The influences of Code-switching in the Second Language Classroom in connection to language development

Användning av kodväxling i relation till språkutveckling i språkundervisning

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Code-switching in L2
Abstract

The goal of this paper was to investigate if code-switching is a beneficial language strategy pertaining to pupils’ oral language development. Moreover, the purpose was to examine what teachers need to consider when they use the pupils’ first language in the classroom. Previous studies are in conflict of whether or not code-switching is a useful language strategy and also of how it should be used in the language classroom. This synthesis attempted to answer if code-switching support oral language development in the second language (L2) classroom in secondary school in Sweden and what needs to be considered when using code-switching in an educational context. The results suggested that low-proficiency learners benefit from first language (L1) usage, whereas high-proficiency students seem to both prefer and benefit more from an English-only classroom. Findings also propose that maximum exposure of the target language (TL) is to be preferred, as long as it is not too difficult for pupils to comprehend. Together, these findings suggest that teachers’ and pupils’ usage of code-switching can be a beneficial language strategy, but that it is crucial for teachers to know their pupils’ language level and when to use code-switching.

*Keywords: Code-switching, Oral language development, second- language, first-language, second language teaching, second language acquisition, language learning*
Code-switching in L2
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1. Introduction

This degree project focuses on the functions of code-switching in connection to oral language development in the language classroom. Code-switching is a phenomenon which has been investigated widely in foreign language classrooms. The topic has been examined and discussed from different approaches and a conflict concerning code-switching exists. For instance, Meiring and Norman (2002) showed, by distributing a questionnaire to 45 language teachers that teachers tend to use the target language (TL) more extensively if the pupils are at a higher level. In Macaro’s (2001) case study it is suggested that code-switching is a language strategy that needs to be acquired since it is a natural form of communication. On the other hand, Xiaoil (2009) proposed, through a quantitative research, that maximum exposure of the TL is important.

Pupil’ and teacher’ code-switching is also something that has been discussed. For example, pupils’ different usage of code-switching seems to be related to proficiency level: interviews conducted by Evans (2009) revealed that some pupils feel hesitant using the L2 if they are not certain about the correct usage of the TL. Additionally, Bateman’s (2008) qualitative findings also suggested that proficiency level influences both the pupils’ and the teachers’ usage of code-switching.

Even though pupils’ proficiency levels have been mentioned as a reason to why teachers’ usage of code-switching differs (Bateman, 2008), there also seems to be a different explanation. For instance, Inbar-Lourie (2010) conducted a qualitative study that investigated the reason why the extent to which teachers’ code-switching differs significantly. The findings indicated that the reason for teachers’ different use of code-switching seemed to be explained by teachers’ personal pedagogical beliefs regarding whether or not code-switching is a beneficial language strategy for the pupils (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, p. 532). The conflict concerning teachers’ different pedagogical beliefs regarding whether or not code-switching is advantageous makes my research relevant. I have, as a student teacher and a substitute teacher at different secondary schools in southern Sweden, witnessed how teachers’ and pupils’ usage of code-switching in the
language classroom differs extensively. For example, the amount of code-switching being used in the classroom seems to depend on individual teachers’ beliefs. For instance, one English teacher used the pupils’ L1 frequently and switched between Swedish and English regularly during class. Another example, from the same school, but with a different English teacher is a teacher whom barely code-switched during a lesson focused on content. However, during a lesson focused on grammar, the same teacher code-switched extensively. The teacher explained all grammatical rules orally in Swedish, but gave examples of sentences where the rules were applied in English. (classroom observation, May 5 and May 8, 2014). My experience concerning code-switching in regards to oral grammar explanation can be connected to Inbar-Lourie’s (2010) qualitative findings, which suggested that teachers seem to use the students’ L1 more frequently during lessons focused on grammar, compared to other types of language lessons. Once again, the main reason to why it differs appeared to depend on teachers’ personal opinion about when code-switching is beneficial.

The topic of code-switching is also particularly relevant in light of core content for communicative skills in the syllabus for English in year 7-9, which includes the ability to use strategies “to understand and be understood when language skills are lacking/...” (Skolverket, 2011) and code-switching is defined as an “asset and a valuable addition to the array of communicative strategies” (Macaro, 2005, p. 63). It is therefore important to investigate the usage of code-switching in connection to students’ oral language development, since the use of language strategies is one of the core contents in the syllabus for secondary school.

