The use of Swedish in teaching English in the multilingual classroom

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation has been to get a deeper understanding of how, when and why the English teachers of year 6-9 at a particular multilingual school use Swedish when they teach English in a multilingual classroom.

Data were collected through notes taken during observations of two teachers during one lesson each. After observing the teachers I conducted one interview with them each.

Swedish was used mostly when grammar was explained and when work was done with vocabulary. If Swedish dominated during a lesson or not, depended on what was being done during the lesson. The main reason given why the teachers used Swedish in teaching English was that they were not trained to teach English in a multilingual classroom where Swedish is not the first language of all the pupils. The teachers felt it was difficult to speak English during a whole lesson when they were teaching a group of pupils who had a low level of English.

Keywords: multilingual classroom, third language acquisition
Table of Contents

Table of Contents ........................................................................................................5

1 Introduction ................................................................................................................8
  1.1 Purpose statement and research questions ..................................................... 9
  1.2 Definitions ........................................................................................................ 9

2 Literature Review ....................................................................................................11
  2.1 School achievement related to foreign background ...................................... 11
  2.2 Teachers’ views ............................................................................................. 12
  2.3 Second and third language acquisition ....................................................... 12
  2.4 The National Curriculum and the English Syllabus ................................. 14
  2.5 Communicative Language Teaching ............................................................ 15
  2.6 Summary of the literature review ................................................................. 16

3 Method ....................................................................................................................18
  3.1 Selection .......................................................................................................... 18
  3.2 Procedure ......................................................................................................... 20
  3.3 Ethical considerations .................................................................................... 20

4 Results ....................................................................................................................22
  4.1 Observations .................................................................................................... 22
  4.2 Interviews ........................................................................................................ 23
    4.2.1 In what teaching situations do the teachers use Swedish?................. 23
    4.2.2 Why do the teachers use Swedish in teaching English?................... 24

5 Discussion ...............................................................................................................26
  5.6 Realiability ....................................................................................................... 30
1 Introduction

When I did my final teaching practice and later when I started working as an English teacher I had a majority of pupils with another first language than Swedish. I also had the opportunity to teach a group of newly arrived immigrant pupils who hardly had any knowledge of Swedish at all. This was a tremendous challenge and I was forced to reevaluate the teaching materials at hand and my teaching methods, which I found useless in the context I was in. The teaching materials used at the school were not suitable for my non-Swedish speaking pupils as all the textbooks and workbooks used Swedish as a base language.

According to the report *Elever med utländsk bakgrund* (The Swedish National Agency for Education /SNAE, Skolverket, 2004) pupils with a foreign background fail to reach the goals for a passing grade in English to a larger extent than native pupils. What could the reasons for that be? What sort of challenges do teachers in the multilingual classroom encounter when teaching English? How does it affect the teaching of English when most of the pupils have Swedish as a second language? What direction does the curriculum and syllabus give to teachers when it comes to choosing a teaching method?

These questions which arose as I reflected on my early teaching experiences and on the results of the report mentioned above made me want to investigate the use of Swedish in teaching English at a multilingual school and the teachers’ thoughts on this at that particular multilingual school. The results of the investigation are relevant to me as a teacher because they will give me a deeper understanding of when and why teachers use Swedish in teaching English. This will make me more aware
of my own choices of teaching methods teaching English to pupils with another first language than Swedish.

1.1 Purpose statement and research questions

The purpose of my dissertation is to get a deeper understanding of how, when and why the English teachers of year 6-9 at a particular multilingual school use Swedish when they teach English in a multilingual classroom.

The research questions for this investigation are:

- In what teaching situations do the teachers use Swedish in teaching English in the multilingual classroom?
- What reasons do the teachers give for using Swedish in teaching English in the multilingual classroom?

In order to get answers to these questions I observed two teachers while they were teaching and also conducted interviews with them.

1.2 Definitions

In my dissertation there are some key terms which need to be clarified: pupils with a foreign background, native pupils, first language, second language, third language and multilingual schools.

In the report Elever med en utländsk bakgrund (SNAE, 2004) The Swedish National Agency for Education /SNAE, that is Skolverket, uses the term pupils with a foreign background (my translation) for pupils who were either born in a country other than Sweden or have two parents born in a country other than Sweden. I will also use this term in my dissertation.

