

Who Are the Gifted? Educators' Perceptions of Gifted EFL Students and Teaching Strategies in Sweden

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Abstract

This study aims to explore educators' perspectives on the perception of EFL giftedness in grades 4-6 in Swedish schools. The study further investigates teaching strategies that can facilitate learning for these students, challenges in implementing teaching strategies, and potential solutions. Empirical data were collected through five semi-structured interviews with educators, supplemented with commentary from the Swedish giftedness expert and author Mona Liljedahl. The results, based on the five interviews and the subsequent qualitative content analysis, indicate no consensus on the perception of EFL giftedness, which aligns with current research. The participants' suggested teaching strategies varied, making it difficult to categorize and compare to the two key giftedness teaching strategies: acceleration and enrichment. Even so, enrichment strategies seem more favorable than acceleration strategies. Another key finding is that teachers' language competence is highly important to evaluate gifted students' level and to challenge them according to their needs. This area of research is limited in Sweden, particularly in EFL giftedness, and thus, the study's results are not generalizable. Nevertheless, it opens a door to an interesting and complex, yet scarcely researched topic in Swedish education.

Keywords

Giftedness, Gifted Learner, Gifted Student, EFL, English as a Foreign Language, English as a Second Language, Acceleration, Enrichment, Differentiated Instruction.

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1. Introduction

Swedish primary school, grades 4-6, is where children with different backgrounds, goals, and ambitions congregate. Some of these children are defined as gifted. Although the definition of giftedness varies, Pettersson (2017) and Liljedahl (2017) describe them as students who think abstractly and can connect complex thoughts in a manner that is above their peers of similar age. Pettersson (2017) adds that they are creative, already know the material, and like to create something new. Furthermore, Liljedahl (2017) states that these students, besides being faster learners, have a profound desire for learning. However, meeting the needs of gifted students is shunned in Swedish society (Persson, S.R., 2010; Pettersson, 2017). Persson S.R. (2010) states that this may derive from Sweden's historical, cultural, and political emphasis on equity.

Schools have primarily focused on students who struggle to pass the knowledge requirements, which has affected the treatment of gifted students (Mattsson & Pettersson, 2015b). However, giftedness does not automatically equate to high test scores. Due to a lack of accommodation and challenge, these students may resort to behavior issues, passivity, low performance, and emotional distress (Liljedahl, 2017). Additionally, the Swedish Education Act chapter 3 clearly states that every student has a right to receive adequate support and assistance in learning and personal development, including students who easily fulfill the knowledge requirements (2010:800, chapter 3. 2 §). Giving these students adequate support may lead to societal benefits (Sternberg et al., 2024) through innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, and knowledge (Mattsson & Pettersson, 2015b). However, these goals seem to clash with the current reality of schools, where funding is being cut and class sizes increased, which increases demand for homogeneous classes (Persson, B., 2019).

The aforementioned arguments highlight the importance of acknowledging gifted students. However, research on gifted students in a Swedish context is limited. By collecting empirical data from interviews, this paper aims to contribute to current giftedness research in Sweden by focusing on the perception of giftedness in EFL (English as a Foreign Language), potential teaching strategies to use, and challenges and solutions in the implementation of teaching strategies.

1.1 Research Questions

- How do educators perceive giftedness in EFL?
- What teaching strategies can educators use to facilitate learning for gifted EFL students in mixed-ability grade 4-6 classrooms in Sweden?
- What challenges may impede the implementation of EFL teaching strategies, and what are possible solutions?

2. Literature Review

This literature review provides a limited overview of relevant terminology for this study. The brevity is due to scope limitations. Articles were accessed through the Stockholm University article database, which provides a toggle to only display peer-reviewed articles. The main keywords in the search were EFL, giftedness, acceleration, and enrichment. Symbol-based operators were used to hone searches. For example, when searching for the word gifted*, the results displayed variants of the words such as giftedness, gifted students, etcetera. Many of the sources used in this study were in Swedish as they provided important Swedish context. Within this overview, Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) are used interchangeably. In Sweden, gifted students are named *särskilt begåvade elever* or *särbegåvade elever*, even if the former is preferred (Liljedahl, 2017).

2.1 Giftedness

There are many definitions of giftedness according to Biedroń and Pawlak (2016), which means there is no standardized definition (Pettersson, 2017). Furthermore, the definition has shifted over time, together with the models for identifying giftedness (Westling Allodi, 2015).

Intelligence quotient (IQ) was previously an important determinant of giftedness (Okan & Ispinar, 2009). However, IQ as a sole indicator of giftedness is inadequate (Biedroń & Pawlak, 2016; Silverman, 2013), especially as IQ can fluctuate (Pettersson, 2017) and be affected by factors such as stress from poverty (Liljedahl, 2022). Furthermore, Sternberg et al. (2024) state that standardized tests favor individuals with a higher socioeconomic status. Sternberg (2007), therefore, argues for a broader definition of giftedness beyond standardized tests, especially since the concept varies across cultures and countries. Additionally, Biedroń and Pawlak (2016) add that most researchers nowadays define giftedness broadly instead of solely by IQ. In Sweden, IQ tests are not commonly used. Instead, other methods should be implemented to start, such as pedagogic mapping (*pedagogisk kartläggning*) (Pettersson, 2017). Additionally, Liljedahl (2017), providing more Swedish context, highlights the importance of identifying these students through personality, personal characteristics, and behavior, instead of relying on IQ scores. In light of previous research, this study will define giftedness with broader terms and focus on the behaviors and characteristics of gifted individuals mentioned in the literature review.

Liljedahl (2017) provides a broad definition stating that a student is likely gifted if the student reasons quickly, abstractly, logically, and deeply. Another practical, albeit non-scientific definition is that gifted students usually surprise and fascinate others in their surroundings with their skills in one or several areas (Mattsson & Pettersson, 2015b; Pettersson, 2017). According to Mattsson and Pettersson (2015b), giftedness can be seen in various subjects such as languages, mathematics, natural sciences, leadership, physical education, and crafts. They state that some students are gifted in one area, some in several, even if most giftedness models underline that it is a combination of skills (Mattsson & Pettersson, 2015b). There is also variation among children in their degree of giftedness. As the degree of giftedness increases, the

ability to learn and utilize complex information generally increases, according to Mattsson and Pettersson (2015).

Other characteristics of a gifted student may include early development of linguistic abilities (see Silverman, 2013 for more), perfectionism, strong morals, a drive to acquire knowledge, excellent memory, interest-based hyperfocus, strong self-perception, androgyny, plentiful and varied interests, and a distinct sense of humor. These students may also feel lonely because they are intellectually ahead of their peers (read more about the characteristics in Liljedahl, 2017).

Discussions of whether giftedness is fixed or developable add complexity to the topic of giftedness (Biedroń & Pawlak, 2016). However, most researchers agree that giftedness is developed over time, and that “culture, abilities, environment, gender, opportunities, and chance contribute to the development of gifts and talents” (Renzulli & Renzulli, 2010, p. 2).

Gifted students can be difficult to identify for different reasons. It can be due to the student hiding their giftedness to fit in (Pettersson, 2017), underperformance, socioeconomic and ethnic background due to teachers correlating giftedness with higher socioeconomic status (Liljedahl, 2022), language barriers (Liljedahl, 2017), and gender (Liljedahl, 2017; Silverman, 2013).