The purpose of this research synthesis is to examine code-switching further, in connection to oral language development. This is relevant because as stated above previous studies discuss code-switching from different perspectives. These studies and my own experiences suggest that it is relevant to investigate whether or not code-switching is a beneficial language strategy in the L2 classroom in secondary school in Sweden. It is also important for teachers to better understand if code-switching in secondary school is beneficial, as LGR11 does not specifically states how the L1 and TL should be used in the language classroom in secondary school. Lastly, it is important for teachers to receive more knowledge about what needs to be considered when using code-switching in educational context. As a result of previous studies this research is relevant.
2. Research questions

Keeping in mind that the conflict previous studies have depicted regarding code-switching related to language development in the second language classroom, I have formulated the following research questions:

1. Does teachers’ and students’ code-switching support oral language development in the L2 classroom in secondary school in connection to Lgr11?
2. What needs to be considered when using code-switching in an educational context?
3. Theoretical background

With the purpose of receiving more knowledge about whether code-switching in the L2 classroom supports oral language development, it is essential to understand what is meant by code-switching and oral language development. In the following sections, I describe the definitions I am referring to when discussing code-switching and oral language development. Furthermore, this section also includes a literature review of previous studies relevant for this degree project and for the research questions.

3.1 Definition of Code-Switching

The definition of code-switching is complex as Gardner-Chloros (2009, p.11) noted that it is problematic to define code-switching, as she mentioned that code-switching can have several different meanings and refer to whatever we want it to mean. With that complexity in mind, I have chosen to use Schendl and Wright’s definition of code-switching. They defined code-switching as the ability to “alternate between languages in an unchanged setting, often within the same utterance” (Schendl and Wright, 2011). In the context of this research this means English teachers’ and English as a L2 students’ ability to alternate between English and Swedish in the language classroom.

Furthermore, Schendl and Wright (2011) stated that all speakers have the ability to use language varieties in their language repertoire. This means different things depending on speaker and context. For instance, bilingual speakers often use two languages within the same setting when they code-switch, whereas monolingual speakers code-switch within their language repertoire, which can, for example be the use of dialects and separate words from other languages (Schendl and Wright).

Bilingual and monolingual speakers use different strategies when they code-switch. This is important to reflect upon, considering some pupils in the Swedish school
system are bilingual speakers and others are monolingual. Bilingual speakers use three different distinct strategies; alternation, which refers to when two languages remain relatively separate from one another. The second strategy is insertion, meaning that two languages are embedded with each other, for example most of the sentences are in French, but some individual words are in English. The third strategy is called congruent lexicalization, meaning to use two languages that share the same grammatical structure (Schendl & Wright, p. 3). Monolingual speakers code-switch as well, however, monolingual speakers’ usage of code-switching functions differently in classroom settings, compared to when bilingual speakers code-switch. For instance, Macaro’s (2001) case study revealed that the student teachers being interviewed code-switched and expressed themselves in pupils’ first language (L1) when there was a lack of comprehension from the pupils and when trying to control the situation in case of conflict. For the purpose of this research it is important to understand that the usage of code-switching will differ depending on whether the languages are used by a bilingual or monolingual speaker who learned English as a L2. There are teachers and pupils in the English language classroom in Sweden who are both bilingual and monolingual. However, as mentioned above, the code-switching strategies used by bilinguals and monolinguals differ extensively and therefore this study will focus on the code-switching of L2 learners in the language classroom in secondary school. In this degree project code-switching and the alternation between the use of the L1 and L2 is referred to when a L2 student and English teacher alternates between two languages in an unchanged setting, in this case the language classroom in secondary school in Sweden.