In the report SNAE (2004) also divides the pupils with a foreign background into three subgroups: pupils with a foreign background who are born in Sweden, pupils born outside Sweden who have immigrated to
Sweden before 1993 and pupils born outside Sweden who have immigrated to Sweden after 1993. The reference group used in the report consists of pupils who finished the 9th grade in 2003. In the dissertation by Nissen and Strukelj (2007) pupils who were born outside Sweden are referred to as immigrant pupils.

In the report from SNAE (2004) native pupils are those pupils who were born in Sweden with one or both of the parents also born in Sweden. Pupils with a foreign background have another language than Swedish as a first language. The term first language could also be referred to as home language, mother tongue or native tongue. I have chosen the term first language in my dissertation because it is the term mostly used in the literature about language acquisition used in the literature review of this dissertation, first language being the first language we learn in a chronological order. For many native pupils the first language and the national language, in this case Swedish, is the same. For most pupils with a foreign background the national language is their second language and the second language is also the language of instruction at school. English for these pupils becomes the third language, sometimes even the fourth language. At most Swedish schools English is taught as a foreign language and is a subject at school and not the language of instruction.

In the report referred to above, SNAE (2004) has chosen to refer to schools in which at least 40% of the pupils have a foreign background as schools with a high frequency of pupils with a foreign background or as schools with a high frequency of immigrants (my translation). These are the schools for which I will use the term multilingual schools. I also could have used the term multicultural school but since my dissertation focuses on language I find the term multilingual more appropriate.
2 Literature Review

In order to understand the implications of learning English as a third language I have referred to reports published by the Swedish National Agency for Education. I have also referred to literature on language acquisition and methodology in English teaching as well as the curriculum and syllabus for English to show some points of view on whether English should or should not be taught through Swedish in the multilingual classroom.

2.1 School achievement related to foreign background

The report *Elever med utländsk bakgrund* (SNAE, 2004) is an analysis of the reasons why pupils with a foreign background as a group do not achieve as well in the Swedish school system as native pupils do.

In its report SNAE (2004) draws the conclusion that a large part of the differences in achievement between pupils with a foreign background and native pupils can be explained by socioeconomic factors such as the level of the parents’ education, whether they have a job or not, or if the pupil lives with one or two parents rather than by the fact that the pupils have a foreign background. For pupils who have immigrated to Sweden after they started school the time spent in Sweden has a great effect on their school results. The shorter time they have been in Sweden the less Swedish they know and their ability to perform in school is affected by this. To a large extent the fact that pupils at multilingual schools tend to have lower grades can be explained by the same factors.

The report also takes a closer look at the difference in achievement between native pupils and pupils with a foreign background in English and
Mathematics and states that 26.3% of the pupils who immigrated late to Sweden do not achieve the goals set for a passing grade in English. It also states that there is a greater difference in achievement between native pupils and pupils who have arrived late in Sweden in English and Mathematics than in other subjects.

2.2 Teachers’ views

One of the teachers interviewed in the report _Elever med utländsk bakgrund_ (SNAE, 2004:90) says:

"In English they are worse. Because first you have to explain the Swedish to them before you can move on, so you are stuck in the same place for so much longer in an immigrant class, you can not move on, so they have much lower grades. … A great problem for these kids is that their parents do not know any English, so their parents do not help them with their homework for various reasons. And I think homework is very important.” (my translation).

The teacher interviewed by Nissen and Strukelj (2007:24) has the same experience:

"...the only reason for differences in achievement between immigrant students and native students is undoubtedly the unsatisfactory mastery of the Swedish language. …She also says that since the students lack good knowledge of Swedish…as simple a part of the lesson as learning a new word from the wordlist can take much more time than planned, because of students not understanding the Swedish word. Hence, a large part of the lesson is lost while she has to explain the Swedish word; otherwise the learning will not be meaningful. …”

2.3 Second and third language acquisition

According to Jessner and Cenoz (in Cummins and Davison, 2007:158) second language acquisition (SLA) has a lot in common with third language acquisition (TLA) but there are also some differences:
“TLA is a more complex phenomenon than second language acquisition (SLA) because, ...the process and product of acquiring a second language can potentially influence TLA.”

