done as the current study did not conduct interviews with the students. This study also included the questions about the students desire to learn English (see: ‘Appendix’) as it would answer how important it is for the students to learn English.

This study, though it is primarily based on Timmis’s, is not as large or involved with the opinions of teachers of English. It instead focused exclusively on students’ opinions in order to establish how important the students feel it is to master English. This study also focuses more on what kind of English students prefer, rather what kind of method teachers should employ. This study is not as comprehensive as Timmis’s due to its restrictions in terms of resources and time, but as it is meant to be used as a starting point to find what Swedish university students preferences are, then its limitation of only students as participants should be enough to answer the study’s purpose of finding how important English is for the students, and if they would prefer to include non-NSN English in their language studies.

3 Method

The study is based on a quantitative research method. This choice was made as the study seeks to look into students attitudes and preferences and to answer the question if the English learning is important for students or not, rather than to find a new research topic which is what qualitative based research method does, according to Creswell (1994). Creswell defines a quantitative research method as “an enquiry into a human or social problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the
theory hold true” (p. 2). For this study it means that the aim of the study will be reached using research questions and a questionnaire and that the data collected will be used as evidence to support the conclusions.

There are two main quantitative research methods: experiments and questionnaires. Creswell defines questionnaires as the following: “a quantitative or numeric description of some fraction of the population - the sample - through the data collection process of asking questions of people” (p. 117). As the study’s focus is the attitude of a group of students, a questionnaire (which focuses on the opinions of several participants which can then be used as a sample of a larger whole) is a suitable method to use.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to using a questionnaire. Oppenheim (1992) concludes that the three primary advantages are: Firstly, that there is a relatively low cost of data collection and processing. Secondly, that there is an avoidance of interviewer bias. And finally, that there is an ability to reach geographically diverse respondents if there is a need to branch out (p. 92). As the study requires a large amount of answers in a relatively short amount of time, the first two of Oppenheim’s advantages fit well with the study. However, as the study focuses on students in Västmanlands län, there is no need for the third advantage of having geographically diverse respondents. The study could have expanded to include students from all over the country, and thus taken advantage of the diversity available through questionnaires, but instead chose to focus on one area in order to be able to minimize some of the disadvantages of using a questionnaire, like self-selection bias (see below).

The disadvantages of using a questionnaire, and how these were handled, should also be explained. Oppenheim lists some of these disadvantages as the following: Firstly, there may be a low response rate and there is a risk of “self-selection bias” (that is, the ones answering the questionnaire may only be the ones with an interest in the topic, thus creating one-sided results). Secondly, people with low language ability may have difficulties answering the questionnaire. Thirdly, there is no opportunity to correct any misunderstandings. Fourthly, there is no control over the order in which the questionnaire questions are answered, which runs the risk of getting incomplete responses or incomplete questionnaires back. Fifthly, there is no way to make assessments based on observation of the people answering the questions (p. 102).
However, as the above mentioned disadvantages can be controlled or minimized to some extent it still permits the questionnaire as a valid method to use in this study. In order to minimize the risk of self-selection bias, the questionnaire was handed out in person as well as on the Internet and some of the questionnaires was handed out personally during class, increasing the likelihood of answers from students with different interests. In order to decrease the chance of miscommunication, difficult or specific terms in the questionnaire were clarified and defined in order to ensure understanding. The language in the questionnaire is relatively simple and direct. Furthermore, the participants of the study were university students and thus some level of English competence should and can be expected from them.

In order to minimize the risk of misunderstandings, the questionnaire was first approved by an advisor and then pilot tested by a small group of volunteers. In the case of incomplete questionnaires, Low (1997) stated that the information can be attempted to be revived (via, for example, marginal notes) or that a decision can be made to exclude sections from a questionnaire which is somewhat incomplete. As for the lack of observations which can be made, as there is no possibility to know who the individual participants are when going through anonymous questionnaires, this flaw in this research method was simply be kept in mind and acknowledged when dealing with the results.

This study acknowledges that it would be stronger with the possibility of using both quantitative and qualitative research methods and that a triangulation or two-phased design of the results would be optimal. This study could have used additional methods to strengthen it but it can be successfully completed using only the quantitative research method. When taking into account the time and effort needed for a simultaneous usage of both methods, it would be unrealistic to complete the study given the timeframe in which the study should be completed.