The theory presented above displays gifted children as a non-homogeneous group. Therefore, measuring the percentage of gifted children is challenging as it depends on the definition. Some theoretical models claim that 2-10% of the population is gifted, some as much as 15-20%. In a Swedish context, Skolverket claims 5% of students are gifted (Mattson & Pettersson, 2015b). However, Liljedahl (2022) states that the 5% percentage used in Skolverket’s material is not a clinically proven number, as it depends on what theory and definition of giftedness is applied. Sternberg (2007), similarly to Liljedahl (2022), claims there is no exact percentage because the number varies depending on the criterion and location.

2.1.1 Attitudes Towards Gifted Students

Currently, the Swedish education system has limited knowledge of giftedness and the needs of the gifted. Persson S.R. (2010) claims that it is due to historical, cultural, and political reasons. In Sweden, discussing giftedness is seen as taboo, especially in theoretical subjects (Pettersson, 2017). Silverman (2013) claims that giftedness is misunderstood because it is not addressed in training programs for counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and educators. The lack of giftedness understanding may cause gifted students to camouflage due to frustration from the teacher when the student asks complex questions or shows they know more than their teacher. Pettersson (2017), therefore, underlines the importance of teachers’ subject competence to adequately challenge the gifted.

There is a misconception that gifted students are high-achieving (Pettersson, 2017). However, gifted students' skills do not always correlate with high grades, since they have personal qualities that quantitative tests do not always cover (Liljedahl, 2017). Gifted students are driven by self-improvement, and less by grade. Another difference is that gifted students already know the material and enjoy creating something new, whereas high-achieving students learn quickly but reproduce knowledge (Pettersson, 2017).

2.1.2 Giftedness in Foreign Language Acquisition

Giftedness in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) lacks a coherent definition (Biedroń & Pawlak, 2016), and research on how gifted students learn foreign languages such as English is sparse (Okan & Ispinar, 2009; Yildirim & Ispinar Akcayoglu, 2019). For literature on gifted English learners, not specifically tied to FLA or SLA, Dean (2018) could offer a different perspective.

Bardel and Österberg (2015) attempt to define gifted SLA learners as students who rapidly learn the target language's structure in the form of, for example, words and expressions. These students are also aware of their language learning skills and are independent learners. Moreover, they also quickly learn to read, write and communicate in the target language. Additionally, they can also understand and explain language-specific phenomena. They add that these students may be easier to identify because they quickly develop communicative skills and understanding of the language. They read new texts quickly and can more easily spot language structures, compared to other students who may need to repeat the content. They may also enjoy word plays and riddles.

A limited study conducted on two students, aged between 11–14 years old, and two teachers regarding their perception of effective EFL learners found that “both teachers and students formed constructs that characterized an effective EFL learner as someone who had good pronunciation, studies independently, is curious and/or is open to learning new things, and is enthusiastic about and interested in learning English” (Yildirim & Ispinar Akcayoglu, 2019, pp. 96-97). Furthermore, gifted language learners have a “special awareness of sounds, intonation, and accent of language” (Yildirim & Ispinar Akcayoglu, 2019, p. 97).

Section 2.1 highlighted how most researchers see giftedness as developable over time. This is also applicable to an FL (Foreign Language) and SLA (Second Language Acquisition) setting, where Biedroń and Pawlak (2016) state that contemporary research views the development of FL and SLA as dynamic, since it responds to the environment.

2.2 Teaching Strategies for Gifted Students

This section summarizes two key strategies for teaching gifted students: acceleration and enrichment (Mattsson & Pettersson, 2015a; Westling Allodi, 2015; Ivarsson, 2024). Another umbrella term, differentiated instruction (Jahnke, 2015), will first be introduced.

2.2.1 Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction, in short, considers everyone's learning differences. In practice, “a differentiated classroom provides different avenues to acquiring content, to processing or making sense of ideas, and to developing products so that each student can learn effectively” (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 1). It does not, however, assume that separate assignments should be created for each student. Importantly, differentiated classrooms lead to higher engagement when the content is relevant and interesting, which leads to learning (Tomlinson, 2017). In practice,

this means that students get a base task, however students can work with different content at different levels in various ways (Boo et al., 2017).

2.2.2 Acceleration

Acceleration allows students to study at a higher pace, better suited to their needs. The student can work with tasks from higher grades, partially move to a higher grade, or be fully promoted (Ivarsson, 2024). Students may also start school at a younger age (Pettersson, 2017).

Acceleration is beneficial for motivation and social inclusion. However, there is skepticism, especially in Sweden, about the effects of acceleration by skipping grades and the emotional distress it may cause students. Although the potential damage of not accelerating gifted students is greater than the potential emotional distress (Liljedahl, 2022).

When applying acceleration in terms of language, Bardel and Österberg (2015) suggest faster progression when learning a language to keep gifted students engaged and motivated. Although in reality, Liljedahl (2022) writes that acceleration is less applied in languages such as English than in math due to languages being less linear in terms of progression.

2.2.3 Enrichment

Enrichment allows for deeper learning opportunities in one or several subjects. These opportunities may go beyond the curriculum to create meaningful activities for the gifted student (Ivarsson, 2024; Pettersson, 2017). One crucial point is that the gifted student needs to find the content meaningful (Liljedahl, 2022). There are different variants of enrichment strategies (see Liljedahl, 2022), where the three most common implementations, according to a questionnaire answered by parents, were interest-based tasks, the student doing their own projects, and subject specialization.

Moreover, Reis and Renzulli (2007) highlight the importance of applying acquired knowledge and thinking skills to solve real-life problems by creating products aimed at an audience. This can, for example, be in the form of participation in a poetry competition (Liljedahl, 2022).

This literature review has presented a limited overview of giftedness and giftedness in EFL. However, it highlights an under-researched area, especially in the Swedish education system, as evident by the lack of unified definitions presented above. Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to further giftedness research in Sweden by focusing on how educators perceive giftedness in EFL, their suggestions on how to teach gifted EFL students, and challenges and solutions in the implementation of teaching strategies. Their contributions will be analyzed and compared to current literature on the topic, presented earlier in the literature review section. The process of gathering empirical data is stated in the next section.

3. Methodology

A qualitative methodology was chosen for this study since it provided “detailed descriptions of smaller groups of individuals” (Groom & Littlemore, 2011, p. 61) with interviews as the data-collection method. This section presents the procedure of selecting participants, data collection & analysis, as well as ethical considerations.

3.1 Interviews

Interviews are conversations with the goal of gathering information (Carlström & Carlström Hagmans, 2006) about what “people think and feel” (Groom & Littlemore, 2011, p. 62). The semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility during the interview and adjustment of questions in real-time. The interview guide was based on selected question types out of nine mentioned by Clark et al. (2021), for example, follow-up questions, probing questions, and specifying questions (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Excerpt from the interview guide corresponding to one of the research questions. The italicized question was optional.

Understanding of giftedness in English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Goal: Establish a common reference point on gifted EFL learners for later questions.

1. How would you define high English proficiency?
2. How does the general level of English proficiency in Swedish students influence your perspective on whether someone can be gifted in English?
3. How different are the needs of gifted students in EFL, compared to other students, such as high-proficiency and high-achieving students? In what areas may gifted students struggle? Are there misconceptions about them?
4. In your experience, how is the understanding of giftedness and EFL education manifested in practice among teachers, scholars, principals, and other personnel?
5. *(What is the current research on giftedness and EFL English learning?)*

One hour was allocated for each interview. As interviews can be prone to partial capture, which does not tell the whole story (Block, 2017), the participants received the interview guide beforehand (see Appendices A and B) to initiate thoughts and to recall information. To ensure the questions could be understood, a pilot test of the questions ensued before the interviews.

