“When in Rome, Do as the Romans Do”

Proverbs as a Part of EFL Teaching

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ABSTRACT

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This essay was underpinned by the premise that the proverb plays an important role in language teaching as a part of gaining cultural knowledge, metaphorical understanding and communicative competence. The purpose with this essay was to examine whether proverbs are a part of the EFL (English as Foreign Language) teaching in the county of Jönköping, Sweden. The investigation focused on the occurrence of proverbs in eleven textbooks for the English A- and B-courses, and on the attitudes toward using proverbs in the teaching among nineteen teachers at seven upper secondary schools. Descriptive methods were used, which combined quantitative and qualitative approaches, i.e. content analysis and close reading of the textbooks and a questionnaire answered by the teachers.

The result showed that proverbs are a small part of the EFL teaching regarding both the textbooks and the use in the classroom by the teachers. Proverbs are mainly used as bases for discussions in the textbooks, and by the teachers as expressions to explain, to discuss the meaning and to compare to the Swedish equivalents. There is a positive attitude toward using proverbs and the result showed awareness among the teachers regarding proverbs as a part of the language and the culture as well as for communication. The conclusion of the result was that the knowledge has to increase among educators and textbook authors about how proverbs can be used as effective devices and tools, not only as common expressions, in every area of language teaching.

Search words: proverbs, EFL, ESL, culture, metaphors, communication, teaching, language
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Introduction

Proverbs are a part of every language as well as every culture. Proverbs have been used to spread knowledge, wisdom and truths about life from ancient times up until now. They have been considered an important part of the fostering of children, as they signal moral values and exhort common behaviour. According to the paremiologist\(^1\) Wolfgang Mieder (2004), proverbs have been used and should be used in teaching as didactic tools because of their content of educational wisdom. Mieder says that “since they belong to the common knowledge of basically all native speakers, they are indeed very effective devices to communicate wisdom and knowledge about human nature and the world at large” (p. 146). When it comes to foreign language learning, proverbs play a role in the teaching as a part of cultural and metaphorical learning. Mieder also claims that the use of proverbs in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language is important for the learners’ ability to communicate effectively. He suggests that the proverbs which ought to be taught are the proverbs that are used today and are a part of the Anglo-American paremiological minimum (see 4.2). Mieder also states that “textbooks on both the teaching of native and foreign languages usually include at least some lists of proverbs and accompanying exercises” (p. 147).

In the Swedish syllabus for the subject of English at the upper secondary level, the aim of the subject concerns inter alia the development of communicative ability and the broadening of cultural perspectives. The structure of the subject of English works to achieve this by providing the students with opportunities to reflect over cultural issues as well as to develop their ability to master the forms of the language, which among other things include vocabulary as well as phraseology. The main aim according to the syllabus is to let “the language [become] a tool for learning in different areas of knowledge” (Skolverket [Electronic version]).

If proverbs are important, as the paremiologists claim, in cultural learning and metaphorical understanding, and for the development of effective communicative skills, then we may assume that they should be a part of the EFL teaching in Sweden and have a place in the textbooks for English. But are proverbs given this scope? My own assumption is that proverbs are not an essential part, perhaps not a part at all, of the EFL teaching in Sweden. One reason might be that proverbs are considered old-fashioned and outdated. Another reason might be time itself, i.e. that

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\(^1\) A paremiologist is a proverb scholar. Paremiology is the study of proverbs. From Greek: *paremia* = proverb. (Mieder, 2004)
teachers have to choose what to teach within limited time and therefore exclude proverbs in favour of other expressions and phrases, e.g. idioms and phrasal verbs. These thoughts about proverbs in language teaching, and the reason for choosing this subject, arouse during spring 2007 when I carried out research for my undergraduate thesis about folk expressions in children’s books by Astrid Lindgren. In order to find answers to my questions and assumptions I aim in this study at investigating the occurrence of proverbs in textbooks and the attitudes toward proverbs as a part of the EFL teaching among English teachers.

In this essay I use the terms EFL (English as a foreign language) and ESL (English as a second language) on equal basis for how proverbs are used in language teaching (see also 4.4). This essay shows mainly an Anglo-American cultural and proverbial perspective, but the subject is of course also applicable to a wider intercultural approach.

The essay begins with the stating of the aim followed by a description of how the study is carried out. The background will define the proverb and give a survey of previous research in this area, which motivate why proverbs belong in the EFL teaching considering the areas of cultural knowledge, metaphorical understanding and communicative competence. The following part focuses on the results of the investigations. Finally, I will discuss the result and draw conclusions from the result and the discussion.

2 Aim

The aim of this essay is to investigate whether and how proverbs are used as a part of EFL teaching in seven Swedish upper secondary schools. The investigation concerns the occurrence of proverbs in textbooks for English, and what attitudes there are among nineteen English teachers toward using proverbs in their teaching. The relevant questions are:

- How many proverbs occur in the textbooks for the A- and B-courses in English?
- Are those proverbs a part of the Anglo-American paremiological minimum?
- What are the purposes of using the proverbs in the textbooks?
- In what forms do the proverbs occur?
- Do English teachers include proverbs in their teaching? Why/why not? How?
- What are the teachers’ attitudes toward using proverbs in the teaching?
3 Material and Method

The aim mentioned above is two-folded and the investigation is divided into two related surveys: an examination of textbooks and a questionnaire to English teachers. The method used is descriptive and it combines quantitative and qualitative research approaches (Cohen et al., 2005).

3.1 Examination of Textbooks

The primary material in this investigation consists of 11 of the textbooks that are used in the English A-and B-courses at 7 upper secondary schools in the county of Jönköping, Sweden. The material is randomly chosen and therefore does not include all the textbooks that are available for teaching English at upper secondary school. The primary material consists of 2,835 pages from the following textbooks:

- English A: Blueprint A, Fair Play 1, Master Plan 1, Professional, Short Cuts 1, Toolbox
- English B: Blueprint B, Project X (Workmate2+Anthology2), Read & Proceed, Short Cuts 2

The aim of this first survey was to find out how many proverbs the textbooks contain, what the purposes for using the proverbs are, i.e. how they are used, and what forms the proverbs have. The aim was also to determine if the proverbs belong to the Anglo-American paremiological minimum suggested by Mieder (2004:129-130; see Appendix 1). In this survey, content analysis was used as method, as it “provides a quantitative view of what a text talks about” (Bazerman, 2006:83). The search for proverbs in the textbooks was carried out with the help of close reading, i.e. a careful scrutiny of the text with the intention to detect proverbs. The close reading included every part of the text; headlines, captions, instructions, and exercises. However, the survey has not included other material connected to the textbooks, e.g. CDs, worksheets and extra material. When a proverbial expression was detected, it was determined as a proverb with the help of The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs (Electronic version) and A Proverb a Day Keeps Boredom Away (Litovkina, 2000:356-360). When all the textbooks had been investigated, the proverbs were compared to the list of the 75 most frequently used proverbs in the USA today (see Appendix 1). The contexts in which the proverbs appeared were made a note of, and the purposes of using the proverbs were determined and classified after an analysis of the material. Bazerman (2006) states that when it comes to content analysis, “one needs to develop aggregating categories based on the actual material in the texts rather than a preconceived model of what
might be relevant or salient” (p. 83). Thus, the categories of the purposes in this investigation were determined to discussion, exercise, explanation, grammar, heading, introduction, and text. The form of the proverb was also considered and comprises fixed form (the original form), truncated and paraphrased form.