3.2 Definition of Oral Language Development

Language development can be related to Vygotsky’s (1986) language learning theory, concerning a person’s zone of proximal development (ZPD). Additionally, Lundahl (2009) stated that viewed from a sociocultural perspective learning is social and occurs between individuals with the support from others. This can be connected to Vygotsky’s (1998) learning theory that states that in order for language development to occur, the individual learner requires a sociocultural environment, where learners’ language develops by cooperating with others. Moreover, Vygotsky (1998) consider that the
teaching process always is done socially, for example, by cooperation with adults. Oral language development in the Swedish educational context can also be related with Vygotsky’s theory, since the syllabus states that students should interpret and understand spoken English, as well as to “express themselves and communicate in speech in English” (Skolverket, 2011, p. 32). In order to do so students need to engage in oral conversations, such as pair discussions or group work. Vygotsky’s theory states that learners’ language skills develop within the learner’s zone of proximal development (ZPD). A learner’s ZPD refers to the zone where it is possible for development to occur. An example from Vygotsky (1986, p.187) is two children who’s mental age is eight. Both of the children received a problem harder than they could solve independently. However, with support one of the children could solve tasks intended for twelve year olds, whereas the other child could only solve problems designed for nine year olds. This indicates the ZPD; “the discrepancy between a child’s actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 187).

Moreover, a student’s ZPD is important to acknowledge, since “learners can only benefit from [scaffolding] if they are in the ZPD” (Harmer, 2007, p. 59). This means that pupils, in the language classroom, will solely develop their language learning if they are learning at a stage above their current level of knowledge with the support of other pupils or teachers. As for instance, in the English classroom it is critical that the teacher knows the individual student’s ZPD and give the pupils tasks accordingly, if the tasks are too easy the students will not develop their language learning, however, the same goes if the problems are too difficult for the pupils to understand with support.

Additionally, when discussing oral language development in this research I refer to the all-round communicative skills stated in the syllabus for English in secondary school, with focus on speaking. It is stated that:

Pupils should be given the opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills. These skills involve understanding spoken /…/ English, being able to formulate one’s thinking and interact with others in the spoken /…/ language, and the ability to adapt the use of language to different situations, purposes and recipients. Communicative skills also cover /…/ the ability to use different strategies to support communication and solve problems when language skills by themselves are not sufficient. (Skolverket, 2011, p. 32)
Hence, in this research when discussing oral language development, I refer to the communicative skills focused on speaking which are mentioned in the syllabus for secondary school in English. Additionally, the focus is on Vygotsky’s theory about language learning, since the oral language learning that are being investigated is connected to a sociocultural perspective and thereby also about pupils’ ZPD.

3.3 Literature review

As noted in the introduction, studies have been conducted on code-switching and researchers are not in agreement on whether or not code-switching is beneficial and when it is supposed to be used. On one hand it is argued that the TL is to be preferred as it maximizes students’ exposure to the L2 (Xiaoil, 2013), on the other hand other Macaro (2005) discovered, through classroom observations, that teachers’ and students’ code-switching in the language classroom can be considered to be a helpful language strategy. This would be in line with Ahmad (2009) investigation who, through a questionnaire based on 257 participants, studied how low proficiency learners where influenced by teachers’ use of code-switching in the language classroom. The study suggested that teachers’ code-switching in the language classroom is a valid asset for low proficiency learners and that teachers’ code-switching is connected to learners’ support. However, Xiaoil’s (2013) questionnaires and interviews suggested that if the teacher frequently code-switch in the classroom this will lead to a risk of students limiting their use of the TL.

Wright (2010) emphasised that pupils’ native language should not be ignored; instead schools should respect their pupils’ mother tongue. Moreover, the author defined and discussed primary language support (PLS), which is used to support pupils’ L2 learning. The purpose of PLS is to instruct pupil in the TL and to make it as comprehensible as possible in order for the pupils to acquire the L2 better. The concept of PSL was further developed by describing that PSL makes it easier for teachers to acknowledge if the pupils understand the concept of what was being taught, but could not answer in the TL, or if the pupils did not understand at all and as a result the teacher needed to re-teach the concept (Wright, 2010). This can be connected to the results of Samar and Moradkhani’s (2014) interviews with language teachers. The results
indicated that one of the functions of teacher’ code-switching is to guarantee pupils’ comprehension.

Wright (2010) further discussed PSL and stated an ineffective way to use it is according to the author direct translation is an ineffective way to use PSL, because it may lead to pupils’ vocabulary learning will decrease. The reason for this is because as the pupils are receiving instructions in their L1, they do not need to attend to the TL and thereby, they learn less English. Another ineffective use of oral language support is when substituting written English words with oral translations in the pupils L1. According to the author, the pupils do not connect the written words with the oral translation (Wright, 2010). This is highly relevant for this study and for teacher profession in southern Sweden, as the usage of direct translation is something I have noticed during my own teacher education. In this case, one teacher first gave instruction in English and later repeated all of it in Swedish. Other ineffective and effective functions of teachers’ and pupils’ use of code-switching will be examined more thoroughly through primary research in the result section.