3.1.1 Participants

For this study, I interviewed five participants (see Table 1). Their various backgrounds allowed for different perspectives; more theoretical from the scholars, and more practical from individuals working in the field. In this study, participants are categorized under the umbrella term educators. The participants were selected based on convenience and ease of access due to the short timeframe and difficulty finding eligible participants. However, the common denominator is their background in EFL teaching. Four out of five participants opted for an interview in Swedish. All five participants wished to receive a pseudonym. The transcripts are available upon request, due to the dataset size (see Table 1).

In addition to these five interviews, I interviewed author Mona Liljedahl (see Appendix C for the interview guide), whose work has been referenced in section 2. Her contribution is not part of the main dataset used in section 4; however, some of her contributions will be presented in section 5 as additional commentary to contextualize other findings. The interview was conducted in Swedish.

Table 1. Participant overview.

Participant pseudonyms	Background	Transcription size (number of words)
Ines	Associate professor (<i>Lektor</i>) in English didactics at a large university in Sweden. English teacher and educator for over 20 years.	11,857
Lena	Lecturer (<i>adjunkt</i>) in English didactics at a large university in Sweden. Has taught in the teacher program for 17 years.	9,769
Kristina	Special education teacher with previous classroom experience in grades F-6. 15 years of experience in education. Works in a school situated in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area in Stockholm.	8,637
Paulina	Has a PhD and is currently a lecturer (<i>lektor</i>) teaching English in grades 4 and 6 with 20 years of teaching experience. Works in a school situated in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area in Stockholm, alongside Åsa.	6,376
Åsa	Primarily teaches Swedish as a second language and English for grades 4-6. Holds a senior teacher position in English (<i>förstelärare</i>). Employed at a school in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area in Stockholm, alongside Paulina.	9,485
Total data size		46,124

3.1.2 Ethical Considerations

A digital consent form was sent or given to the participants to sign (see Appendix D). The recorded interview data was stored on my computer until I received my grade, after which the data was deleted. The decision was guided by GDPR rules of storing data for the shortest time possible (European Commission, n.d.).

3.1.3 Technical Setup

The interviews were conducted on-site or through Zoom, depending on the preference of the participant. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed using Microsoft Word's built-in transcription feature to speed up the transcription process. The transcription was manually checked for errors since software may struggle with different accents and dialects. If the interview was conducted in Swedish, I translated parts of the transcripts that would be used in the paper using Microsoft Word's Copilot feature. As before, errors in the translations were manually checked.

3.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

To analyze the data, I opted for qualitative content analysis, which is interpretive. This qualitative method reduces data with code frames (Schreier, 2012) to “identify and highlight the most relevant and meaningful passages of text” (Drisko & Maschi, 2015) by categorizing the data. As the interviews amassed a word count of 46,000 words total (46,124), categorization of data was important to get an overview of the participants' input. Due to project deadlines, the data analysis was done in parallel with ongoing interviews.

An initial code frame was created after familiarizing myself with the transcribed interviews. My approach was inspired by Schreier (2012) in that the main categories (dimensions) and subcategories were created both inductively from patterns of data (data-driven) and deductively from theory, previous research, and logic. A combined approach was used since one limitation of solely using deductive coding is that data may contain new ideas not yet present in the literature (Drisko & Maschi, 2015).

In the analysis, sections relevant to the research questions were categorized in accordance with the code frame by using the comment function in Microsoft Word. The process of categorization was done iteratively as clearer patterns emerged and distinct dimensions and subcategories developed. This study's code frame has several dimensions, divided mainly by each research question (see Figures 1-4). The figures show how the dimensions and subcategories are connected. Visualizing the dimensions and subcategories hierarchically allowed for an easier overview, which aided the categorization of transcriptions. As to not surpass the word count, examples of how transcripts were categorized are in Appendix E. Certain parts of the transcripts were difficult to categorize as they could fit in several categories depending on the interpretation. I problematize this further in Section 5.

Figure 1: The dimension Educators’ perception of giftedness.

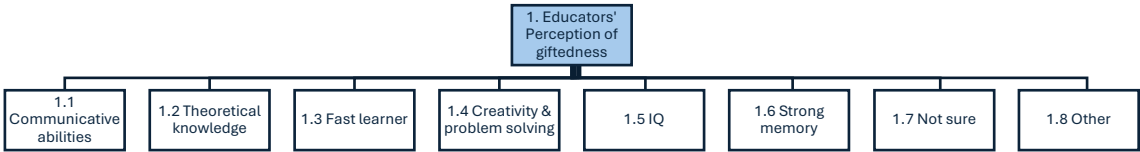


Figure 2: The dimensions Teaching strategies and Assessing students’ needs, with corresponding sub-categories.

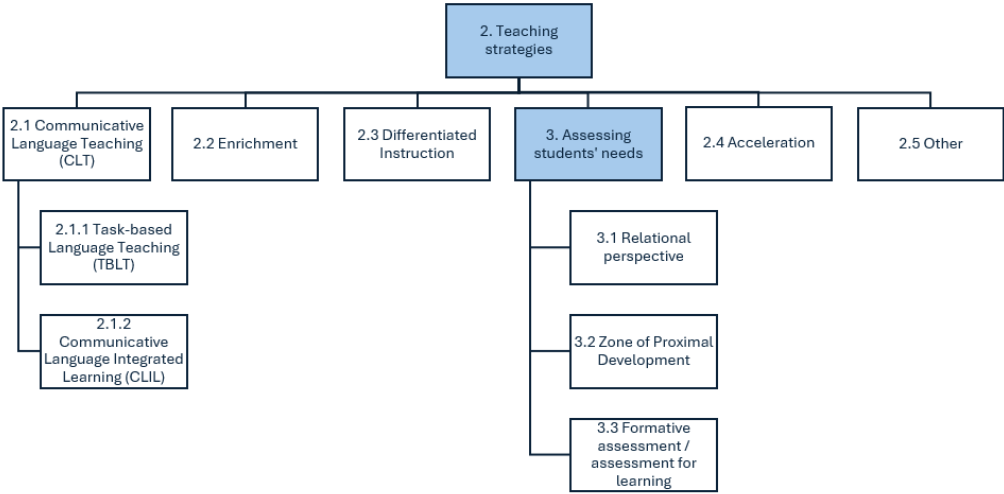


Figure 3: The dimension Challenges for Educators.