3.2 Questionnaire to English Teachers

In order to find out whether proverbs are a part of the EFL teaching in the county of Jönköping, I created a questionnaire, which was sent by e-mail to 97 English teachers at 7 upper secondary schools in the county. The schools were chosen by random, as were the teachers. The message of the e-mail presented the survey as such and informed the addressees of the ethical considerations concerning a participation in the survey, i.e. the participation is voluntary and the collected data will be treated confidentially. The questionnaire contains ten questions; eight unstructured open-ended questions and two multiple-choice questions (see Appendix 2). The purpose with the questionnaire was to find out if teachers use proverbs in their teaching, which ones they consider useful to teach, and how they use them. I also wanted to find out what attitudes there are toward using proverbs. I chose to use a written questionnaire before oral interviews because I wanted a quantitative approach, which “assumes the possibility of replication” (Cohen et al., 2005:119). However, due to the unstructured open-ended questions, the questionnaire also provides a qualitative approach, as the answers to an extent show reasons behind various attitudes and may “catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour which … are hallmarks of qualitative data” (Cohen et al., 2005:255).

When I created the questionnaire I should have begun by giving my definition of the proverb, as it has shown that the participants sometimes have considered other expressions, e.g. idioms, as proverbs and therefore answered with these kinds of expressions in mind. On the other hand, by not defining the proverb I have been made aware of the fact that there are certain lacks of knowledge about proverbs. Also, only a fifth of the asked teachers have chosen to respond. Reasons might be the way the questionnaire was distributed or that the open-ended questions were too time-consuming. My first intention was to create a questionnaire with only close-ended multiple-choice questions, because it takes less time to answer and may assure greater participation. Yet, I did not want the respondents to be restricted by the limited response ranges that close-ended questions may provide (Cohen et al., 2005).
4 Background

This unit is divided into four sections which briefly describes the definition, history, form and function of the proverb, explains the paremiological minimum and proverb comprehension. The last section focuses on language teaching regarding proverbs as a pedagogical resource and as a part of gaining cultural knowledge, metaphorical understanding and communicative competence.

4.1 Proverbs – Definition, History, Form and Function

Proverbs belong to the traditional verbal folklore genres and the wisdom of proverbs has been guidance for people worldwide in their social interaction throughout the ages. Proverbs are concise, easy to remember and useful in every situation in life due to their content of everyday experiences (Mieder, 2004). However, it is difficult to give a precise definition of a proverb, since there are and have been discussions among scholars on this issue since the days of Aristotle (ibid.). In 1931 Archer Taylor assumed that “a proverb is a saying current among the folk” (p.3), which was tested in 1985 by Wolfgang Mieder. He asked 55 people in Vermont, USA, to define a proverb. The people’s answers resulted in a general description of the proverb:

A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation. (Mieder, 2004:3)

Mieder’s definition may, in this study, serve as basis to briefly explain the history, form and function of the proverb. First, proverbs are used from generation to generation; they are traditional. Many proverbs are old and have their origins in classical antiquity and medieval times, and several proverbs are biblical. Yet, it is not only old proverbs that are used and handed down. Proverbs change with time and culture. Some old proverbs are not in use any longer because they reflect a culture that no longer exists, e.g. Let the cobbler stick to his last, which has vanished more or less, because the profession of the cobbler nowadays is rare (Mieder, 2004). However, new proverbs that reflect the contemporary society are created instead, e.g. Garbage in, garbage out, a proverb created due to our computerised time (ibid., p. xi). Old proverbs are also used as so called anti-proverbs today, i.e. “parodied, twisted, or fractured proverbs that reveal humorous or satirical speech play with traditional proverbial wisdom” (ibid., p. 28). One example is Nobody is perfect, which as an anti-proverb is changed to No body is perfect (ibid., p. 151).
A proverb is usually recognised by the fixed, often short form and is therefore quite easy to memorise. Many proverbs also contain metaphors. Proverbs often have multiple meanings and are therefore dependent on context and should be analysed in whatever context they are found (Mieder, 2004). Other proverbial features concern style. Arora (1994) has defined certain stylistic features that are applicable on proverbs. These include phonic markers such as alliteration, rhyme and meter, e.g. Practice makes perfect; A little pot is soon hot, semantic markers such as parallelism, irony, paradox, e.g. Easy come, easy go; The longest way around is the shortest way home, and lexical markers like archaic words.

The traditional function of proverbs is didactic, as they contain “wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views” (Mieder, 2004:3; Abadi, 2000; Obelkevich, 1994). Proverbs are basically conversational, but occur commonly in both spoken and written communication, e.g. lectures, newspapers, speeches, books, fables and poetry. Proverbs are used in a wide range of situations and according to Mieder (1993) there are no limits to the use of the proverb. They can be used to:

“strengthen our arguments, express certain generalizations, influence or manipulate other people, rationalize our own shortcomings, question certain behavioral patterns, satirize social ills, poke fun at ridiculous situations” (Mieder, 1993:11)

“advise, console, inspire, comment on events, interpret behaviour and foster attitudes, such as optimism, pessimism and humility” (Nippold et al., 2001a:2)

In short, proverbs are “strategies for dealing with situations” (Obelkevich, 1994:213). In today’s media exploited societies, proverbs occur frequently in radio, TV, magazines, advertisements, commercials and on the Internet (Nippold et al., 2000). Because proverbs reflect different aspects of human behaviour and human nature, they are particularly “useful in oral communication, political rhetoric, song lyrics, newspaper headlines, book titles, advertising slogans, and cartoon captions” (Gibbs & Beitel, 2003:113; Rogers, 2003).