3.1 Attitudes Studied in the Questionnaire

The questionnaire has four major sections. The first section looks at students attitudes towards learning English by asking questions about different aspects of English learning and asking them to rate how important that component is to them using a scale of one to five, with one being the most important and five the least (see: ‘Appendix’). This section focuses on affective components of the participants’ attitudes as the focus is to see how the students feel about English (see: 2.3: ‘Attitudes’). The other sections are made similarly to one another.
The second section looks at the students’ preferences in pronunciation, the third at formal grammar and the fourth at informal grammar. These sections of the questionnaire have student examples (see: ‘Appendix’). In the pronunciation section, for example, Student A claims to have a native-like accent and Student B claims to have a Swedish accent (“the accent of my country,” in ‘Appendix’). The participant chooses which one they prefer. The student example focuses on the behavioral component of the students attitudes as their preferences for one kind of English over the other is formed by their past experiences with how each types of pronunciations sounds (see: 2.3: ‘Attitudes’). Each student example also has follow-up questions (see: ‘Appendix’). Based on the answers of the follow-up questions, it is possible to study of the cognitive component of the student’s attitudes: that is, the follow-up questions looks at what the students believe they are capable of and what they report their current knowledge of English is.

3.2 Ethical Considerations

To ensure that all participants retain their rights and feel comfortable being a part of the investigation, the questionnaire and study follow the guidelines handed out by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet). All participants were informed before completing the questionnaire that the subject of interest for the study was to inquire about their attitudes towards English and their English education, and that their anonymity was guaranteed and participation was completely voluntary. They were informed that by participating in the study they were giving their consent to allow their answers to be reviewed by myself and by my advisor. All participants were told that they could leave the study at any time should they so wish (and that no reason had to be given if this were to occur). Sensitive issues and concerns were taken into consideration (such as a third option was given when asking for gender: male, female, and “I identify as another gender”).

4 Results

Like in Timmis’s study, this questionnaire focused on three areas of language: pronunciation, formal grammar, and informal grammar. The reason for these foci was twofold: one, because this study is modeled after Timmis’s 2002 study and will use his results for comparative purposes, which means that the two studies should be relatively similar to make for easy comparisons. Two, because these areas (pronunciation and grammar) seem to
be the heart of the native speaker issue (Timmis, 2002); that is, does the speakers’ English sound right and does it look correct?

The survey received 69 responses, of which 65 responses were able to be used. Two questionnaires were completed by native speakers, which were not of interest to the study, and two left several vital parts of the questionnaire incomplete and the results were thus inconclusive. As such, these four were deemed best left out of the analysis.

4.1 The Importance of English as a Subject

The questionnaire asked the participants to rate how important learning English was to them. This was done in order to establish if the participants think English to be an important subject, which is the basic assumption made in this study. Over 90% of the participants responded that learning English was incredibly (“very, very important!”) or very important for them. About 10% of the participants answered that learning English was quite important or not very important to them. This confirmed that a great majority of the participants find English to be an important subject and that no participant thinks English to be an unimportant subject to learn.

Table 1. Accurate to one decimal point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very, very important!</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Quite important</th>
<th>Not very important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning to speak</td>
<td>69.2% (45)</td>
<td>21.5% (14)</td>
<td>9.2% (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to write</td>
<td>47.7% (31)</td>
<td>43.1% (28)</td>
<td>9.2% (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to read</td>
<td>66.2% (43)</td>
<td>24.6% (16)</td>
<td>4.6% (3)</td>
<td>4.6% (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to listen</td>
<td>61.5% (40)</td>
<td>33.8% (22)</td>
<td>4.6% (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Pronunciation

The first part of the questionnaire revolved around pronunciation. Accents are often considered an important part of identification (Timmis, 2002, p. 241), and as such the results
can help indicate how much the participants prefer NSN English being used in their learning when it comes to pronunciation. The question asked was:

**Student A:** “I can pronounce English just like a native speaker now. Sometimes people think I am a native speaker.”

**Student B:** “I can pronounce English clearly now. Native speakers and non-native speakers understand me wherever I go, but I still have the accent of my country.”