Harmer (2007) also discussed the usage of pupils’ L1 in the classroom in comparison with an English-only approach. One example of when the usage of pupils’ L1 is a benefit is when it is used to create a better group dynamic, according to the author. Another function of the L1 in the language classroom is when a teacher wants to “discuss making a learning contract with their students, or to ask what they want or need” (Harmer, 2007, p. 133). According to the author, this will result in the lower-level students being more included. This can be connected to Centeno-Cortés (2004) case study, who investigated 18 learners with different language proficiency levels and its connection to code-switching. It was discovered that low proficiency learners will use the L1 to a greater extent, compared to pupils with better L2 abilities. Perhaps this will result in the lower-levels being more included when the L1 is used by teachers and pupils, if they do not understand the L2 greatly.

Nonetheless, Harmer (2007, p.134) also mentioned detriments in using the pupils’ L1. One of the disadvantages discussed is the fact that the usage of pupils’ L1 limits TL exposure. Xiaoil’s (2013) also noticed this, though a qualitative research and came to the conclusion that when possible it is preferable for teachers and pupils to use the TL.

Harmer (2007, p. 135) considered that clear guidelines might help pupils to know when they are allowed to use the L1 in the language classroom. Moreover, the author described that some teachers, inadvertently, over-use pupils’ L1 in the classroom and
with clear guidelines this may be avoided. This will further be discussed in the result section, when analysing primary research on the subject.

As the above text indicates, previous studies view the usage of code-switching differently. However, not only do previous studies consider the usage of code-switching in the language classroom differently, but national curriculums do too (Macaro, 2001, p. 534). For instance, Macaro (2001) stated that the national curriculum in England argues that pupils’ L1 should be avoided and that the TL is the only language recommended to be used in the language classroom. France, on the other hand, recommends that pupils should learn the TL by gradually limit the use of French in the classroom. The Swedish curriculum for secondary school does not give any direct indications to whether code-switching should be used or not in the language classroom. As a result individual teachers’ usage of code-switching may differ. Because of the present conflict in the field of code-switching it is relevant to further investigate if code-switching is beneficial to be used in the English classroom and if so when it should be used.
4. Methodology

For the purpose of this research, I have chosen to conduct a research synthesis. Norris and Ortega (2006) defined research synthesis by emphasising the importance of systematic evaluation of primary research. This degree project aims to produce more knowledge of the usage of code-switching in connection to language development. Studies have previously been conducted within this field and as mentioned there are still conflicts concerning the subject. As a result, I argue that it is advantageous to use a research synthesis as a method since it allows comparing, contrasting and analysing previous studies. By comparing and contrasting studies relevant to my research questions, I will increase the possibility to understand how code-switching can be used to promote language development in the second language classroom, which is the aim for this degree project.

4.1. Reliability

The reliability of a research is important to establish a research that is trustworthy and dependable. One issue with reliability is publication bias (Ortega, 2010, p. 114-115). For example, studies that do not include statistically significance are likely to be rejected and not published. For this reason, Ortega (2010, p.114) stated that a good synthesis should address this issue and include not only published material, but also fugitive and unpublished literature. Norris and Ortega (2006) suggested that research synthesis that relies merely on publicized articles should be aware of publication bias. This degree project may be in risk of publication bias, since the articles used are exclusively published.
4.2. Validity

It is significant to consider the validity of a research. Ortega (2010, p. 114) discussed “important validity considerations that arise during the sampling of the primary studies to be included in the research”. In order to increase the validity of the paper, the author mentioned the importance of considering the research questions and the purpose of the paper. For instance, this paper deals with code-switching and oral language development in the L2 classroom. In order to increase the validity, I have therefore methodically chosen relevant articles for the purpose of this specific research. The inclusion and exclusion are described in details in the section below.