This essay is concerned with proverbs as “complete thoughts that can stand by themselves” (Mieder, 2004:13). Nevertheless, there is a range of proverbial subgenres that often are referred to as proverbs. The difference is that these subgenres have to be integrated in sentences and cannot stand by themselves. These subgenres are proverbial expression: to cry over spilled milk; proverbial comparison: as busy as a bee; to work like a dog; proverbial exaggerations: “He’s so angry he can’t spit straight”, and twin formulas: short and sweet; live and learn (Mieder 2004:13-14). Another group of expressions which sometimes is mixed up with proverbs are idioms. Idioms can be defined as “a combination of words with a special meaning that cannot be inferred from its separate parts” (Gulland & Hinds-Howell, 1994:v). Idioms are equally important in the teaching and learning of English, but will not be dealt with in this essay.
4.2 The Paremiological Minimum

Trying to sum up Mieder (1993; 1994; 2004), one may say that a paremiological minimum consists of the most commonly used and well known proverbs in a language. A paremiological minimum is established with the help of demographic research, conducted by scholars from different disciplines such as folklore, sociology, and psychology. The Anglo-American aim is to create lists of the most well known proverbs, which “make up part of the cultural literacy of English speakers, and the most common of them form a minimum of proverbial knowledge that one must have to communicate effectively in the English language” (Mieder, 1993:xii). These lists should then be included in e.g. foreign language dictionaries or textbooks. An Anglo-American paremiological minimum is not yet fully established, as it must be based on major multi-cultural demographic research. However, Mieder presents a list based on empirical studies, which consists of 75 proverbs that are used with high frequency in the USA today (Mieder, 2004:129-130). This list is used in this study (Appendix 1).

4.3 Proverb Comprehension

The development of language competence is ongoing from childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood (Nippold et al., 2001a). Studies on proverb comprehension have shown that in comparison with other types of figurative language, e.g. metaphors, similes, and idioms, proverbs are on the whole more difficult to comprehend (Nippold et al., 2000). Research has also indicated that there are variations in adolescents’ ability to comprehend proverbs. Several studies made by Nippold and colleagues (Nippold & Haq, 1996; Nippold et al. 2000; 2001a; 2001b; 2003), point out certain features that can be associated with proverb comprehension in adolescence. Among these are reading proficiency, word knowledge, world knowledge and analogical reasoning crucial for the individual’s comprehension of proverbs. Reading is emphasised as the most important language modality for adolescents, because it promotes the understanding of both words and figurative language. Nippold also points at the fact that concrete and familiar proverbs are easier to understand than abstract and unfamiliar proverbs, due to the concrete nouns that more often are used in the concrete proverbs.

Temple and Honeck (1999) discuss figurative comprehension of a proverb and explain that it “involves problem solving, entailing understanding and integration of the proverb topic, discourse context, figurative meaning, and speakers’ pragmatic points” (p. 66). The context is of
great importance for the ability to comprehend a proverb figuratively. Proverbs are basically used and understood in irrelevant-context situations and relevant-context situations (ibid.). An irrelevant context challenges the interpreter of the proverb due to the lack of context to relate to. A kind of irrelevant context might be a proverb given in some kind of intelligence test. When the context is relevant, it gives relevant information which makes it possible to construct literal or figurative meaning. However, to be able to understand the proverb it is crucial that the interpreter understands both the topic and the proverb, and can link them together, i.e. to have skills in analogical reasoning. Analogical reasoning is using existing information to be able to understand what is new (Nippold et al., 2001b; Temple & Honeck, 1999; Nippold & Haq, 1996).

4.4 Proverbs in Language Teaching

In order to motivate the use of proverbs as a part of language teaching, one has to consult research from a range of different disciplines. The disciplines involved in this survey concern previous research in folklore (includes paremiology), linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, psychology and pedagogy. However, this essay is underpinned by a paremiological statement made by Wolfgang Mieder (2004):

> Proverbs also play a major role in the teaching of English as a second language, where they are included as part of metaphorical and cultural learning. Obviously it behooves new speakers of English to be acquainted with proverbs and other phraseological units for effective communication. As instructors plan the curriculum and devise textbooks for teaching English as a second language, they should choose those proverbs for inclusion that are part of the Anglo-American paremiological minimum. It is the proverbs that are in use today that ought to be taught. /…/ All of this also holds true for foreign language instruction in general, where proverbs have always been included as fixed cultural expressions. (p.147)

4.4.1 Proverbs as a Pedagogical Resource

The use of proverbs and its declining in the teaching of modern languages has long been discussed. Durbin Rowland (1926) points at some arguments pro the use of proverbs in language teaching. Rowland says that proverbs “stick in the mind”, “build up vocabulary”, “illustrate admirably the phraseology and idiomatic expressions of the foreign tongue”, “contribute gradually to a surer feeling for the foreign tongue” and proverbs “consume very little time”(pp. 89-90). Joseph Raymond (1945) states his arguments for proverbs as a teaching device. Proverbs are not only melodic and witty, possessed with rhythm and imagery; proverbs also reflect “patterns of
thought” (p. 522). As proverbs are universal, there are analogous proverbs in different nations that have related cultural patterns. Proverbs are therefore useful in the students’ discussions of cultural ideas when they compare the proverbs’ equivalents in different languages. Raymond exhorts: “Let each student seek and discover meanings, beauty or wit or culture in his own manner by suggestion and inference in accordance with his background” (p. 523).

Anna T. Litovkina’s (1998; 2000) experience is that the incorporation of proverbs in the foreign language classroom is rare. When proverbs are included, they are often used as time-fillers and not integrated into a context. The proverbs that are used are often randomly picked from dictionaries, which often include archaic proverbs and new proverbs might therefore be missed. The suitability of proverbs in teaching is due to their form; they are pithy and easy to learn, they often rhyme and contain repetition figures like alliteration and assonance, and “they contain frequently used vocabulary and exemplify the entire gamut of grammatical and syntactic structures” (p. vii; also Nuessel, 2003:406). Litovkina (1998) proposes the use of proverbs in a range of areas within language teaching: grammar and syntax, phonetics, vocabulary development, culture, reading, speaking and writing. Litovkina (2000) also states that proverbs, besides being an important part of culture, also are an important tool for effective communication and for the comprehension of different spoken and written discourses. Litovkina’s most important argument reads:

The person who does not acquire competence in using proverbs will be limited in conversation, will have difficulty comprehending a wide variety of printed matter, radio, television, songs etc., and will not understand proverb parodies which presuppose a familiarity with a stock proverb. (2000:vii)

Michael Abadi (2000) investigates how proverbs can be used as curriculum for ESL students in the USA. He claims that both the structure and the content of proverbs are useful in ESL teaching especially when it comes to teaching and understanding of culture, as proverbs conveys the values and metaphors shared by a culture. Proverbs are also useful in teaching the differences between spoken and written language, something that often confuses language learners; they use conversational style when they write. Proverbs are one way to help the students to clarify the distinction between oral and written English. Abadi says: “if students can successfully turn oral proverbs into explicit written sentences, they will become more facile in navigating between oral and written English” (p. 2). According to Abadi, it is the ungrammatical structures of proverbs that “offer a window into grammar instruction” (p. 2). Proverbs can also be used as curriculum with “new pedagogical purposes”, as Abadi calls it (p. 18). It includes inquiries of how proverbs
are a part of convincing language, e.g. in advertisements and propaganda, but also as a cultural resource, when the students bring proverbs from their home languages to share in the classroom.