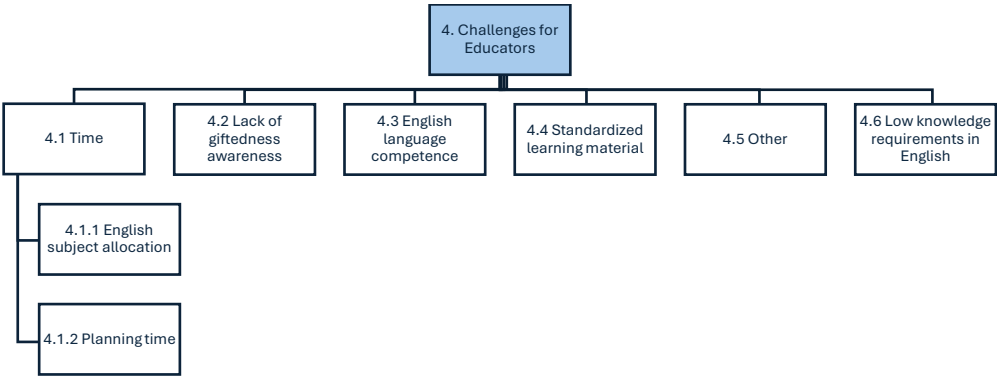
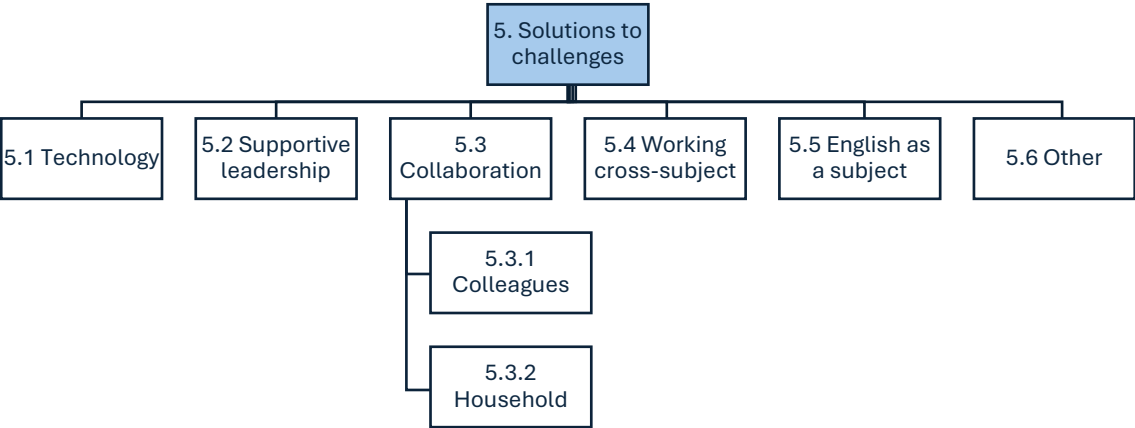


Figure 4: The dimension Solutions to challenges.



4. Results

This section presents the results of the qualitative content analysis in relation to the research questions and displays participants' beliefs, thoughts, and experiences. In this study, the word *strategy* is used broadly for the sake of simplification. The word *advanced* in this section is left in intentionally, as it was terminology used by one of the participants. The word is interpreted to encompass gifted and highly proficient but not necessarily gifted students. Section 5 further discusses how this choice may have impacted the results.

4.1 Research Question 1: Teachers' Perception of Giftedness in EFL

The participants seemed to have encountered the term gifted before with various prior experiences; however, all but one were uncertain whether they had encountered a gifted student themselves, especially a gifted EFL student. Only teacher Paulina had explicitly identified one gifted math student prior. The participants also expressed ambiguity about what constitutes giftedness, especially in EFL. They also expressed uncertainty about the distinction between high-achieving, highly proficient, and gifted students. Whether someone could even be gifted in EFL was discussed, and the participants pointed to the high English proficiency in Sweden due to prolonged exposure to English as a factor. Despite uncertainty about the definition of giftedness, the participants agreed that insufficient challenge in school may lead to boredom, which may cause students to misbehave.

The participants mentioned different possible criteria for being gifted, from more theoretical, such as the student's linguistic/grammatical competence, to other aspects such as being a fast learner, already knowing the material, being an avid reader, using metalanguage, being a creative problem solver, and having great communicative skills. One participant, Ines, mentioned how she was labeled as a gifted student in her home country when she was young. In her case, she thinks her IQ score was used to determine giftedness in her childhood. However, she does not subscribe to IQ being a determinant of giftedness. Instead, the type of questions students ask may be an indicator, as it shows the student's thought process. Additionally, she adds that communication skills above peers of a similar age are a component of being more advanced.

While participants found the definition of gifted ambiguous, two of the participants, Kristina and Åsa, stated after reflecting during the interview that they may have or have had cases where a student could be considered gifted. One such example is when a student asked an unexpected question on a topic she had not taught in class:

- (1) They were supposed to make a PowerPoint about themselves, so I said they could include pictures representing them. Just take them from Google, I didn't say anything more. Then the student says: "But Åsa, what about the Copyright Act?" – Åsa (Copilot translation from Swedish)

She also expressed that the student somewhat fits into the gifted characteristics of quick processing abilities, having excellent memory, and being an abstract thinker. Kristina and Åsa

also reflected on whether the students were gifted or if they were on the autistic spectrum and were not sure how to distinguish the two, especially regarding the topic of students with autism having English as their special interest, where they may display characteristics akin to gifted students. However, Liljedahl (2017) states that students may be gifted and have a disability simultaneously. In literature, this is referred to as *twice exceptional*. Liljedahl (2017) furthermore states that, due to a lack of giftedness knowledge, students may be diagnosed with ADHD and autism, without targeting the giftedness potential as well. Pettersson (2017) and Liljedahl (2017) express how students may display characteristics of disabilities, which may stem from the student potentially being gifted, such as understimulation. Paulina similarly expressed how she may have missed potentially gifted EFL students because she had not been actively looking for them.

The participants also discussed whether giftedness is innate or whether it can be developed. Kristina reflected on whether prolonged exposure from childhood could lead to giftedness. Ines and Kristina also added that students' socioeconomic status could be an important factor regarding the development of giftedness; Kristina further expressed how parents' education level may affect children's development in different abilities, and Ines mentioned how the available resources and support systems are important in being defined as gifted. Åsa added that her friend works in a school with a higher socioeconomic status, and in said school, they had discussed the topic of giftedness and even accelerated students. On the other hand, Åsa's school, a school in a less socioeconomically affluent area, does not focus on questions such as giftedness and acceleration.

Participants Ines and Kristina added that even though a student may be considered gifted or more advanced in EFL, their proficiency may not transfer to all areas of the language. For example, Ines mentioned boys being labeled more proficient more often than girls due to boys playing more language-based video games such as World of Warcraft. However, she stated that they may only learn a very specific kind of English, which may not apply to other contexts. Kristina also mentioned how many students she has encountered are verbally skilled in English; however, it does not match their other skills:

- (2) What does it mean to be good at something? Are you good at speaking, reading comprehension, or are you good at writing texts? Where does the skill lie? It's different because I notice in students today that, yes, they are good verbally, but when it comes to producing something themselves... and I also notice when they read English texts, they are not as good anymore. – Kristina (Copilot translation from Swedish)

Additionally, Åsa stated that even if many students in her classes are capable of speaking English outside of classrooms, they are not as proficient in discourse competence, such as leading a conversation and listening to their conversational partner. Paulina adds that highly proficient learners still need school to learn aspects of English that would be more difficult to learn outside school, such as writing in different genres and speaking in different contexts.

4.2 Research Question 2: Teaching Strategies for Gifted EFL Students

During the interviews, different teaching strategies were suggested to teach students of various levels in the same classroom. A unanimous response was the diversion from standardized learning material and instead favoring differentiation, where students' output can vary by being more open-ended. Students can therefore choose how they want to complete a task. Lena suggested working with referential and inquiry-based questions since they offer diversity in answers. Moreover, Åsa added that open-ended conversations, such as students stating their opinions, are a way for proficient learners to use their fluency. Another strategy to make output open-ended is by thinking in terms of themes and projects, as mentioned by Åsa. She explained how working with animals as a project is favorable in grades 4-6. Students choose an animal, do extensive research on it, and present it by writing as much or as little as they want.