Would you prefer to be like Student A or Student B?

**Student A**  **Student B**

Additionally, the participants were asked if they were currently speaking more with native or non-native English speakers outside of classroom and if they, during the next three years, thought they would speak more with native or non-native English speakers. An option for those not sure if they spoke/will speak more with native speakers or non-native speakers was also provided. The results were:

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student A</th>
<th>Student B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Participants</strong></td>
<td>84.6% (55)</td>
<td>15.4% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants who currently use English more with non-native speakers</strong></td>
<td>41.5% (27)</td>
<td>4.6% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants who predict that they will use English more with non-native speakers</strong></td>
<td>18.5% (12)</td>
<td>9.2% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants who currently use English more with native speakers</strong></td>
<td>21.5% (14)</td>
<td>4.6% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants who predict that they will use English more with native speakers</strong></td>
<td>24.6% (16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some participants answered that they were unsure if they were speaking more with native speakers or non-native speakers and many answered that they did not know if they would speak more with native speakers or non-native speakers in the next three years.

Finally, after each student example (Student A and Student B) the participants were asked two follow up questions. “Do you think you could ever be like Student A/B?” and
“Would you like to be like Student A/B?” These questions were asked in order to find out if Timmis’s speculation - that students found NSN English to be a benchmark of achievement - was accurate for Swedish students (p. 242).

The results were that a slim majority of the participants answered that they think they could be like Student A and that almost all participants would like to be like student A. (All participants who answered that they would not like to be like student A answered that they preferred Student B, and these participants also answered that they currently spoke more with non-native speakers.) 44.6% answered that they thought they could be like Student A, 35.4% answered that they did not believe they could be like Student A, and 20% answered that they did not know if they could be like Student A. 87.7% answered that they would like to be like Student A, 9.2% answered that they would not like to be like Student A, and 3.1% did not know if they would like to be like Student A.

A clear majority answered that they thought they could be like Student B (87.7%) with only a few participants answering that they thought they could not be like Student B (4.6%) or that they did not know if they could be like Student B (7.7%). The majority of the participants also answered that they would not like to be like Student B (58.5%).

Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think you could ever be like student A?</td>
<td>44.6% (29)</td>
<td>35.4% (23)</td>
<td>20% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to be like student A?</td>
<td>87.7% (57)</td>
<td>9.2% (6)</td>
<td>3.1% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think you could ever be like student B?</td>
<td>87.7% (57)</td>
<td>4.6% (3)</td>
<td>7.7% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to be like student B?</td>
<td>35.4% (23)</td>
<td>58.5% (38)</td>
<td>6.2% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Formal Grammar

The next two parts of the questionnaire revolved around grammar as it is an important part of any language. In this questionnaire grammar was divided between formal grammar and informal grammar as merely focusing on one aspect of grammar alone was not sufficient
to gain a good understanding of the students’ grammar preferences. For the formal grammar section a student example was again used:

**Student C:** “I can say everything I want to say. Native speakers and non-native speakers understand me wherever I go, but I use English my own way and sometimes I say things which native speakers think are grammar mistakes.”

**Student D:** “I know all the grammar rules I need so that I can say anything I want. I use these rules correctly, but sometimes English people use grammar which isn’t in the grammar books and I don’t want to learn this.”

**Student E:** “I use all the grammar rules that native speakers use, even the informal grammar native speakers use when they are speaking to each other.”

Would you prefer to be like Student C, Student D, or Student E?

**Student C**  **Student D**  **Student E**

The results showed that a clear majority of the participants preferred Student E with some participants choosing Student C or Student D. Student C represents a speaker who uses “stable and consistent interlanguage” (Willis, 1999, in Timmis’s, 2002 study, p. 244).\(^5\) Student D represents a speaker using the more traditional grammar rules (using the system of British English or American English: see Skolverkets directive, under English Learning and Teaching). Student E represents a speaker with more native-like proficiency of both formal and informal written-based grammar rules. The table below shows which student example the participants preferred.

Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student C</th>
<th>Student D</th>
<th>Student E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like the examples with Students A and B, the examples for Students C, D and E had the same follow-up questions after each example: “Do you think you could ever be like Student C/D/E?” and “Would you like to be like Student C/D/E?” For the first follow-up question 64.6% of the participants answered that they could be like Student C. However, even though many answered that they could be like Student C, few participants answered that they would like to be like Student C. 73.8% of the participants stated that they would not like to be like

---

\(^5\) Interlanguage refers to a language used for international communication
Student C. The rest were divided almost evenly between answering that they would like to be like Student C and that they did not know if they would like to be like Student C.

For Student D, 60% said they could not be like Student D. 26.2% said they could be like Student D, and 13.8% said they did not know. The bulk of the participants (73.8%) would not like to be like Student D. 7.7% of the students would like to be like Student D however, and 18.5% do not know if they would like to be like Student D.

Lastly, for Student E, 67.7% of the students responded that they could be like Student E. The rest of the votes were tied almost evenly between the other options. 64.6% of the students answered that they would like to be like Student E and 26.2% answered that they did not know if they would like to be like Student E. The rest answered that they would not like to be like Student E. Table 5 (below) shows the results for the follow up questions to student examples C/D/E.

Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think you could ever be like student C?</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(42)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to be like student C?</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(48)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think you could ever be like student D?</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to be like student D?</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(48)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think you could ever be like student E?</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(44)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to be like student E?</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(42)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Informal Grammar

In the part of the questionnaire that focused on informal grammar, two examples were given. The participants were asked to choose which one they thought was spoken by a native speaker of English. Example A was Timmis’s modified example, and example B was taken down “verbatim from a young English trainee teacher speaking to a pre-intermediate class”
(Timmis, 2002, p. 246). Example B was the spoken example and example A was made by observing a written down version of example B and adjusting the sentences more to formal grammar rules. The students were specifically asked to identify the native speaker’s spoken example.

Example A:
I had a disaster last night. I was sitting at home on the sofa watching TV when the phone rang. I wasn’t very pleased to find out that it was my mum, but she was asking me if I wanted to go to the USA with her. (Note: It is a “disaster” when something very bad happens.)

Example B:
Disaster last night. Sat at home on the sofa watching TV. The phone rings. It’s my mum. I’m like “Oh no!” she’s going. “Do you want to come to the USA?”.

Which of the examples do you think was spoken by a native speaker?

Example A  Example B

The results showed that a majority of the students correctly identified the spoken example. 69.2% of the participants chose example B, while 29.2% chose example A. One participant did not choose either example.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example A</th>
<th>Example B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29.2% (19)</td>
<td>69.2% (45)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students were then asked three follow-up questions and asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement using a one to five scale (one being strong agreement and five being strong disagreement). The results were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 (Strongly agree)</th>
<th>2 (agree)</th>
<th>3 (unsure)</th>
<th>4 (disagree)</th>
<th>5 (disagree strongly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important for me to be able to use the kind of English in Example B</td>
<td>23.4% (15)</td>
<td>29.7% (19)</td>
<td>28.2% (18)</td>
<td>14.1% (9)</td>
<td>4.7% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important for me to study the kind of English in Example B in class.</td>
<td>12.5% (8)</td>
<td>18.8% (12)</td>
<td>32.8% (21)</td>
<td>21.9% (14)</td>
<td>14.1% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to learn to use the kind of English that native speakers use.</td>
<td>48.5% (31)</td>
<td>32.8% (21)</td>
<td>9.4% (6)</td>
<td>9.4% (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


5 Discussion

The discussion is divided into two different sections: the ‘Discussion of Results’ and the ‘Comparing the Results’. This was done in order to first establish interesting aspects found in the present study’s results, and then after that to compare them to Timmis’s results.

5.1 Discussion of Results: The Importance of English as a Subject

The results of the first section of the questionnaire were, without a doubt, the most vital part of the study for one simple reason: this study was made with the assumption that Swedish university students find English to be an important subject and tool to have. Because of this the first thing which needed to be confirmed was if the students agreed with this presumption; otherwise the study would lose its value.

As shown in section 4.1, over 90% of the participants find English to be an important subject to learn (picking either the “very, very important!” response or the “very important” response). No participants answered that English was unimportant for them to learn in any of the four questions and only three respondents answered with a “not very important” for the “learning to read English is” statement. With this, it can be concluded that Swedish students find English as a subject to be important to learn which is in agreement with this study and with other studies across the world (like Davis, Timmis, Widdowson and many more).