They also state that third language learners have experience from second language learning and have developed different strategies for language learning (Jessner and Cenoz in Cummins and Davison, 2007:158). Another researcher mentioned by Jessner and Cenoz, Cook

... argued that in contrast to monolinguals, bilinguals and multilinguals have a different knowledge of their first language and their second language as well as a different kind of language awareness and language processing system” (Jessner and Cenoz in Cummins and Davison, 2007:159).

According to Jessner and Cenoz (in Cummins and Davison, 2007:159) bilinguals have shown themselves to be superior to monolinguals when it comes to language acquisition in a number of studies. Research on third language acquisition has shown that the better the pupils are at their first and second language, the better results they show in the third language (in Cummins and Davison, 2007).

According to Ladberg (1996:103), English and other foreign languages become difficult subjects for many pupils with a foreign background. It is not because there are too many languages to keep track of. Difficulties arise when a language is taught through Swedish, because even if pupils with another first language than Swedish know how to speak and write Swedish very well, they might still be thinking in their first language. Pupils use their first language as a thinking tool and translate from Swedish to their first language when they read or listen to Swedish and then back from the first language to Swedish when they speak or write Swedish. When English is taught through Swedish another layer in the thinking process is added
because they have to make double translations. It would be easier for these pupils if English was taught through English.

2.4 The National Curriculum and the English Syllabus

The national curriculum (SNAE, 1994) states education should be adapted to each pupil’s circumstances and needs. Based on the pupils’ background, earlier experiences, language, and knowledge, it should promote the pupils’ further learning and acquisition of knowledge.

According to the National Curriculum the education “should be of equivalent value” but the national curriculum also states that “equivalent education does not mean that the education should be the same everywhere”

The objective of English as a subject in the Swedish school according to the syllabus (SNAE, 2000) is to teach general communication skills. “The subject aims at developing an all-round communicative ability and the language skills necessary for international contacts…“. One of the goals to aim for is that “The school in its teaching of English should aim to ensure that pupils develop their ability to use English to communicate in speech and writing….“ These points of view are also stated in the goals which the pupils are supposed to have attained by the end of the ninth year in school.

There are not any clear guidelines as to how exactly teachers are supposed to teach English, neither in the curriculum nor in the syllabus for English published by SNAE (2000). This gives teachers great liberty to use as little or as much Swedish in teaching English as they want as long as they teach communicative English skills to their pupils. To be able to choose one method instead of the other, one needs to consider different
approaches to language and language learning according to Richards and Rogers (1986).

Communicative language teaching is an approach in language teaching which shares the same objective as the present syllabus for English (SNAE, 2000) does, to teach general communication skills. However, there will be a new syllabus of English published in 2010/2011.

2.5 Communicative Language Teaching

According to Richards (2006:22) in current Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) the pupils should be engaged in interaction and meaningful communication which arises when pupils work with content that is

…relevant, purposeful, interesting, and engaging….Effective classroom learning tasks and exercises provide opportunities for students to negotiate meaning, expand their language resources, notice how language is used, and take part in meaningful interpersonal exchange.

Richards (2006:22) states that to learn the pupils need activities which teach them grammar but also activities which gives them the opportunity to reflect upon the language and analyze it.

Language learning is a gradual process that involves creative use of language, and trial and error. …the ultimate goal of learning is to be able to use the new language both accurately and fluently.

According to Richards (2006:23) the language learning process is individual and will be successful if the pupils use “… effective learning and communication strategies.”

In CLT the teacher’s role is to give the pupils the kind of tasks and exercises which lead to language learning and also the opportunity to
reflect on their language learning. The pupils learn through working
together and sharing experiences. (Richards 2006:23)

2.6 Summary of the literature review

In its report, SNAE (2004) states that for pupils who have immigrated to
Sweden after they started school the amount of time they have spent in the
Swedish school has a great affect on their school results. 26, 3% of the
pupils who immigrated late to Sweden do not achieve the goals set for a
passing grade in English.

The teachers mentioned in the literature review agree that the pupils
low level of Swedish is a challenge for them when they teach English in the
multilingual classroom, especially when they teach vocabulary.

Even if TLA has a lot in common with SLA there are differences. TLA
is influenced by SLA. Research on TLA has shown that the more bilingual
the pupils are the better results they show in the third language. (Cummins
difficult for many pupils with a foreign background when it is taught
through Swedish because an extra layer in the thinking process is added
when the pupils still use there first language to think.