Another suggested open-ended strategy was to offer students opportunities to give micro presentations in class. Kristina gave an example of how she had concepts called "Culture Quarterly" and "Grej of the Day", where students were to choose topics to present in class. In "Culture Quarterly," students were allowed to explore topics on social studies through creative expression. For example, they might discuss and play a cello piece when presenting the instrument. In contrast, "Grej of the Day" had students create PowerPoints on topics related to science and social studies. In all subjects but Swedish, the students had the opportunity to present in English. Åsa mentioned a similar format where students were free to research a topic and do a PowerPoint presentation in class.

English was seen as a favorable subject to cater to students of different levels, since the material in the syllabus is not as predetermined as other subjects, such as social studies. This allows teachers to differentiate tasks and make them more meaningful and enriching.

- (3) It's not difficult to give advanced assignments in English. If one can write an argumentative text, perhaps the next step is to make it more fact-based; one can always build upon it. There is a natural progression. – Paulina (Copilot translation from Swedish)

Another approach was to work with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT, read more in Siegel, 2022) and variants of CLT, such as Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT, read more in Siegel, 2022) and storyline (read more in Keaveney & Lundberg, 2019). Ines and Paulina mention, for example, how gifted EFL learners may benefit from CLT because they need to adapt to situations where their peers are not as proficient. Ines says that TBLT can pose a challenge for the gifted since the students have to solve tasks by communicating. Lena suggested a task-based project regarding cooking:

- (4) This might lead to a task-based project, a cooking project. Then perhaps some will choose to do something a little simpler ... They might have received a lot of support with phrases. For example, what they should say like: "First I add this, then we mix". While someone else perhaps experiments with very difficult words and possibly very unusual ingredients. – Lena (Copilot translation from Swedish)

Students, including gifted EFL learners, may also benefit from the integration of English with another subject, as mentioned by Lena, Kristina, and Åsa. Lena and Kristina mention how home

economics is an example of where English can be used outside English classes (for CLIL - Content and language integrated learning, read more in Siegel, 2022; Keaveney & Lundberg, 2019). Cross-subject integration can also make learning more meaningful if the student has an interest in another subject, as expressed by Åsa. It can also save time, according to her, since she can teach students the structure of a text type once in Swedish without having to repeat information in English.

Åsa is also trying a new teaching strategy by allowing her most proficient students to teach a math class on their own, since she sees it as challenging content for them. She mentions how it, besides being challenging, will teach these students responsibility and to be responsible for their learning. She states that this strategy may also be used in English.

- (5) They get to grow in that role. They need to reflect and think about: What should the students be able to do here? What is it that I am supposed to teach? And then they need to understand it themselves as well and engage with it. They become active in engaging with the content instead of being more passive, waiting for the teacher to tell them what they should know and then solving some tasks. – Åsa (Copilot translation from Swedish)

Overall, the aforementioned examples can be seen as instances of enrichment, or differentiated instruction at the very least, depending on the implementation and execution. The open-ended structure of many suggested teaching strategies may allow for deeper learning opportunities for the gifted student that might go beyond the content of the curriculum, which in turn would be enriching. The crucial point of enrichment, according to Liljedahl (2022), is that the gifted student needs to find the content meaningful. Since the suggested teaching strategies are also primarily interest-based tasks, similar to the results from Liljedahl's (2022) questionnaire (see more in section 2.2.3), it may increase the meaningfulness of the task and, in turn, be enriching. The suggested CLT activities are difficult to categorize, as they may have elements of enrichment if the student finds it meaningful, or whether they allow for deeper learning opportunities. The same can be iterated for cross-subject integration and CLIL.

A pattern in the interviews was the importance of identifying students' needs. Ines, Paulina, Lena, and Kristina underline the importance of having a dialogue with the students to learn what their needs are. Kristina said that being a class teacher instead of a subject teacher allowed her to have a clear overview of the students. She also asked the students what they wanted to learn, so they could learn together. Similarly, Lena said that the teacher could ask the students how they would like to do the task. She also mentions how trust is an important component of enabling dialogue. A second way to gauge students' needs and development is by using formative assessment, as mentioned by Lena, Ines, and Paulina:

- (6) We have the researcher Dylan William. He is actually a mathematician, but he has become like a guru in Sweden in terms of formative assessment. He talks about signs of learning, so the teacher must collect a wide variety of assessment materials. It's about ensuring that students can show what they know because we cannot assess what we have not seen. – Lena (Copilot translation from Swedish)

A third way to gauge students' needs is to consult students' households to get an extensive overview of the students' needs, as mentioned by Lena and Kristina. A fourth way is by being

an active teacher by walking around and talking with the students, as stated by Åsa. However, she does acknowledge that her classes are small, with the smallest class consisting of 14 students and the largest 26. A fifth way is to have students, as mentioned by Lena and Åsa, complete old English national exams.

Acceleration as a strategy was mainly exemplified by giving proficient learners more challenging material to work with. Kristina mentioned how her more proficient learners, although not explicitly in English, were allowed to skip to more advanced material immediately instead of having to do easier tasks. She was also accelerating her students by teaching her students more than needed for the current grade level, as preparation for more advanced studies.

Other forms of acceleration, for example skipping grades, were not widely mentioned as a strategy. However, Kristina mentioned that, after implementing other solutions and mapping out current skills in the relevant subject, the student can be a candidate for skipping a grade. However, it is up to the principal to determine the outcome. She had also experienced instances where students from grades 4-6 had classes with older students in subjects they were more advanced in. She added that the downside of not accelerating may be that the student avoids going to school due to boredom. Åsa mentioned that her previously mentioned friend's school is more open to letting students skip grades, whereas it was not a strategy used in Åsa's school.

4.3 Research Question 3: Challenges and Solutions with Implementation of Teaching Strategies

When trying to meet the needs of different students, teachers may resort to standardized teaching materials such as textbooks and worksheets. Åsa mentioned how standardized workbooks and textbooks are unfavorable for most students, as they may be too easy for some and too difficult for others. Instead, Åsa favors project- and theme-based tasks, previously mentioned in section 4.2, where tasks are more open-ended and easier to differentiate for students of different levels.

Ines mentioned how teachers compromise between working quickly and coming up with great lesson plans:

- (7) It's sort of a tradeoff between coming up with ideas quickly and coming up with really high-quality ideas sometimes. Which I think is really a shame, but you can easily throw together a grammar worksheet, but it's a lot harder to develop a really high-quality sort of communicative activity that has all the details that you want them to work with. – Ines (Original language)

Paulina highlighted the challenge of differentiating tasks for 25-30 students, noting how these students are often overlooked by handing them more difficult tasks. One solution, Paulina said, is to use open-ended tasks. A potential solution brought up by Ines was to utilize Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT to help differentiate tasks. She specified that the lesson plans are not perfect, but they can quickly create a starting point:

- (8) One thing that's exciting about artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT is that they can be used to adjust texts to lower and more advanced levels. So speaking of the gifted kids, if you have a text that you want to work with but it's too easy for the gifted kids, you could easily

put it into ChatGPT and say, ok, I want you to rewrite this text at a B2 level, and it can pretty easily do that task. – Ines (Original language)

Ines, Lena, Kristina, and Paulina suggested that teachers seek help from colleagues. This can be done cross-subject, within the same subject, outside school, nationally, or even globally in what Lena describes as a “Community of Practice” (Wenger, 1998).