Upon further examination of the results it can be seen (in Table 1) that the majority of the participants (around 60%) answered with the strongest positive response (“very, very important!”) to the four questions about learning English. About 20-30% of the participants answered with the second strongest positive response (“very important”). It can therefore be concluded that the students feel strongly about learning various aspects of English and are very clear in their desires. The only exception was the response to the statement “learning to write English is” in which the results were more evenly divided between the strongest and second strongest response (about 50% and 40%). This means that fewer students feel very strongly about learning to write English as compared to the three other areas of learning English. As the method of collecting the results was done with questionnaires, we can only speculate as to why that is. It is however, interesting to note as it is the only statement which has noticeably lower results for the highest response (with more people choosing instead the
second highest response) than the other statements, and it could help to explain an interesting occurrence in the informal grammar section of the questionnaire (see ‘Discussion of Results: Informal Grammar’ below).

5.2 Discussion of Results: Pronunciation

In the pronunciation section of the results a vast majority of the participants chose Student A (see table 2), meaning that they would prefer to sound like a native speaker of English rather than keep their Swedish accents when speaking English. This is interesting as it opposes Jenkins’s idea that people often wish to keep at least part of their accent, “the majority express a desire to retain something of their L1” (Jenkins quoted from Timmis 2002, p.242).¹ Timmis speculates that this could be because students find NSN English to be a benchmark of achievement (p. 242). This seems to be a reasonable presumption to make for at least some of the participants. It is also interesting to note that all participants who answered they would not want to be like student A answered that they preferred Student B, and these participants also answered that they currently spoke more with non-native speakers. This might indicate that the participants make their choice based on context: “who do/will I speak with?”. The ones who chose Student A might spend more time communicating with a native English speakers and therefore feel the need to conform more, whereas the participants who chose student example B feel less pressure to have native speaker proficiency when speaking to their Swedish peers or other non-native English speakers.

5.3 Discussion of Results: Formal Grammar

In the formal grammar section there were three examples for the participants to choose from, Students C/D/E (see: ‘Appendix’). Their results showed that like in the pronunciation section, a majority of the participants chose the student example which was closest to native speaker proficiency (Student E). Also like in the pronunciation section, we can speculate that this is due to the students finding NSN English to be a benchmark of achievement. The results for student example C’s follow-up questions is a point of interest. Most participants answered they could be like student example C (about 60%), but that they did not want to (about 70%). As the last follow-up question simply asked if they would prefer to be like Student C – who is a person capable of speaking fluent English, if not one who perfectly conforms to NSN English – and not which of the examples they ultimately favored (which was a question of its

¹ L1: first language, mother tongue.
own), this shows that a majority of the participants do not want to learn interlanguage English. This gives more credit to Timmis’s idea of the students seeing NSN English as a benchmark of achievement, rather than the language simply being a tool to use to communicate.

For student examples D and E the results were both expected and unexpected. It is not surprising to see that many of the participants do not want to be like Student D, as the former results have already revealed that they want to mimic NSN English as closely as possible. It is also not surprising that they would want to be like Student E, for similar reasons. But only some participants answered that they could be like Student D (about 25%), which arguably would be the easiest student to emulate, as it is simply a matter of memorizing and applying the grammar rules. Yet despite this, over half of the participants (about 65%) answered that they could be like student example E, which is the hardest example to emulate as it illustrates a person capable of both formal and informal grammar mastery. These results might be influenced by the last part of student example D: “and I don’t want to learn this.” The participants could be responding more to this last part of the statement rather than the rest of it. As to why so many participants answered that they could be like Student E, it could simply be a matter of self-confidence, or, as shown in the next part of the questionnaire which presents an interesting contradiction (discussed below), it could be a matter the participants not truly understanding what mastery of informal NSN English grammar means.

5.4 Discussion of Results: Informal Grammar

In the final part of the questionnaire the participants were asked about informal grammar. For the follow-up questions, one of the questions had been changed from Timmis’s original question. The question had been changed to: “I want to learn to use the kind of English that native speakers use.” Interestingly, this one small change to the questionnaire presented a contradiction in the answers in some of the participants.