Frank Nuessel (2003) compares the content of proverbs, which includes the metaphors contained in them, to “a microcosm of what it means to know a second language” (p. 395). He points out that proverbial competence both requires knowledge of the linguistic structure of a target language (i.e., morphology, syntax, lexicon, pronunciation, and semantics) and of the rules and regulations that are necessary to be able to use a proverb accurately. Nuessel discusses Danesi’s theories of a neurological bimodal approach to second-language learning, i.e. the need to stimulate both hemispheres of the brain in the process of language acquisition (pp. 404-407; also in Kim-Rivera, 1998). Nuessel’s conclusion is that the processing of proverbial language involves all the functions of both the right and the left hemisphere of the brain. The function of the left hemisphere is to interpret the incoming linguistic data, i.e. text, while the right hemisphere supports the understanding of context. Due to the metaphorical content of a proverb, the function of the right hemisphere is to create a literal meaning with the help of the contextual features in which the proverb is used, while the left hemisphere processes the linguistic structure of the proverb. Proverbs therefore serve an important purpose in the second-language classroom.

4.4.2 Cultural Knowledge

The Modern Language Association (MLA, 2007 [Electronic version]) states that “culture is represented not only in events, texts, buildings, artworks, cuisines and many other artefacts but also in languages itself.” The forms and the uses of a language reflect the cultural values of the society of which the language is a part. To be able to understand another foreign culture, one has to put that culture in relation to one’s own and to see the relationships between the cultures (MLA, 2007; Sercu, 2004; Kramsch, 1993). Language learners need to be aware of culturally appropriate behaviour, for example how to address people, make requests and express gratitude (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Awareness of different cultural frameworks are crucial, otherwise language learners will use “their own cultural system to interpret target-language messages whose intended meaning may well be predicated on quite different cultural assumptions” (Cortazzi & Lixian, 1999:197).

Proverbs as a part of gaining cultural knowledge is underpinned by the fact that proverbs reflect the worldviews and values of a culture, both contemporary and historically (Mieder, 2004; Peterson & Coltrane, 2003; O’Hara, 1995). Exploring culture with the help of proverbs not
only gives a historical perspective of the traditions of that culture as “many proverbs refer to old measurements, obscure professions, outdated weapons, unknown tools, plants, animals, names, and various other traditional matters” (Mieder, 2004:137); it also “provides a way to analyze the stereotypes about and misperceptions of the culture” (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003) in order to detect and discuss any form of prejudices about other cultures (Dundes, 1994).

4.4.3 Metaphorical Understanding

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have described metaphors as concepts we live by, i.e. metaphors are penetrating language, thought and actions in everyday life. Metaphorical language is central to our cognitive development as “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (p. 5). Figurative language, which includes metaphors, similes, idioms and proverbs, is a part of everyday language (Palmer & Brooks, 2004). Figurative language causes problems for foreign language learners due to its underlying metaphorical character (Lennon, 1998). A lack in understanding figurative language may lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication for learners of English, as well as other languages, in their interaction with native speakers. Palmer et al. (2006) points at the fact that metaphorical understanding is crucial for reading and listening comprehension, i.e. if a reader or listener is not able to interpret the figurative language in a text or in conversational phrases, it will lead to a breakdown in comprehension of the text or of the conversation. This may entail further frustration on the reader/listener and discourage him/her from continuing to read or communicate orally (Palmer et al., 2006).

One way of develop figurative and metaphorical understanding is by using proverbs in the teaching of English or other languages, as “the vast majority of proverbial sayings are metaphorical” (Gibbs & Beitel, 2003:116) and that “one of the most characteristics of proverbial language is its extensive reliance on figurative speech” (Nuessel, 2003:402). Palmer and her colleagues stress the importance of knowing both the figurative expression and the cultural context:

Students who develop the ability to interpret figurative language not only expand their capabilities for creative thought and communication, but also acquire insight to expressive forms of language, allowing them to comprehend both text and speech on a deeper and more meaningful level. (2006:265)
4.4.4 Communicative Competence

One of the goals to aim for in the Swedish syllabus for English at the upper secondary level is to ensure that pupils “develop their ability to communicate and interact in English in a variety of contexts concerning different issues and in different situations” (Skolverket [Electronic version]). Communicative competence is to know how to use the vocabulary and the grammar of a language to achieve the goals of communication, and to know how to use it appropriate in different sociocultural situations (Genishi & Glupczynski, 2006; Brown, 2000; Thornbury, 1999).

Communicative competence is connected to both cultural knowledge and metaphorical understanding. The learner of a foreign language needs to be aware of culture in order to communicate effectively. Cortazzi and Lixian (1999:197) claim that “communication in real situations is never out of context, and because culture is part of most contexts, communication is rarely culture-free.” The learner must also be able to recognise and understand metaphorical and figurative language in order to avoid misunderstanding or other communicative clashes, e.g. being rude or insulting.

Robert Harnish (2003) discusses how to communicate with the help of proverbs and establishes that communication with proverbs only is successful if the hearer recognises the intentions of the speaker. An example of speaker intention may be to allude to a common truth with the help of the proverb, or to use it as an explanation for a situation. If the hearer recognises the common truth or gets hold of the explanation, then the result is successful communication with proverbs. However, speech acts of any kind require the ability to understand speaker intentions: “competence in a first or second language demands that the speaker be able to encode and decode intention” (Nuessel, 2003:400; Norrick, 1985; 1994). The issue of learning proverbs does not only concern the memorisation and understanding of them; “The real linguistic task begins when the language learner attempts to learn when and how to apply the proverb to a concrete communicative situation” (Nuessel, 2003:399).

Mieder (2004) stresses the importance of including proverbs that belong to the paremiological minimum in the teaching of foreign language and culture because they are “clearly a part of the cultural literacy of native speakers” (p. 128). Inclusion of proverbs also enables immigrants and visitors in America to communicate more effectively with native speakers of English. Mieder argues: “Proverbs continue to be effective verbal devices and culturally literate persons, both native and foreign, must have a certain paremiological minimum at their disposal in order to participate in meaningful oral and written communication” (1993:54).
5 Results and Analysis

The results of the two surveys are presented in two sections. In 5.1, the result from the examination of the textbooks is accounted for, together with a comparison to the Anglo-American paremiological minimum. This section also includes a description of the purposes of using the proverbs, and what forms the proverbs have. In 5.2, the results from the questionnaires are presented and analysed. The result is presented with the help of figures and tables together with summarising comments.

5.1 Examination of Textbooks

The examination of the 11 textbooks has resulted in 50 findings of proverbs. Ten of the proverbs are used more than once. The list in Appendix 4 therefore consists of 35 different proverbs. Figure 5.1 presents the findings in each textbook for English A (light) and English B (dark). 17 of the proverbs (34%) were found in the textbooks for English A and 33 proverbs (66%) in the textbooks for English B. Most of the proverbs were found in Project X Anthology 2 and Project X Workmate 2, which are used together. The former consists of texts and the latter of exercises and wordlists. Even so, only 6 out of the 17 proverbs found appear in both books.