- (9) Teachers need to dare to ask each other questions. Most of the time, it is not about right and wrong, but interpretations. We constantly make adjustments to try and reach everyone in the classroom. – Lena (Copilot translation from Swedish)

Lena suggested that teachers seek help from English subject teachers from higher grades to help students who may be gifted. The collaborative efforts also help the teacher develop in their profession, which Kristina said is important to improve how they teach students, regardless of level. Kristina also highlighted how social media, such as Facebook groups, have been helpful when she has had questions. Åsa proposed collaborative efforts with a special education teacher, as it may enable the teacher to occasionally work with more advanced material by having the special education teacher assist high-support students, while the teacher works with more proficient learners.

Ines, Lena, Kristina, and Paulina stressed the importance of the teacher’s English language competence and for the students to be in an English-speaking context. Lena, for example, said that teachers need to feel comfortable addressing students’ questions. Paulina expressed how grade 4-6 students in the teacher program only study 30 hp (*credits*) of English, which she believes is too little. As a result, teachers are afraid of speaking English in their classrooms, according to her. In her school, they have dedicated English teachers from grade 4, instead of class teachers teaching different subjects. She also suggested English teachers swap classes occasionally, depending on the lesson content, to fully utilize teachers’ different competencies.

Moreover, supportive leadership could be part of the solution for increasing the teachers’ language and teaching competence. Lena said that schools can support teachers by offering teachers the opportunity to study English courses to become more confident in their skills. Another solution is self-interest in improving as a teacher and applying for courses yourself, as mentioned by Kristina. Paulina added reading up on research to stay updated.

During the interviews, Ines, Kristina, Åsa, and Lena criticized the time allocation for English in grades 4-6 for being too low. A potential solution is, as previously mentioned, working across subjects to challenge more proficient students.

5. Discussion

The educators' reflections mirrored the current questions in giftedness research, for example, the lack of unified definitions, the role of IQ, the innateness of giftedness, and the role of gender and socioeconomic background. The role of gender and socioeconomic background was a clear pattern in both the interview data and literature (Liljedahl, 2017; Liljedahl, 2022; Silverman, 2013; Sternberg et al., 2024). The lack of giftedness knowledge and experience may result from the majority of the educators working in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas in Stockholm. The participant Åsa mentioned how a colleague, working in a more affluent school in Stockholm, had actively worked with gifted students and implemented acceleration strategies (see Section 4.1). It could therefore be beneficial to interview teachers working in city center schools to compare the results.

The ambiguity of giftedness extends to gifted EFL learners. The lack of a unified definition in the interview data was mirrored in the literature by Biedroń and Pawlak (2016) and Yildirim & Ispinar Akcayoglu (2019). Research on gifted EFL learners may be limited since most studies are conducted in English-speaking countries, where EFL is less relevant. It is possible that literature on gifted English learners, such as Dean (2018), could apply to an EFL setting and be a useful resource. However, this paper did not explore that possibility due to scope limitations. Yildirim and Ispinar Akcayoglu's (2019) study's results on what constitutes a gifted EFL student would be relevant to compare with, as both our studies focused on a similar age group. The cultural aspect could also be interesting to contrast, since giftedness definitions vary across cultures and countries (Sternberg, 2007).

My contribution as an interviewer may also have impeded the results. In one interview, the word *advanced* was used in a context where the topic was giftedness and gifted EFL learners. This potential conflation in terminology is not uncommon, as shown in section 2.1.1 with the word *high-achieving*. Likewise, my interpretation of the word *advanced* may have affected the analysis and results, as there might have been uncertainty of whether this term was synonymous with giftedness. However, this was also the first interview conducted in the study, and as Carlström and Carlström Hagmans (2006) state, the first interview is usually a "training interview". Hence, after each interview, I reflected on how the interview went and considered ways to improve the next one, also per Carlström and Carlström Hagman's (2006) recommendations. Similarly, the terminology used by participants using Swedish in the interviews may not have a 1:1 meaning in English when translated. Furthermore, the participants may have used colloquial speech during the interview, which adds difficulty when comparing interview data with theoretical definitions and terminology. The uncertainty stems from giftedness being a complex topic, where my theoretical knowledge of the area may have impeded the ability to ask deeper probing or further follow-up questions to clarify the participants' positioning.

Even if my role as an interviewer may have affected the results, gifted EFL students do exist, according to Liljedahl (interview, March 2025), even if the literature on gifted EFL learners is ambiguous. In section 4.1, participants expressed uncertainty about the link between giftedness and early exposure to English. Liljedahl (interview, March 2025) stated that earlier exposure to

the language may result in more children being parallel learners of English, which may develop into EFL giftedness. YouTube and gaming are two platforms that can be attributed to that development. A further reason as to why gifted EFL students may be difficult to identify may be due to the child's skills not conforming to the Swedish curriculum, as it "is a construction we have created" (Liljedahl interview, March 2005). Meaning that it is important to see beyond the curriculum and individual subjects to identify gifted students.

The exemplified teaching strategies from the interviews were diverse, such as open-ended tasks, project and theme-based learning, and CLT and its variants. The author Liljedahl (interview, March 2025) additionally suggested engaging students in English grammar and English language history, since many students, even those proficient, may benefit from it. The participants in this paper also found standardized learning material problematic since it does not allow for differentiation. The diverse responses increased the difficulty of creating a code frame and interpreting and categorizing participants' responses to conclude whether they were enrichment, acceleration, or other. This may be due to my lack of deep understanding of the participants' practical implementation of suggested teaching strategies or due to the interpretation of data. However, the overall interpretation is that enrichment strategies were more commonly suggested as teaching strategies for gifted EFL students. The difficulties may also stem from how acceleration and enrichment strategies are connected. Pettersson (2017) states that these two methods are connected in that acceleration without enrichment may be difficult to implement in most subjects. This is also seen in Liljedahl (2017), who states that some experts state that enrichment is preferable over pure acceleration, since enrichment strategies automatically become accelerating.

Enrichment strategies being more commonly suggested by the educators in section 4 do not correspond with parents' responses in Liljedahl's (2022) questionnaire. The questionnaire found acceleration to be more common than enrichment in schools, with the most common acceleration strategy being supplying the students with more advanced material. Providing students with more difficult material was also a finding in section 4.2 in regards to acceleration. The discrepancy in Liljedahl's questionnaire and this study's results may be due to differences in what educators believe gifted students need, contrasted by parents' experience of the implementation of teaching strategies. The result of giving the student more advanced material is often an emergency solution when time is limited, according to Liljedahl (2022) and participant Paulina. Furthermore, Persson, B. (2019) writes about increased teacher workload, which leaves teachers with less time to adequately challenge gifted students. Empirical data also indicated that standardized learning materials may also hinder differentiation of tasks, which may affect the implementation of enriching learning strategies.