Though a clear majority of the participants (about 70%) chose the correct answer (example B) and also answered positively to the changed question with either “strongly agree” or “agree” as their choice (about half), there was a handful of students who answered negatively on the first two follow-up questions. Six participants answered with either “strongly disagree” or “disagree” when asked to agree or disagree with the statements “It is

---

7 Original question used by Timmis was: “It is better for me to use the kind of English in Example A than the kind of English used in Example B”.
important for me to be able to use the kind of English in Example B” and “It is important for me to study the kind of English in Example B in class”. Yet, these participants had also answered that they thought that example B was the example spoken by a native speaker of English and they answered positively on the final follow-up question about wanting to learn NSN English. These participants had also chosen Student E in the previous section of the questionnaire (the student example which showed a master of formal and informal NSN English), and five of them preferred student example A in the pronunciation part of the questionnaire (the student with NSN English pronunciation). Simply put, six participants answered that they would like their English to mimic NSN English in pronunciation, formal- and informal grammar, yet they would not like to be able to use informal grammar or study it in class. The answers contradict each other.

There could be many reasons for this, however, and the two most prominent reasons are that either the questionnaire was not clear enough and consequently the participants misunderstood what was asked of them or the participants do not understand what informal grammar among native speakers of English may sound/look like. The first option could be the reason; however, as the other participants did not have such contradictions in their questionnaires it is not as likely. The participants who chose student example B in the beginning of the questionnaire also chose student example C or D and most of them did not grade the final follow-up question in example A/B as highly (the question about NSN English mastery). In some cases Student E was chosen, but the participants who chose this option also answered positively towards the follow-up questions concerning student examples C/D: that is, that they would not mind sounding like them. This clear continuation of opinions gives credit to the questionnaire’s understandability, and as such it is more likely that the six participants do not understand what they say they wish to master.

5.5 Discussion of Results: Comparing this Study’s Results to Timmis’s

Timmis’s study was conducted over a decade ago, in a different country and without Swedish participants. Even so, as this study was made based on Timmis’s study, it is relevant to compare his results to this study’s results.

As stated in the background (see 2.5: ‘Previous Study by Timmis’) Timmis’s study was done in 2002, fourteen years ago, and it did not include Swedish students. During these years the school system has changed and not just in Sweden (see 2.2: ‘Learning and Teaching
English in Sweden’). It would not be an unreasonable assumption to make that people’s opinions have also changed during this time, but as Timmis’s study did not include Swedes, it can only be considered speculation. Timmis’ study was also made with over 500 participants from several different countries, whereas this study has a smaller number of participants which all come from Sweden. Timmis’s study used both teachers and students while this one used only students. Timmis’s also conducted interviews in his study.

5.5.1 Comparing the Results: Pronunciation

The comparison with Timmis’s results will revolve around pronunciation and grammar, as these areas are of interest to this study (see 1.1: ‘Research Questions’). In Timmis’s study the results for the pronunciation section was slightly more evenly divided between student example A and B as compare to this study. In Timmis’s study, 67% of the participants chose Student A and 32% chose Student B (p. 242), whereas the current study shows a greater inclination towards Student A than Student B (about 85% for Student A and 15% for Student B). However, in Timmis’s study the results for students from South Africa, Pakistan, and India were the opposite, with 34% choosing Student A and 64% choosing Student B (p. 242). He suggested that this was in accordance with Jenkins’s (1997) idea that people wish to keep a part of their first language (also see 5.2: ‘Discussion of Results: Pronunciation’). This observation could also be supported by Davis’s (2013) identity marker theory (see 2.1: ‘Variants’). However, this study indicates that the Swedish students are more like the first group (‘All Students’) who do not wish to keep parts of their first language in their English pronunciation, and less similar to the second group (‘Students from South Africa, Pakistan, and India’) which might have been more expected because in Sweden, English is a foreign language. It could be that these opinions have shifted more towards favoring NSN English since Timmis’s study was made over a decade ago, or it might be that Swedish students simply favor NSN English more than their overseas counterparts.