The National Curriculum (SNAE, 1994) encourages teachers to adapt
their teaching to each pupil to secure equivalent value of education to all
pupils. The objective of English as a subject in the Swedish school
according to the syllabus (SNAE, 2000) is to teach general communication
skills.

Richards (2006:23) states that the language learning process is
individual. In the multilingual classroom most pupils have experiences
from SLA and have already developed different strategies for language
learning which they will use to learn English. Some of the pupils are very
bilingual with a high level of Swedish while others are at the beginner level of Swedish. In CLT the teacher provides the pupils with material which makes the pupils want to interact and have meaningful conversation with each other. When pupils interact and try to communicate with each other in English they use their strategies for language learning they have with them from SLA. In CLT the teachers are also supposed to give the pupils the opportunity to reflect on their language learning.
3 Method

In my dissertation I have done a case study to get a deeper understanding of when and why English teachers choose to use Swedish to teach English. According to Johansson and Svedner (1998:30) a case study is a deeper investigation of one case or a few cases. This kind of investigation aims to catch what is unique about the situation investigated. A properly conducted case study can give results which can be applied to other similar situations. In this case study I observed two teachers during one lesson each.

To be able to get different perspectives on my case study I used different methods of investigation. This is called triangulation (Johansson and Svedner, 1998:28). When I had made my observations I conducted structured interviews with the teachers. Structured interviews as described by Johansson and Svedner (1998:44) are interviews where both the general topic of the questions and the questions are decided before the interview. Usually the questions are constructed in such a way that the answers are open rather then limited to specific answers to choose from.

3.1 Selection

I work at the school which was the subject of my investigation. The teachers who were observed and interviewed are the only English teachers in year 6-9 at the school except for me. According to Hatch (2002:99) using a school or people who are easy to access in an investigation is called a convenience study. It was important to me that my colleagues did not feel obligated to participate just because we work together.
Since my investigation is about the use of Swedish in teaching English in the multilingual classroom the school where I conducted my investigation had to be a multilingual school. This school has pupils from Pre School to year 9. It has about 250 pupils in year 6-9. About 93% of the pupils have another first language than Swedish. About 20% of the pupils have arrived in Sweden within the last year and are attending an introduction class in Swedish. The school has a soccer and music- and arts profile.

The groups chosen for observation were random because I had to observe the groups when I did not teach classes myself. The first observation was conducted in a group of 13 pupils in year 6. All the pupils in the group have a foreign background with both parents born in another country than Sweden while the pupils themselves were born in Sweden.

The second observation was conducted in a group of 14 pupils in year seven. Four of the pupils were born in another country than Sweden and came to Sweden after they started the first grade. The rest of the pupils were born in Sweden with both parents born in another country than Sweden.

The first interview was conducted with the teacher who taught lesson A. I will call her teacher A. She is a senior Master of Swedish and English and has worked as a teacher since the beginning of the 70´s. She has worked at multilingual schools during almost all of her teaching career. In addition to having to learn about language acquisition while she studied to be a teacher she has also attended many further training courses in language acquisition in order to keep herself up to date with the latest research.

The second interview was conducted with the teacher who taught lesson B. I will call her teacher B. She has a Masters degree in English and another language, and teacher degrees from both an English speaking country and Sweden. She has worked as a teacher within the Swedish
school system since the 90’s and taught at multilingual schools since she came back to Sweden but also during her nine years as a teacher in an English speaking country, where she taught English as a second language. Her degrees include courses in language acquisition.

3.2 Procedure

In my case study I observed two English teachers when they taught one of their lessons. Each lesson was a 40 minute lesson. During the observations I took notes. According to Johansson and Svedner (1998:54) taking notes during the observation is the most appropriate method when observing what happens in a classroom “/…/because it describes what actually happened and preserves the connection between different events” (my translation) Although I took notes during the whole lesson I focused my attention during my observations on seeing if English or Swedish was the dominating language during the lesson and in what situations the teachers would use Swedish if they used Swedish during the lesson.

After I had observed the teachers I conducted the interviews. I recorded the interviews but I also took notes. I took notes to create silence in between questions, not to interrupt the line of thought of the teacher I was interviewing, as recommended by Johansson and Svedner (1998:47). The interview questions can be found in Appendix 1. Each interview took about an hour.