Attaining knowledge and self-development are key takeaways from both interviews and literature. One important conclusion is the importance of the teachers' language competence, which the participants, the literature (Silverman, 2013), as well as Liljedahl (interview, March 2025), expressed as important. Liljedahl (interview, March 2025) expressed that without this, teachers cannot recognize the proficiency of students unless they push the limits to see how advanced material the gifted student can handle. Two participants and Liljedahl (interview, March 2025) suggested using old national exams to evaluate the gifted students' current level. Formative assessment is another way to assess students' needs. As for attaining giftedness

knowledge, Liljedahl (interview, March 2025) stated that since it is not taught, teachers have to attain it themselves: “There’s no way around it – we have to study. We must read up and gain knowledge”.

6. Conclusion

This study has investigated educators' perceptions of gifted EFL students in grades 4-6 in the Swedish education system, alongside teaching strategies, challenges, and potential solutions. The study concludes that there is no unified definition of giftedness in EFL. Educators proposed enrichment strategies more often than acceleration strategies and gave ample examples of ways to challenge gifted students. Additionally, the teachers' language competency is important to evaluate students' needs and to adequately challenge them.

It is important to underline that this study's results cannot be generalized as they will vary depending on factors such as the participants' experience of giftedness, differences in education systems, and culture. Additionally, this complex topic is difficult to cover in a study of this size. However, it has achieved the main goal of shedding light on a severely under-researched area, which hopefully promotes further reading on the topic. Additional research could involve gifted students' perceptions of giftedness in EFL and their experiences in the Swedish school system, to compare and contrast with educators' perspectives.

Even if the reader does not believe in giftedness in EFL, they may still take away some important findings from this study. Undoubtedly, students with the traits mentioned in previous sections still exist, label or no label, and they must not be forgotten to erode in the Swedish education system. It is not the aim to promote one set of students over another. However, gifted students are individuals who, like any other students, deserve to have their needs met.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide English

Introduction

Goal: Establish a common understanding of the definition of gifted students.

1. Could you briefly introduce yourself and your role in education (for example, teacher, special education teacher, researcher etcetera)?
2. Can you describe your experience with gifted students? Have you encountered them in your teaching or research? If so, in what way?
 - a. If yes, how do they stand out compared to their peers? What are the key characteristics?
 - b. If not, what do you think defines a gifted student?
 1. (after defining giftedness): Have you encountered students with these characteristics before? Tell me more about those experiences.

Understanding of giftedness in English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Goal: Establish a common reference point on gifted EFL learners for later questions.

6. How would you define high English proficiency?
7. How does the general level of English proficiency in Swedish students influence your perspective on whether someone can be gifted in English?
8. How different are the needs of gifted students in EFL, compared to other students, such as high-proficiency and high-achieving students? In what areas may gifted students struggle? Are there misconceptions about them?
9. In your experience, how is the understanding of giftedness and EFL education manifested in practice among teachers, scholars, principals, and other personnel?
10. *(What is the current research on giftedness and EFL English learning?)*

Teaching EFL to gifted middle school (grade 4-6) students

Goal: Understand how teachers can teach gifted EFL middle school (grades 4-6) students, focusing on educational differentiation.

1. In gifted education, acceleration, and enrichment are often discussed as ways to facilitate learning. Have you used or observed these strategies in practice? If yes, in what way?

- 1.1. What are some specific examples of tasks or activities, especially in relation to acceleration and enrichment, that teachers in middle school (grades 4-6) can use or that you have used for gifted EFL students?
- 1.2. What are the students' reactions or attitudes towards these practices?
2. In your experience, what are some difficulties with implementing enrichment, and acceleration in mixed-ability classrooms where students are on different levels?
3. Are there other strategies or methods, other than enrichment, and acceleration that could be beneficial for gifted middle school (grades 4-6) EFL students?

Organizational challenges & policies

Goal: Understand how educational differentiation strategies are implemented in practice, how they may lead to complications, and what potential solutions are.

1. In your experience, how effectively are teachers implementing educational differentiation strategies to cater to students who learn at different rates? Not only for gifted students but for all? Do you have examples of challenges or successes?
2. What do you think is the largest challenge to implementing educational differentiation in today's educational system?
3. What kind of support, training, or policy changes - on a school or political level – do you think teachers need to effectively implement educational differentiation strategies in EFL?
4. *(What best practices regarding support, training, or policy used in other countries would you want Sweden to implement or be inspired by?)*

Closing

Goal: Rounding off the interview with easy-to-answer questions, and the potential to add final remarks.

1. *(In your opinion, what is the largest research gap relating to giftedness and EFL teaching?)*
2. If you could give one piece of advice to new teachers on how to teach students at different ability levels, what would it be?
3. Is there anything you would like to add that you have not had the chance to say yet?

Appendix B: Interview Guide Swedish Translation

Introduktion

Mål: Skapa en gemensam förståelse av definitionen av särskilt begåvade elever.

1. Kan du kort presentera dig själv och din roll inom utbildning (till exempel lärare, specialpedagog, forskare etcetera)?
2. Kan du beskriva din erfarenhet av särskilt begåvade elever? Har du mött dem i din undervisning eller forskning? Om ja, på vilket sätt?
 - a. Om ja: Hur skiljer de sig från andra jämnåriga? Vilka är deras främsta kännetecken?
 - b. Om nej: Vad tror du definierar en särskilt begåvad elev?
 - i. (Efter att ha definierat särskild begåvning): Har du mött elever med dessa egenskaper tidigare? Berätta mer om dina erfarenheter.

Förståelse av begåvning i engelska som främmande språk (EFL)

Mål: Skapa en gemensam referenspunkt inför senare frågor om särskilt begåvade i engelska som främmande språk

1. Hur skulle du definiera hög språkkompetens i engelska?
2. Hur påverkar svenska elevers höga språkkompetens i engelska din syn på om någon kan anses vara särskilt begåvad i engelska?
3. Hur skiljer sig behoven hos särskilt begåvade elever i engelska som främmande språk från andra elever, såsom högpresterande eller elever med hög språkkompetens? Inom vilka områden kan särskilt begåvade elever ha svårigheter? Finns det vanliga missuppfattningar om de särskilt begåvade eleverna?
4. Hur märks förståelsen av särskild begåvning i engelska främmande språk i praktiken bland lärare, forskare, skollärare och annan personal enligt din erfarenhet?
5. (Vad är den aktuella forskningen om särskild begåvning och engelska som främmande språk?)

Undervisning av särskilt begåvade elever i engelska på mellanstadiet

Mål: Förstå hur lärare kan undervisa särskilt begåvade mellanstadieelever i engelska som främmande språk med fokus på pedagogisk differentiering.

1. Acceleration och berikning är vanliga begrepp i undervisning för särskilt begåvade. Har du använt eller observerat dessa strategier i praktiken? Om ja, på vilket sätt?
 - 1.1. Vilka specifika uppgifter eller aktiviteter, särskilt kopplade till acceleration och berikning, kan mellanstadielärare använda eller har du själv använt för begåvade elever i engelska?
 - 1.2. Vad tycker eleverna om dessa strategier?
2. Vilka är de största utmaningarna med att implementera acceleration och berikning i klassrum där eleverna har blandade förmågor och kunskapsnivåer enligt din erfarenhet?
3. Förutom acceleration och berikning, finns det andra strategier eller metoder som skulle kunna vara gynnsamma för särskilt begåvade mellanstadieelever i engelska?

Organisatoriska utmaningar och policys

Mål: Förstå hur differentieringsstrategier används i praktiken, vilka utmaningar som uppstår och möjliga lösningar.