5.5.2 Comparing the Results: Formal Grammar

In the formal grammar section, Timmis’s results were similar to this study’s results. Timmis’s participants were divided with 68% of the participants choosing Student E, 14% of the participants choosing Student C, and 14% choosing Student D (p. 244). Student E was the clear choice for a majority of the participants, both in Timmis’s study and in this one, which had about 59% of the participants choosing Student E, about 23% of the participants choosing
Student C and about 19% of the participants choosing Student D. The results do show that unlike in the pronunciation results (which had a greater percentage wanting NSN English in this study as compared to Timmis’s) there was a greater diversity between the different student examples, with more choosing Student’s C and D rather than Student E.

5.5.3 Comparing the Results: Informal Grammar

For Timmis’s informal grammar results, 63% of the participants correctly identified example B as the one spoken by a native speaker, with 34% choosing example A (p. 247). In this study, about 69% correctly identified the correct example. Once again, the results between the two studies are largely similar, but the present study had a higher degree of respondents who chose the correct option. Of course, while this study’s high numbers may seem impressive, it is important to remember that despite the current study’s percentages of participants identifying the correct option being higher than Timmis’s, it was his study that had more people choosing the correct answer overall.

What is interesting to note is that similarly to this study, Timmis’s also included participants who despite correctly choosing example B and thus indicating that they would like to master both formal and informal grammar, still answered that they would not like to learn the kind of English in example B. In Timmis’s study 20% of the ones who chose student example E also said that they did not want to learn to use the English used in example B. He also noted that there were a high number of students who picked the “unsure” option (25%), which would give further support to the idea that students do not understand what informal grammar is (p. 247). This is similar to the results in this study, in which about 30% chose the unsure “option” and there were also students’ who despite having answered that they would like to master both formal and informal NSN English grammar, did not want to learn the English used in example B.

6 Conclusion

This study, while not able to provide a clear picture of the desires of the general Swedish student population, does perhaps manage to provide some insights into a few points when it comes to student attitudes and preferences concerning English. The purpose of this study was to learn how important Swedish students felt English and English learning is to them and to see what kind of English would they prefer to learn: NSN English or non-NSN
English. This study used four research questions in order to reach these answers: How important do Swedish university students think it is to learn English? How far do Swedish university students want to conform to/follow native speaker English in pronunciation? How far do Swedish university students want to conform to/follow native speaker English in formal grammar? And, how far do Swedish university students want to conform to/follow native speaker English in informal grammar?

The study found that a clear majority of the Swedish university students think that English is an important subject to learn. No participant in the study found English to be unimportant to learn. Moreover, this study tentatively concludes that while the changes implemented by Skolverket in 2012 (see 2.2: ‘Learning and Teaching English in Sweden’), which changed the regulations in favor of English teaching which does not have to be focused on British or American English, it might still be relevant to use as many students seem to prefer it. This study found that students want to learn English as close to NSN proficiency as possible in the areas of pronunciation, formal grammar, and informal grammar. This study also found that while the students may desire to mimic NSN English, they do not always understand what this means, especially when it comes to informal grammar. Based on these results, this study suggests that it might be relevant for English teaching to include more informal NSN English grammar, as there is a great desire to learn and master it, but not as great an understanding as to what it is.

What this study did not find was how far the participants desire to conform to NSN English extends, as the study did not use any further means of data collection beyond the questionnaire. If further research is to be made, interviewing participants is a must, as the reasons for their choices are as clear as the current questionnaire can make them, but the questionnaire alone would not be enough to understand the students reasons for preferring NSN English, or to answer if they are aware of their preferences.
References


Appendix

Hej, jag heter Sara och jag genomför en studie om Engelska utbildning för min kandidatuppsats i språk and humaniora med inriktning kommunikation. Jag skulle vara tacksam om du kunde delta genom att besvara följande enkät som tar ca 10 minuter. Studiens intresse ligger i att se var folks intresse i Engelska finns och om dessa intressen matchar den nuvarande utbildningen. Det finns inga "rätt" eller "fel" svar.

Uppgifterna som du lämnar är helt anonyma och kan inte, vid någon tidpunkt, knytas till dig som person. Ditt deltagande i undersökningen är frivilligt och du kan när som helst avsluta enkäten utan att nämna någon motivering. Datan som samlas in kommer endast att användas i den ovannämnda studien.

Tack!