3.3 Ethical considerations

According to Codex(Vetenskapsrådet) people who participate in an investigation should be informed about the methods used in the investigation, the purpose of the investigation, the fact that they do not
have to participate in the investigation and that they can end their participation at any point. They should be given the possibility to ask questions and receive truthful answers and they should also be sure of that their anonymity is protected.

Before I conducted any of my observations and interviews I informed the teachers who participated about what my dissertation was about and explained to them that I wanted to observe them during one lesson to see how much Swedish they use and in which situation they chose to use Swedish. I also told them that they were welcome to ask questions at any point during my investigation and that they did not have to feel bad if they did not want to participate. I informed them that the name of the city where our school is, the schools name and their names would not be mentioned in the dissertation.
4 Results

The aim of my investigation was to get a deeper understanding of when and why English teachers use Swedish teaching English. During my observations I wanted to see if English or Swedish was the dominating language and in what situations the teachers used Swedish if they used Swedish during the lessons. In this section I will present the results of my observations and interviews. The interviews were conducted in Swedish and I have translated the quotations from the interviews into English.

04.1 Observations

During the first lesson I observed, which was in a year 6, the pupils read *The Elephant Man*, taking turns reading the text aloud. I will call this lesson A. According to my observations the dominating language in lesson A was English. During lesson A the teacher used Swedish to explain grammar and to translate difficult words.

During the second lesson I observed, which was in a year 7, the pupils had a written vocabulary test. I will call this lesson B. During the vocabulary test the pupils were asked to translate half of the words from Swedish into English and the other half from English into Swedish. The words were read by the teacher and the pupils wrote them in their test books. The words were taken from a list of words in the back of the textbook. They all belonged to the same chapter. The text book being used was called *What’s up?* and during the second half of the lesson they took turns reading the same chapter out loud. The teacher asked questions in English on the text which the pupils answered in English. During lesson B the dominating language was Swedish. Most of the communication which
concerned such things as pupils being late or pupils speaking when they were not supposed to and other examples of authentic communication was in Swedish.

4.2 Interviews

4.2.1 In what teaching situations do the teachers use Swedish?

During lesson A, teacher A used Swedish to explain grammar and to translate difficult words. She wishes she were more consistent in her use of English during lessons because she believes it would be better for pupils with a foreign background. She feels she very often uses Swedish to translate instructions she has given in English. When she teaches new vocabulary she uses the text in which the vocabulary is found a lot so that the words are learnt in a context. She believes in using a lot of texts to expose the pupils to a lot of different vocabulary. When she does vocabulary tests she usually lets the pupils translate the words from Swedish into English and from English into Swedish.

During lesson B the dominating language was Swedish. Most of the communication which concerned such things as pupils being late or pupils speaking when they were not supposed to and other situations with authentic communication was in Swedish. In her teaching teacher B claims that Swedish definitely is the base language teaching English. She speaks Swedish almost all of the time during her lessons, using it as the main language of instruction. Whenever she speaks English she directly translates it into Swedish so that all the pupils can understand and feel included. She finds this to be unfortunate but necessary with the type of pupils she has.
4.2.2 Why do the teachers use Swedish in teaching English?

Teacher A says that if she uses mostly Swedish teaching English or not depends a lot on what kind of a group she is teaching. If the group is used to speaking and using English from fourth and fifth grade it is easier to continue with English as the dominating language in the English classroom. If the pupils are low achievers in English and not used to speaking English then it is harder to maintain English as the base language. It does not matter to her if it is a multilingual classroom or not.

Teacher B finds it very hard to teach English through English at a multilingual school because of pupils’ low achievement in English. “It is very hard to conduct a whole lesson using nothing but English “. She thinks that the use of Swedish in the textbook materials could complicate the learning situation for the pupils in her groups but at the same time they still know more Swedish than English and it is the only common language in the classroom. She thinks that if English would be a second language in Sweden it should be taught through English. But she thinks that since Swedish is the second language for most of the pupils in the multilingual classroom in Sweden and the only language all the pupils have in common, the way from the pupils’ first language over to Swedish is very important in teaching English and the pupils’ proficiency in Swedish determines how well they achieve in English.