Fig. 5.1 Numbers of proverbs found in the textbooks for English A and B
5.1.1 Comparison to the Paremiological Minimum

The proverbs in the textbooks were compared to the list of the suggested Anglo-American paremiological minimum made by Mieder (2004; Appendix 1). The result shows that 12 of the 35 proverbs in the textbooks belong to the 75 most frequently used proverbs in the USA today. Among the top ten proverbs in the textbooks, four proverbs belong to the paremiological minimum: *Love is blind; All that glitters is not gold; It takes two to tango;* and *When in Rome, do as the Romans do*. The most frequently used proverb in the textbooks is *Love is blind*, which is used five times in total.

5.1.2 Purposes of Using Proverbs

The analysis of the contexts in which the proverbs occur was carried out in order to find out what the purposes of using the proverbs in the textbooks are. The purposes have been determined to the following seven categories that comprise (see also Appendix 4):

**Introduction:** Proverbs introduce chapters about critical thinking and poetry, a theme about moral, and texts about love, personal style and fashion, e.g. *All that glitters is not gold; Crime never pays;* and *Clothes make the man.*

**Grammar:** Proverbs exemplify grammatical issues, i.e. definite article *Love is blind* (3 times); the difference between lay and lie *You shouldn’t kill the goose that (lays/lies) the golden egg*; and the difference between the use of singular and plural in English and Swedish *No news is good news.*

**Explanation:** Proverbs are explained in the wordlists. One is used in a text to explain an abbreviation in computer language, GIGO *Garbage in, garbage out.*

**Exercise:** Exercises are used to match the proverbs with a statement and to translate from English to Swedish. One proverb is suggested to be used as both subject and heading for a writing exercise; *Blood Is Thicker Than Water.*

**Heading:** Proverbs are used as headings for chapters on critical thinking and on relationships; for a discussion on friendship; of an article in a debate about child abuse; of a page for grammar exercises, and as heading for a text from the Bible and the wordlist connected to this text.
Text: Proverbs occur in texts of different sorts. The subjects of the texts deal with issues concerning teenage pregnancy and marriage, fashion and personal style, life and death in poetry, and love problems. In three cases, the narrators’ thoughts are revealed with the help of proverbs. One proverb is used twice, insinuating that a person is becoming boring; *All work and no play [makes Jack a dull boy]*.

Discussion: Proverbs are used as bases for discussions. The subjects for discussion involve relations, moral, first impression, love, fashion and style. The readers are also asked to discuss and explain the meaning of six proverbs and to look for the Swedish equivalents. Four proverbs are to be matched with texts about family, work places and being away from home. Three times proverbs are named and used as idioms for discussions about forgiveness, culture and jobs; *Let bygones be bygones; When in ROME...[do as the Romans do]; and JACK-of-all-trades [but master of none]*.

Figure 5.2 views the result for En A and B, in total and separate, for the different categories of purpose. In the textbooks for En A, proverbs are mainly used for discussion, as examples of grammar and as headings. The five proverbs that are used for exercises only occur in the textbooks for En B. In En B, proverbs are mainly used for discussions, 12 out of 17, and in different types of texts, 9 out of 12. Only one proverb is used in an example for grammar in En B.

![Fig. 5.2 The numbers of purposes in En A and B, separated and in total](image-url)
5.1.3 Form of the Proverbs

The forms of the 50 proverbs in this investigation have been determined. 35 proverbs have fixed form, i.e. the original form, and 15 have changed form, i.e. 9 proverbs are truncated and 6 proverbs are paraphrased. Figure 5.3 views the division between the three types of forms among the categories of purpose.

![Figure 5.3](image)

*Fig. 5.3 The division between the forms of the proverbs and the categories of purpose*

The most commonly used form is fixed form, which also is the form that proverbs usually are recognised by (see 4.1). Truncated form is mainly used as headings, e.g. “It Takes Two…” and “All That Glitters…”, but also in discussion: “When in ROME…” and “JACK-of-all-trades”, and in text: “The grass is greener on the other side [of the fence]”. The paraphrased proverbs are the most changed, as the words in the proverbs are either to some extent changed or replaced. An example of the former is “Whatever CAN go wrong WILL go wrong” which is a paraphrase of a proverb called Murphy’s law: *If anything can go wrong, it will*. Two examples that paraphrase the proverb *Art is long and life is short* are “Life is short, but the hours are long” and “Whereas life is short-lived, art is long-lived.” These proverbs are used in the same chapter but in different contexts. However, in this context they both relate to poetry.
5.2 Questionnaire - The Use of Proverbs as a Part of EFL Teaching

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) was sent by e-mail to 97 English teachers at 7 upper secondary schools in the county of Jönköping. However, only 19 teachers have answered the questionnaire. Due to the few respondents, the result cannot be seen as general for what attitudes English teachers have regarding the use of proverbs in EFL teaching. The result of the questionnaire will be presented as a summarising text. Numbers within brackets refer to the numbers of responses. The whole result is presented in figures and tables in Appendix 3.

5.2.1 Responses on the Questionnaire

The textbooks used by the respondents are listed in Appendix 3. The result on question 2 shows that the respondents more often notice idioms in the textbooks before proverbs. The respondents who have not noticed any proverbs state as reasons the use of own material or that they have not reflected upon it. The respondents who have noticed proverbs also use textbooks where proverbs occur. The most chosen alternatives in question 3 on how to deal with a proverb found in the textbook, viewed in figure 5.4, were the three first: explain it, compare to the Swedish equivalent, and discuss the meaning. These alternatives are also often used in the textbooks (see 5.1.2.). Two examples besides the given alternatives were mentioned: translate it, and discuss in what situation you would use the proverb or if it is useful at all. No respondent has chosen to work with a theme around the proverb. Worth noticing is that Blueprint A uses *All that glitters is not gold* as a starting point for a theme about critical thinking.

![Figure 5.4 Numbers of responses on question 3: "How do you deal with a proverb you find in the textbook?"](figure.png)
The answers on question 4 “Do you consider proverbs an important part of the EFL teaching?” show that the majority of the respondents, 79%, consider proverbs an important part of the teaching because of the cultural aspects and as a help to better communicate, to get fluency and to understand spoken and written English. The respondents also say that proverbs are a part of the language and increase the knowledge of the language. The explanations for not considering proverbs important are: proverbs are not useful as they are old and outdated, there is not enough time to include them in the teaching, and there are more important things to teach. There were some discrepancies between the answers as the respondents on one hand said that proverbs should be taught “when you feel secure using your English”, and on the other hand that “proverbs normally are quite easy to understand” and therefore cause no trouble in learning.