Please tick (√) one box

I am
17-19 years old □ 20-25 years old □ 26-30 years old □ 30+ years old □

I am
Male □ Female □ Identify as another gender □

1. For each sentence please circle (O) one number

I= very, very important! 2= very important 3= quite important 4= not very important 5= unimportant

For me,
Learning to speak English is 1 2 3 4 5
Learning to write English is 1 2 3 4 5
Learning to read English is 1 2 3 4 5
Learning to listen to English is 1 2 3 4 5

2. Please tick (√) one box

At the moment, when I am outside class, I use English

More with native speakers □
More with non-native speakers □
I am not sure if I will use English more with native speakers or non-native speakers □
(Note! In this questionnaire, native speaker means someone who has spoken English since he or she was a small child.)

3. Please tick (√) one box

In the next three years, I think I will use English

More with native speakers □
More with non-native speakers □
I am not sure if I will use English more with native speakers or non-native speakers □

4. For each sentence please circle (O) one number

I= strongly agree 2= agree 3= unsure 4= disagree 5= disagree strongly

a) I want to learn any kind of English that is easy to learn and helps me communicate
b) I want to learn the kind of English that is easy to learn and helps me communicate

1  2  3  4  5

5. Please read what Student A says then underline one answer to each question

*Student A:* “I can pronounce English just like a native speaker now. Sometimes people think I am a native speaker."

a) Do you think you could ever be like Student A?
   Yes  No  I don’t know

b) Would you like to be like Student A?
   Yes  No  I don’t know

6. Please read what Student B says then underline one answer to each question

*Student B:* “I can pronounce English clearly now. Native speakers and non-native speakers understand me wherever I go, but I still have the accent of my country."

a) Do you think you could ever be like Student B?
   Yes  No  I don’t know

b) Would you like to be like Student B?
   Yes  No  I don’t know

7. Please underline one answer

Would you prefer to be like Student A or Student B?

   Student A  Student B

8. Please read what Student C says then underline one answer to each question

*Student C:* “I can say everything I want to say. Native speakers and non-native speakers understand me wherever I go, but I use English my own way and sometimes I say things which native speakers think are grammar mistakes."

a) Do you think you could ever be like Student C?
   Yes  No  I don’t know

b) Would you like to be like Student C?
   Yes  No  I don’t know
9. Please read what Student D says then underline one answer to each question

Student D: “I know all the grammar rules I need so that I can say anything I want. I use these rules correctly, but sometimes English people use grammar which isn’t in the grammar books and I don’t want to learn this.”

a) Do you think you could ever be like Student D?
   Yes  No  I don’t know
b) Would you like to be like Student D?
   Yes  No  I don’t know

10. Please read what Student E says then underline one answer to each question

Student E: I use all the grammar rules that native speakers use, even the informal grammar native speakers use when they are speaking to each other.”

a) Do you think you could ever be like Student E?
   Yes  No  I don’t know
b) Would you like to be like Student E?
   Yes  No  I don’t know

11. Please underline one answer

Would you prefer to be like Student C, Student D, or Student E?

   Student C  Student D  Student E

12. Please look at the Example A and Example B below and decide which example was actually spoken by a native speaker of English

Example A:
I had a disaster last night. I was sitting at home on the sofa watching TV when the phone rang. I wasn’t very pleased to find out that it was my mum, but she was asking me if I wanted to go to the USA with her. (Note: It is a “disaster” when something very bad happens.)

Example B:
Disaster last night. Sat at home on the sofa watching TV. The phone rings. It’s my mum. I’m like “Oh no!” she’s going, “Do you want to come to the USA?”.

Please underline one answer

Which of the examples do you think was spoken by a native speaker?

   Example A  Example B

13. For each sentence please circle (O) one number

1= strongly agree 2= agree 3= unsure 4= disagree 5= disagree strongly

a) It is important for me to be able to use the kind of English in Example B
b) It is important for me to study the kind of English in Example B in class

1 2 3 4 5

c) I want to learn to use the kind of English that native speakers use

1 2 3 4 5

**Personal Information (optional)**

*It would help to analyze the information, if you could answer these questions*

Why are you learning English?

For how many years have you been studying English?

In which country are you studying English now?

In which country do you normally live?

Have you ever studied English abroad?

*Thank you for helping with this questionnaire*