Neither teacher A nor teacher B thought the use of Swedish depended on the textbooks. The teacher of lesson B stated that the use of Swedish in the textbook material complicated learning for the pupils in her group but Swedish is the only common language which the pupils know better than English. However, she thinks that “a good text book” in English as teaching material is important and teachers need to be patient and not rush things, everything takes its time in the acquisition process. It is important to
teach pupils to communicate in small steps, to start with the simple things and then to advance. She does not take any special consideration of the fact that most of her pupils do not have Swedish as their first language. Her goal is to teach proper English to all her pupils. “Maybe all cannot learn much English at all but they should know how to use the English they know.” She uses a textbook most of the time and tries to adapt it to the needs of the pupils.
5 Discussion

The purpose of my dissertation has been to get a deeper understanding of how, when and why the English teachers of year 6-9 at a particular multilingual school use Swedish when they teach English in a multilingual classroom. The questions which I wanted to find the answers to in my investigation were:

- In what teaching situations do the teachers use Swedish in teaching English in the multilingual classroom?
- What reasons do the teachers give for using Swedish in teaching English in the multilingual classroom?

5.1 Swedish in teaching English in the multilingual classroom.
Considering the views of the teachers mentioned in the literature review one could assume English is taught through Swedish in the multilingual classroom and that this causes a problem for pupils with a foreign background. According to NU-03, the national evaluation of the compulsory school in Sweden (SNAE, 2003) (my translation), almost half of the pupils state English is used for communication all the time or almost all the time during the English classes. Slightly fewer teachers agree. According to the report Elever med utländsk bakgrund (SNAE, 2004) only 8, 7 % of the schools in Sweden are multilingual. Considering this there might be a possibility that teachers who teach English at multilingual schools (like the teachers quoted above) use Swedish to teach English to a larger extent than teachers who teach at schools which are not multilingual.
The teachers in my interviews find it hard to teach English through English when they teach English to pupils who have a low achievement in English. It does not matter to them if the pupils are multilingual or not, although teacher B agrees that the use of Swedish in the textbook materials could complicate the learning situation for the pupils in her groups but at the same time they still know more Swedish than English and it is the only common language in the classroom. Teacher A wishes she would be more consistent with her use of English during her lessons because she believes it would be better for the pupils with a foreign background. According to Ladberg (1996) using Swedish causes problems for pupils with a foreign background because they have to add another layer to their thinking process. A number of studies have shown that bilinguals are superior to monolinguals when it comes to language acquisition but that how successful the pupils are in acquiring a third language depends on how bilingual they are (Jessner and Cenoz in Cummins and Davison, 2007).

5.2 The teacher knowledge of third language acquisition

The teachers who I interviewed are very qualified and have a long experience of teaching at multilingual schools and are very familiar with language acquisition but they still use more Swedish than they would want to in teaching English. The reason for this seems to be that even if language acquisition has been a part of their training the focus has been on second language acquisition rather than third language acquisition. They are not trained to teach English in a context where Swedish is not the first language of all pupils. According to Jessner and Cenoz (in Cummins and Davison, 2007:158) acquiring a third language is similar to acquiring a second language but there are differences too. Thus, teaching English as a third language is different to teaching English as a second language. In my
opinion there is a need for training teachers in teaching English as a third language although most pupils learn English as a second language. However, I do not think there is a need for a special syllabus in English as a third language because in the end the pupils should achieve the same goals, communicating in English, whether they are learning English as a third language or not. I do question if it is right to demand that pupils who arrive in Sweden when they are in the 8th year should have to have a passing grade in English in the 9th year to be able to qualify to a national program at upper secondary school.

5.3 Teaching English vocabulary through Swedish.

Based on my observation and interviews with the teachers it seems more likely that teachers tend to use more Swedish in certain teaching situations than others. For example a common practice seems to be to translate words from or to Swedish when working on vocabulary. It also seems more common to explain grammar in Swedish than in English.