1. Enligt dig, hur effektivt upplever du att lärare implementerar pedagogisk differentiering för att tillgodose elevers behov av att lära sig i olika takt? Har du exempel på utmaningar eller framgångar?
2. Vad tror du är den största utmaningen för att genomföra pedagogisk differentiering i dagens skolsystem?
3. Vilket stöd, vilken fortbildning eller vilka policyförändringar – på skol- eller politisk nivå – tror du skulle behövas för att lärare ska kunna genomföra differentiering i engelska på ett effektivt sätt?
4. (Finns det exempel från andra länder som Sverige skulle kunna inspireras av?)

Avslutning

Mål: Avrunda intervjun med lättare frågor och möjlighet att lägga till avslutande tankar.

1. (Enligt dig, vad behövs forskas mer om inom särskild begåvning och undervisning i engelska som främmande språk?)
2. Om du kunde ge ett tips till nya lärare om hur man undervisar elever på olika kunskapsnivåer, vad skulle det vara?
3. Finns det något du vill tillägga som vi inte har hunnit prata om?

Appendix C: Interview Questions Author

Introduction

1. Could you briefly introduce yourself and your role in education (for example, teacher, special education teacher, researcher etcetera)?
2. Can you describe your experience with gifted students? How do they stand out compared to their peers? What are the key characteristics?

Understanding of giftedness in English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

1. How do you define giftedness in EFL, and how does it compare to the CEFR proficiency levels used in the English syllabus?
2. How does the general level of English proficiency in Swedish students influence your perspective on whether someone can be gifted in English?
3. How different are the needs of gifted EFL students, compared to high-achieving students?
4. In my interviews, the topic of giftedness and autism was brought up, alongside the challenge of distinguishing between the two. What advice do you have for teachers regarding this?

Teaching EFL to gifted middle school (grade 4-6) students

1. In my interviews, communicative language teaching (CLT) methods were seen as a method to teach students of different levels, including gifted students. What's your view on CLT in relation to giftedness and EFL? Are there other methods that better support mixed-ability classrooms?
2. In my interviews, differentiation by offering open-ended tasks was common. What's your view on this strategy?
3. In my interviews, acceleration was mostly discussed in terms of giving more difficult tasks. What are the benefits and challenges to this approach in EFL and gifted students?
4. In my interviews, the low English course requirements and the limited allotted time for English were mentioned as negatives. How can teachers facilitate learning for gifted EFL students despite these hurdles?

5. Are there additional teaching strategies or methods that could benefit gifted EFL students in grades 4-6?

Organizational challenges & policies

Goal: Understand how teaching strategies are implemented in practice, how they may lead to complications, and what potential solutions are.

1. In your experience, how is the understanding of giftedness in EFL manifested in practice among teachers, scholars, principals, and other personnel? Especially compared to other subjects like Math.
2. What is the biggest hurdle preventing teachers from effectively implementing teaching strategies to cater to gifted EFL students, particularly in mixed-ability classrooms?
3. What kind of support, training, or policy changes - on a school or political level – do you think teachers need to effectively implement teaching strategies catering to gifted EFL students?
4. *(If there's time: What best practices regarding support, training, or policy used in other countries would you want Sweden to implement or be inspired by?)*

Closing

1. *(If there's time: In your opinion, what is the largest research gap relating to giftedness and EFL teaching?)*
2. If you could give one piece of advice to teachers on how to teach gifted students in EFL, what would it be?
3. Is there anything you would like to add that you have not had the chance to say yet?
4. Can you recommend literature regarding the topic of giftedness and EFL?

Appendix D: Consent Form

Nairi Boladian
[Nairi's email]

Undergraduate Degree Project

About me

I'm Nairi Boladian, a student at Stockholm University, conducting an independent degree project for my last semester of English in the upper-secondary teacher program.

What the project is about

The degree project explores how teachers use or can educational differentiation (pedagogisk differentiering) methods i.e. acceleration, and enrichment (berikning) to facilitate English learning for gifted middle school students, and what challenges teachers face/may face when implementing these educational differentiation methods.

What participation involves

The interview will last about 60 minutes and with your consent, I will record and transcribe it. If any sensitive issues arise, you can request that parts be removed from the transcript.

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time.

Before the interview begins, I will explain the purpose of the study and answer any questions you may have. During the interview, feel free to express your thoughts openly. All information shared will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. After the interview, you may review the transcript for accuracy.

What will happen to the data

The information you provide will be handled with care and stored securely on devices that only I, the researcher, can access. This data will be used solely for this study. All recordings will be securely stored until the final grade is registered, after which they will be permanently deleted following GDPR guidelines. The recordings will be transcribed using software installed on my personal systems. If the interview is conducted in Swedish, it will be translated into English with the assistance of translation software. If you choose to remain anonymous, pseudonyms will be used in place of your real name to protect your identity. However, general information about your professional background (e.g., "Middle-school teacher in Stockholm" or "Lecturer at Stockholm University in the English Didactics Department") may still be included. You will have the opportunity to specify the level of detail you are comfortable sharing on the next page.

Contact details

For any further questions, please don't hesitate to email me at: [Nairi's email]

Supervisor: Maria Kuteeva, [supervisor's email]

Consent to participating in the research project
Undergraduate Degree Project

I have read and understood the information about the study in the document "Undergraduate Degree Project". I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and I have had them answered. I may keep the written information.

- ☐ I wish to remain anonymous and receive a pseudonym
☐ I wish to see a copy of the transcription, to ensure the accuracy of my contribution
☐ I consent to participating in the study described in the document "Undergraduate Degree Project"

Any additional information to me, for example regarding personal information:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Place, Date (YYYY-MM-DD): _____

Appendix E: Analysis Examples

Nr.	Excerpt	Dimension and subcategory
1	What does it mean to be good at something? Are you good at speaking, reading comprehension, or are you good at writing texts? Where does the skill lie? It's different because I notice in students today that, yes, they are good verbally, but when it comes to producing something themselves... and I also notice when they read English texts, they are not as good anymore. – Kristina (Copilot translation from Swedish)	1.8 Other (1.0 Educators' perception of giftedness → 1.8 Other)
2	It's not difficult to give advanced assignments in English. If one can write an argumentative text, perhaps the next step is to make it more fact-based; one can always build upon it. There is a natural progression. – Paulina (Copilot translation from Swedish)	5.5 English as a subject. (5.0 solution to challenges → 5.5. English as a subject)
3	Teachers need to dare to ask each other questions. Most of the time, it is not about right and wrong, but interpretations. We constantly make adjustments to try and reach everyone in the classroom. – Lena (Copilot translation from Swedish)	5.3.1 Colleagues (5.0 Solution to challenges → 5.3 collaboration → 5.3.1 Colleagues)
4	It's not good for the weakest students, because they can't keep up and never finish the workbook exercises. It's not good for the most capable students either, because they finish very quickly. The tasks are too easy. They're too boring. These grammar exercises—answering questions based on a text—are not challenging enough. – (Copilot translation)	4.4 Standardized learning material (4.0 Challenges for educators → 4.4 Standardized learning material)
5	But these days I tend to think of proficiency more as sort of a general commutative ability. Is this person good at getting the message across? And I think that's heavily influenced by Lgr 22 because that's kind of the main priority there. – Ines (Original language)	1.1 Communicative ability (Educators' perception of giftedness → Communicative abilities)

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