The respondents who use proverbs as a part of the teaching (question 5) do it because they consider them to be an important part of knowing the language, it is interesting, funny and enriching and that “you could not teach a B-course without taking them into consideration”. One teacher teaches proverbs on a weekly basis ”as there are so many to learn”. The motivations for not teaching proverbs are the lack of good material, the need to focus on strategy and vocabulary instead, and that it is not time-efficient planning to teach proverbs. When I compare the answers in question 4 and 5, it shows that two of the respondents who consider proverbs important do not teach proverbs, while three who do not consider them important do teach proverbs. There are other issues within phraseology the respondents (69%) consider more important to learn than proverbs (question 6): idioms, every day phrases, phrasal verbs, verb/noun collocations, false friends, and grammatical issues like prepositions and linking words. Whether the respondents use proverb or not, they have given a range of ways to use proverbs in the teaching (question 7):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIAL</th>
<th>METHOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of proverbs (3)</td>
<td>Discuss the Swedish equivalent (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures (to illustrate situations) (2)</td>
<td>Discuss and explain the meaning (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature – text (2)</td>
<td>Discuss cultural aspects (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piece of paper – match front/back</td>
<td>Explain metaphorical implications (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies</td>
<td>Discuss the use – why, how, when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White board (to illustrate situations)</td>
<td>Compare topics in the proverbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charades (to illustrate situations)</td>
<td>Compare - languages and cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Card games</td>
<td>Contest and Quiz walks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create contexts were proverbs fit</td>
<td>Writing tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use humour</td>
<td>Role play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most useful proverbs for teaching were chosen by the respondents from the list in question 8.
The twenty most chosen are listed in Appendix 3. The top ten proverbs chosen are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverb</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When in Rome, do as the Romans do (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t judge a book by its cover (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy come, easy go (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty is in the eye of the beholder (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can lead a horse to water,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but you can’t make him drink (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every cloud has a silver lining (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All’s well that ends well (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better late than never (8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice makes perfect (8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More examples of proverbs to use were given by the respondents in the answers on question 9:
You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours; In for a penny, in for a pound; Empty barrels make the most noise; and No news is good news (when teaching grammar). One teacher frequently chooses other proverbs randomly from movies. The further comments from the respondents were both negative and positive (question 10). Two respondents state that there are more important things to deal with than proverbs, e.g. basic grammar and that “proverbs are more a funny thing we do. Extras.” Four respondents are very positive toward using proverbs in EFL teaching. One says that proverbs should be discussed more in school and that “there should be more teaching material about proverbs.” Another respondent considers it a good exercise to compare English and Swedish proverbs in order to discuss why there are not always an exact equivalent and “why one language has proverbs in a special area and the other one hasn’t.”

5.2.2 Summary of the Questionnaire

The result of the questionnaire shows that there is a positive attitude among the respondents toward using proverbs in the English teaching. In all, 58-84% deal with proverbs by explaining them, comparing them to Swedish equivalents and by discussing the meaning. Also, 79% consider proverbs an important part of the teaching, because proverbs view cultural aspects, increase the ability to communicate and to understand the language. Equally many teachers use proverbs in their teaching, as it is an important part of knowing the language. However, 68% consider other phraseological issues more important to teach than proverbs, e.g. idioms and every day phrases. The answers on how to include proverbs in the teaching (question 7) are analogous to the answers on how the respondents deal with the proverbs they find in the textbooks (question 3). The reasons for not using proverbs in the teaching are due to more important things to teach, e.g. grammar and other types of phrases, not enough time, and proverbs are old and outdated.
6 Discussion

The result of this investigation shows that proverbs are a part of the EFL teaching in the county of Jönköping. However, proverbs only take up a small part of the teaching and of the textbooks. The 50 proverbs that occur in the textbooks are mainly used for discussions about issues that probably concern adolescents, e.g. love, relationships, rights and wrongs, style and fashion. In that sense, proverbs may be seen as an important device for oral and written communication and as a tool to get the students focused on discussing things closely related to them and their lives. The fact that proverbs contain “knowledge about human nature and the world at large” (see Introduction, p. 1) also supports the relevant use of proverbs as bases for discussions; something that also is stated on page 6 (4.1). Seven of the in total twelve proverbs in the textbooks that belong to the paremiological minimum, are used for discussions. This result may be connected to Mieder’s statement that the proverbs that are in use today also should be the ones that are taught (see 4.4). The result also shows that 70% of the proverbs occur in fixed form, which makes them easier to recognise and to memorise (see 4.1). The proverbs that are used for discussion in the textbooks are always related to a theme or a text that concern the proverb, i.e. a relevant-context situation is used (see 4.3, p.8). In these cases, the context may help the students to comprehend both the literal and the figurative meaning of the proverbs.

The result from the questionnaire shows an on the whole positive attitude toward using proverbs, and that most of the participating teachers use proverbs in the teaching. However, they consider other issues more important to teach. When proverbs are taught, the meanings and the Swedish equivalents are discussed, and to some extent culture and metaphors. Only two teachers mention that proverbs can be used to teach grammar. On question 3, none of the teachers chose to work with a theme around a proverb. Three teachers do mention that they would use and compare proverbs that deal with the same topic. When proverbs are used for discussions in the textbooks, they either start off from a certain topic or relates to a theme. In the answers, there are no suggestions of using proverbs as bases for discussion about different topics. The answers from the teachers indicate, what I consider, a common and traditional way of using proverbs in the teaching. Some teachers also answer that proverbs are used either as time-fillers or when time allows, as extras (see Litovkina, 4.4.1). Due to the few respondents, these ways of teaching and the positive attitude toward using proverbs should not be seen as general. Actually, the high rate of none respondents might indicate that the interest in proverbs and in using them is not that positive.
The result of the examination of the textbooks shows a higher frequency of proverbs in the books for the B-course. In the description of the subject of English, the B-course deviates from the A-course in that “the perspectives is further broadening to cover the use of language in varying and complicated situations” (Skolverket [Electronic version]). One teacher in the survey also claims that proverbs are important and “you could not teach a B-course without taking them into consideration”. The result also shows that there are discrepancies between the participants’ views on the comprehension of proverbs, considering the difficulty to learn them. Comments in the questionnaire includes views from “proverbs are normally quite easy to learn” to “proverbs are something you learn when you feel secure using your English”. Maybe the latter viewpoint can explain the authors’ choices to use more proverbs in the textbooks for the B-courses, as the learners of English at that stage probably have acquired more knowledge of the language and are more receptive to expressions like proverbs. On the other hand, paremiologists claim that proverbs are quite easy to learn due to their short and fixed form. Yet, they can cause problems because of the figurative language that some proverbs contain. I assume that this discussion is too complex to be able to conclude in this essay, as there are so many factors to take into consideration when it comes to proverb comprehension (see 4.3).