Even if the teachers I interviewed did not find a connection between the textbooks being used and the amount of Swedish they used, their way of testing vocabulary is very consistent with the way it is presented in most textbooks. According to Bo Lundahl (2009:82) the wordlists used in the English textbooks cause problems and for the pupils who do not quite master the Swedish language they become an obstacle in learning English. The teachers mentioned in the literature review express the same point of view (Nissen and Strukelj 2007:24). It is very hard for the pupils to understand the meaning of an English word through the use of a Swedish word if they do not understand what the Swedish word means. Teachers in the multilingual classroom should find other ways to teach vocabulary. Teacher A tries to teach vocabulary in a context but when she does
vocabulary tests she usually lets the pupils translate the words from Swedish into English and from English into Swedish.

The report *Läromedlens roll i undervisningen* (SNAE, 2006) shows that English textbooks are used as teaching materials in English classes all the time or almost all the time. Most of those books use Swedish in their instructions and almost all of them have a wordlist where words are translated from Swedish into English or from English into Swedish. According to Bo Lundahl (2009:82) the grammar explanations refer to comparisons between Swedish and English grammar and this also causes problems for the pupils with another first language than Swedish. The pupils in the multilingual classroom are then forced to make comparisons between to grammatical systems which they do not master.

5.4 Teaching general communication skills.

According to the English syllabus teachers should teach general communication skills. According to Richards (2006) the goal of CLT is to develop learners’ communicative competence. Pupils interact and communicate when the teacher provides them with a material that is interesting to them. Considering the TLA research mentioned in the literature review (Jessner and Cenoz in Cummins and Davison, 2007) one could assume that the pupils in the multilingual classroom use language learning strategies which they have from their SLA when they are encouraged to communicate with each other in English. Richards (2006) states that to learn the pupils need activities which teach them grammar but also activities which gives them the opportunity to reflect upon the language and analyze it. It seems to me it would be easier for the pupils in the multilingual classroom to reflect upon the English language and try to analyze it they were encouraged to make comparisons between their first
language and English and not between Swedish and English. In CLT the teacher’s role is to give the pupils the kind of tasks and exercises which lead to language learning and also the opportunity to reflect on their language learning.

5.5 Conclusions

Because of the results of my investigation I will be more attentive to my own use of English in teaching English. It is easy to give up when the pupils do not understand very much of what one is saying and it is important to be persistent even if the pupils respond in Swedish or it feels as if one has to translate most of what is said into the only common language which the pupils know better than English. I want to find out more about teaching English as a third language so that I can develop and adapt the teaching methods I am already using to the pupils I am actually teaching. I especially want to use more CLT when I teach and continue to encourage my pupils to use their first language when they compare grammar.

5.6 Reliability

According to Hatch (2002) a convenience study is the least reliable because usually the researcher and the informants have a relationship to each other and this could affect the outcome of the research. I did not want my colleagues to feel obligated to participate in my investigation because I was their colleague. I hope that the fact that they knew me did not affect the way they conducted their lessons or answered my questions.

The fact that I informed them about the exact aim of my investigation could have affected them into using more English than they usually do and
to be more conscious about their use of English or Swedish than they would normally be.

It could be interesting to do a case study at a school which is not multilingual and to do such a study in a group of less proficient pupils since the teachers in my interviews claim they use more Swedish teaching English to a group where the pupils achieve lower grades in English. It would be interesting to compare the results.

In retrospect I feel I could have observed the teachers during more lessons and maybe I would have found other situations where they used Swedish. It should also be added that I do not know how the pupils I observed will perform in year 9 nor do I know how they performed in year 5, I can only rely on what my colleagues said about the groups.
Bibliography


Appendix 1

I used the following interview questions:
What are your qualifications?
How long have you been teaching?
How long have you been teaching at a multilingual school?
Do you have any knowledge of language acquisition?
What is your knowledge about and attitude towards multilingualism?
Do you feel you are competent to teach English to a multilingual group?
Do you think there is a need for special skills when one teaches English in a multilingual classroom and if so what are they and do you have those special skills?
Do you take special consideration to pupils with a non-Swedish background when you teach English?
What do you consider when planning your lessons?
Have you noticed a difference in the achievement in English between native pupils and pupils with a foreign background?
What in your opinion could be the reason for such differences?
What study material do you use most of the time?
How does the choice of material affect the way in and extent to which you use Swedish teaching English?
Does most of the material used and available use Swedish as a base language?
Would you consider Swedish as the base language in your English classroom?
How do you use Swedish teaching English?
What method do you use for teaching new vocabulary?
Would you consider Swedish a necessity for your pupils’ ability to learn English?