This essay is underpinned by arguments for proverbs as a part of teaching and for the development of cultural knowledge, metaphorical understanding and communicative competence. A comparison with the results shows that these three factors are explicitly found in the answers from the teachers, but only implicitly in the textbooks. The teachers’ main reasons for using proverbs are that they are a part of the language and the culture and useful when it comes to communicating. However, only two teachers mention the metaphorical use. An analysis of the teachers’ choices from the list of proverbs in question 8 indicates that among the twenty most chosen proverbs there is a majority of proverbs with didactic and character building contents. Ten of the proverbs are also metaphorical and are therefore very useful when it comes to teaching metaphorical understanding (see p.19). One teacher, who has English as mother-tongue, stresses the importance of noticing and explaining metaphorical implications, because “many students don’t really grasp a lot of English being spoken as they don’t understand the true meanings of the proverbs. Many times they use the equivalent Swedish proverbs by simply translating them to English!” According to previous research (4.4.3), metaphorical understanding is crucial for understanding the language and for communication. Yet, I assume that the most common ways of using proverbs, i.e. explain them, compare to the Swedish equivalent and discuss the meaning, implicitly involve and refer to dealing with metaphorical understanding.
Culture is mentioned as the foremost important argument for using proverbs in the questionnaire (p.18). The two most popular chosen proverbs of the list also relates to cultural aspects: *When in Rome, do as the Romans do; Don’t judge a book by its cover.* Even so, only one teacher refers to the multi-cultural aspect: “When you have students from other cultures it [the discussion] can also lead to other languages, word order and other interesting questions.” As Sweden is a multi-cultural country and the classes in school contain cultures from all parts of the world, the cultural approach is important as well as useful. Furthermore, none of the respondents refer to other comparisons accept to the Swedish equivalents. In the multi-cultural schools proverbs may serve as a source and an inspiration to discussions about similarities and differences between a range of languages and cultures. Teachers must have in mind that one and the same proverb actually may be interpreted differently depending on the students’ cultural backgrounds in that they may use “their own cultural system to interpret target-language messages” (see 4.4.2).

According to the participating teachers, proverbs are important when it comes to developing both understanding and communicating in English. “It enables learners to communicate with variation,” says one teacher. The teachers in this survey usually explain the proverbs so the students become aware of the meanings, and that is a good basis for knowing how to use them. The textbooks on the other hand mainly use proverbs for discussions, which allow the students to relate the proverb to a context, and in that way grasp the meaning. The results of this study confirm the importance and usefulness of proverbs as a part of communicating in English.

7 Conclusion

My assumption before doing this research was that proverbs are not an essential part of the EFL teaching, and are probably not given much space. I also assumed that the reasons might be that proverbs are considered old-fashioned and outdated, or that teachers choose other kinds of expressions before proverbs due to limited time. My assumptions have to an extent been verified. Proverbs do occur in both textbooks and in teaching but they do not occur as frequently as other kinds of expressions, e.g. idioms and phrasal verbs. One reason for not using proverbs is lack of time. However, only two teachers mention that proverbs are outdated. The majority considers proverbs an important part. I based my investigation on a statement made by Wolfgang Mieder and his assumption that textbooks of English usually include a list of proverbs and accompanying exercises (see 4.4). Unfortunately, this investigation does not support his assumption, as none of the textbooks contained lists. At the most, one book contained two proverbs on the same page!
Considering the outcome of the investigation, more knowledge of how useful proverbs actually are in language teaching is necessary among educators in Sweden. Further research on this subject may include a national survey among teachers, not only at the upper secondary school, but also in compulsory school and in language courses at the university and at the teachers’ education. Teaching material involving English and Swedish proverbs is also something that may be developed; in due time also with references to other languages than Swedish.

Summing up, my conclusion is that proverbs are a very small part of the EFL teaching considering the examined textbooks and the participating teachers. Whether teachers use proverbs to a greater or lesser extent is dependent on material and time, but also own interest. The attitudes among the teachers are positive, but proverbs are not focused on as didactic tools; rather as expressions that are good to know. Previous research on proverbs and their didactic usefulness indicates that proverbs shall be seen as devices and tools for teaching in all different areas concerning language, i.e. grammar, syntax, phonetics, vocabulary, culture, reading, speaking and writing. As material for teaching besides textbooks, teachers may use authentic material such as newspapers, advertisements, commercials, TV, movies, the Internet, literature, fairy tales, comic strips, and so on. Proverbs exist everywhere in daily life and must therefore be detected and focused on so learners of languages develop their cultural knowledge, their metaphorical understanding and their communicative competence. However, the goal of including proverbs as a part of the EFL teaching should not only be proverb comprehension; the goal should above all be language comprehension.
8 Works Cited


Gustafsson, Jörgen, and Peterson, Lennart. (2001). *Short Cuts to English 1.* Stockholm: Bonnier Utbildning AB.

Gustafsson, Jörgen, and Peterson, Lennart. (2002). *Short Cuts to English 2.* Stockholm: Bonnier Utbildning AB.


Center for Applied Linguistics. Retrieved November 19, 2007 from
http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/0309peterson.html


The 75 most frequently used proverbs in the United States today (Mieder, 2004: 129-130)

The list is ordered according to the headword in *italics* in each proverb.

*Absence* makes the heart grow fonder.
An *apple* a day keeps the doctor away.
The *apple* doesn’t fall far from the tree.
*Beauty* is in the eye of the beholder.
*Beauty* is only skin deep.
Early to *bed* and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.
*Beggars* can’t be choosers.
A *bird* in the hand is worth two in the bush.
*Birds* of a feather flock together.
The early *bird* catches the worm.
Don’t judge a *book* by its cover.
Don’t cross the *bridge* till you come to it.
New *brooms* sweep clean.
*Business* before pleasure.
You cannot have your *cake* and eat it too.
*Chickens* come home to roost.
Don’t count your *chickens* before they’re hatched.
Spare the rod and spoil the *child*.
Every *cloud* has a silver lining.
Easy *come*, easy go.
First *come*, first served.
Too many *cooks* spoil the broth.
*Curiosity* killed the cat.
*Do* unto others as you would have them do unto you.
Let sleeping *dogs* lie.
You can’t teach an old *dog* new tricks.
Don’t put all your *eggs* in one basket.

All’s well that *ends* well.
Like *father*, like son.
Big *fish* eat little fish.
*A fool* and his money are soon parted.
*A friend* in need is a friend indeed.
Don’t look a *gift horse* in the mouth.
All that glitters is not *gold*.
The *grass* is always greener on the other side of the fence.
Many *hands* make light work.
One *hand* washes the other.
*Haste* makes waste.
Make *hay* while the sun shines.
Two *heads* are better than one.
He who *hesitates* is lost.
*Honesty* is the best policy.
Don’t change *horses* in the middle of the stream (mid-stream).
You can lead a *horse* to water, but you can’t make him drink.
Strike while the *iron* is hot.
Better *late* than never.
He who *laughs* last, laughs best.
*Live* and let live.
*Look* before you leap.
*Love* is blind.
*Misery* loves company.
*Money* talks.
A *penny* saved is a penny earned.
*Penny* wise and pound foolish.
A picture is worth a thousand words.
A watched pot never boils.
Practice makes perfect.
An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
When it rains, it pours.
When in Rome, do as the Romans do.
Easier said than done.
If the shoe fits, wear it.
Out of sight, out of mind.
Where there’s a smoke, there’s a fire.
A stitch in time saves nine.
A rolling stone gathers no moss.
If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.
It takes two to tango.
Time is money.
Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.
Waste not, want not.
Still waters run deep.
The squeaky wheel gets the grease.
Where there’s a will, there’s a way.
Two wrongs don’t make a right.
Appendix 2

Questionnaire about the use of proverbs as a part of EFL teaching
(The questionnaire is here compressed in order to save space.)

Please answer the ten questions with your own words or, when it comes to multiple choices, by making your choice red or bold. Thank you for your valuable help!

1. **What teaching material do you use when it comes to textbook/s? Give the title of the textbook/s.**
   - In EnA:
   - In EnB:

2. **Have you noticed any proverbs in the teaching material you use?**
   - If YES, what have you noticed? 
   - If NO, why do you think you have not noticed any?

3. **How do you deal with a proverb that you find in the textbook?** Choose one or more by making them red or bold.
   - Explain it
   - Compare it to the Swedish equivalent
   - Discuss the meaning
   - Discuss metaphorical use
   - Discuss cultural issues concerning the proverb
   - Discuss the communicative use of the proverb
   - Work with a theme around the proverb
   - I do not deal with it
   - I have not noticed any and therefore I do not deal with it
   - Anything else (give your own example):

4. **Do you consider proverbs an important part of the EFL teaching?**
   - If YES – explain why: 
   - If NO – explain why not:

5. **Do you teach proverbs?**
   - If YES – explain why: 
   - If NO – explain why not:

6. **Is there anything else within the area of phraseology that you think is more important to teach than proverbs?**
   - If YES – what and why: 
   - If NO – why:

7. **If you were to include proverbs in your teaching, how would you teach them?** Give examples of ways to use proverbs in the teaching.

8. **Below follows a list of the 75 most frequently used proverbs in the USA today. Mark in red 20 proverbs that you think are important to learn as an EFL learner.**
   (The list is the same as the one in Appendix 1.)

9. **Are there any more proverbs, other than those listed, that you consider important to learn?**

10. **Do you have any comments on this subject of proverbs as a part of EFL teaching?**
Appendix 3

Responses on the Questionnaire

1. What teaching material do you use when it comes to textbook/s? Give the title of the textbook/s. The numbers in the table do not correspond to the number of the respondents, as some respondents use their own material or more than one textbook or teach both A- and B-courses. Column 3 views the textbooks used in the first survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbooks</th>
<th>Numbers of users</th>
<th>Numbers of users</th>
<th>Used in survey 1: “Examination of Textbooks”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EN A</td>
<td>EN B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Print A+B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes, A + B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair Play</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masterplan 1+2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Gold B</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project X 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes (include 2 books)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read &amp; Proceed</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Cuts 1+2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes, A + B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solid Ground</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springboard</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toolbox</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own material</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 with yes/no alternatives, here without comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>No answer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Have you noticed any proverbs in the teaching material you use?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Do you consider proverbs an important part of the EFL teaching?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Do you teach proverbs?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is there anything else within the area of phraseology that you think is more important to teach than proverbs?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Are there any more proverbs, other than those listed, that you consider important to learn?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Do you have any comments on this subject of proverbs as a part of EFL teaching?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3. How do you deal with a proverb that you find in the textbook?

16 Explain it
15 Compare it to the Swedish equivalent
11 Discuss the meaning
8 Discuss metaphorical use
5 Discuss cultural issues concerning the proverb
2 Discuss the communicative use of the proverb
0 Work with a theme around the proverb
0 I do not deal with it
2 I have not noticed any and therefore I do not deal with it
2 Anything else (give your own example): translate, discuss in what situation a proverb can be useful or if it is useful at all

7. If you were to include proverbs in your teaching, how would you teach them? Give examples of ways to use proverbs in the teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIAL</th>
<th>METHOD</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of proverbs (3)</td>
<td>Discuss the Swedish equivalent (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures (to illustrate situations) (2)</td>
<td>Discuss and explain the meaning (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature – text (2)</td>
<td>Discuss cultural aspects (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piece of paper – match front/back</td>
<td>Explain metaphorical implications (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies</td>
<td>Discuss the use – why, how, when</td>
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<tr>
<td>White board (to illustrate situations)</td>
<td>Compare topics in the proverbs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charades (to illustrate situations)</td>
<td>Compare - languages and cultures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Card games</td>
<td>Contest and Quiz walks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create contexts were proverbs fit</td>
<td>Writing tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use humour</td>
<td>Role play</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 8: The respondents’ 20 most chosen proverbs from the list in Appendix 2.

12 When in Rome, do as the Romans do.
11 Don’t judge a book by its cover.
10 Easy come, easy go.
9 Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.
9 Every cloud has a silver lining.
9 All’s well that ends well.
9 You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.
9 The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.
8 The early bird catches the worm.
8 Better late than never.
8 Practice makes perfect.
7 An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
7 The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.
7 Birds of a feather flock together.
7 Easier said than done.
7 Where there’s a will, there’s a way.
7 Two wrongs don’t make a right.
7 Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.
7 Don’t count your chickens before they’re hatched.
6 Love is blind.
### The 35 proverbs found in the textbooks in original form

**Appendix 4**

Numbers indicate how many times a proverb occurs in the textbooks and in the forms.

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A friend in need is a friend indeed</td>
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<td>All is fair in love and war</td>
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<td>All that glitters is not gold</td>
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<td>All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy</td>
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<td>Art is long and life is short</td>
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<td>Birds of a feather flock together</td>
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<td>Blood is thicker than water</td>
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<td>Clothes make the man</td>
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<td>Crime does not pay</td>
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<td>Do not (try to) teach your grandmother (how) to suck eggs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't kill the goose that lays the golden egg/s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater</td>
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<td>East or west – home is best</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy come, easy go</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy does it</td>
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<td>First impressions are the most lasting</td>
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<td>Garbage in, garbage out</td>
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<td>Home, sweet home</td>
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<td>If anything can go wrong, it will</td>
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<tr>
<td>It takes two to tango</td>
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<td>Jack of all trades and master of none</td>
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<td>Let bygones be bygones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Let sleeping dogs lie</td>
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<td>Like mother, like daughter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love is blind</td>
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<td>3F</td>
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<td>No news is good news</td>
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<td>Practice makes perfect</td>
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<td>The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence</td>
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<tr>
<td>There are other fish in the sea</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a time for everything</td>
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<td>Third time lucky</td>
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<td>Time will tell</td>
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<td>When in Rome, do as the Romans do</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>T</td>
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<tr>
<td>You cannot teach an old dog new tricks</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Abbreviations:**

PM = belongs to the paremiological minimum in Appendix 1

Disc. = Discussion

Text = Text

Head. = Heading

Exer. = Exercise

Expl. = Explanation

Gram. = Grammar

Intro. = Introduction

F = Fixed form

T = Truncated

P = Paraphrased