4.4. Selection

Ortega (2010, p. 117) suggested that a literature search and the study of eligibility criteria should be considered when doing a literature synthesis. This step of the research is used to search through databases in order to exclude and include material relevant for the research. I searched in EBSCO and used code-switching as a search term as well as added not bilinguals in the search field. After this, I looked through the articles left based on my inclusion and exclusion criteria. The criteria were chosen to be relevant for the Swedish educational context, for instance I included articles focused on oral language development. The following criteria were the base of which articles to include or exclude:

Inclusion criteria

- Focus on code-Switching and its effect on students
- Focus on use of L1 in the L2 classroom
- Focus on code-switching in the L2 classroom
- Focus on code-switching and Foreign Language
- Focus on oral code-switching
- Literature written during the 21st century
Exclusion criteria

- Focus on code-switching in writing and reading
- Focus on code-switching and bilingualism
- Focus on code-switching outside the L2 language classroom
- Literature written prior to the 21st century

Fink (2005, p. 62-64) emphasized random selection of articles to avoid biases. Due to this, I used the search engine EBSCO to make sure I received a randomized selection of articles based on my inclusion and exclusion criteria. A total of 20 articles were included in the result section of this study. When applying the above criteria on the search of EBSCO it resulted in 18 relevant articles. Two additional articles were used, which were found from previous investigation on the subject. However, these two articles passed the inclusion and exclusion criteria and therefore I decided to use them.
5. Analysis and results

The analysis section of this report offers a knowledge overview, discussion and analysis. The different focusing areas of code-switching are discussed in separate subsections. Each focusing area of the research has the same structure; starting with a short knowledge overview and then followed by discussion and analysis.

The documented reports on code-switching in the L2 classroom indicated that code-switching can be, to an extent, beneficial for language development. However, some studies suggested that teachers’ usage of code-switching in the L2 classroom may have a negative impact on students’ usage of the target language. In this section previous studies will be analysed in detail, in order to receive more knowledge about whether code-switching supports oral language development and what needs to be considered when using code-switching in an educational context.

5.1. Code-switching and pupils’ believed expectations

This section briefly discusses issues with pupils’ emotions connected to code-switching in the language classroom. The reason for this is to receive an indication as to why pupils’ may in some cases code-switch. The aim of this paper is to declare if teachers’ and pupils’ usage of code-switching is beneficial for pupils’ oral language development and to clarify that it can be helpful to recognise why pupils may code-switch.

Evans (2009) concluded, through a qualitative research, that most of the incidences of code-switching suggest that the students who code-switched were aware that they were in fact code-switching. Furthermore, not only were the pupils aware of their code-switching but “in many cases they appear to have been hesitant or apologetic in doing so” (Evans, 2009, p. 477). The reason to why some pupils appeared to be hesitant and apologetic about their usage of code-switching seemed to be caused by two reasons. Firstly, the reason to why one of the interviewed participants code-switched
was because she was reluctant to use the TL. It was stated that she was reluctant because of fear of being misinterpreted due to inadequate proficiency in the TL. Secondly, teachers’ expectations made one interviewee in the article feel guilty about using the L1 (Evans, 2009, p. 478). Thereby, it is indicated that students may code-switch due to the fear of inadequate proficiency in TL, but that it might result in guilt because of teachers’ expectations concerning the avoidance of the L1 in the language classroom.

The reason to why this is relevant for this synthesis is because it is connected to code-switching in the context of Sweden and therefore also to my research questions, concerning what needs to be considered when using code-switching. In Lgr11 (2011, p. 16) it is stated that teachers should “reinforce the pupils’ desire to learn as well as the pupil’s confidence in their own ability”. Moreover, it is also emphasises in the syllabus for English the importance of “pupils’ confidence in their ability to use the language in different situations and for different purposes” (Skolverket, 2011, p. 32). If teachers make pupils feel a sense of guilt when code-switching, perhaps a different approach should be considered. Confidence in using English in connection to language development will be discussed further in the sections below.

5.2. Teachers’ usage of code-switching

This section is divided into two subsections. Firstly, a subsection that describes why teachers’ to pupils usage of code-switching differs, as well as to how it is used in the language classroom, when the focus is not on language development but on other reasons. The second subsection focuses on how language teachers’ usage of code-switching affects pupils’ language development.
5.2.1 Teachers’ usage of code-switching in connection to classroom management

Inbar-Lourie (2010) deliberated if teachers should use students’ L1 as a strategy for teaching foreign languages. De la Campa and Nassaji’s (2009, p.755) clarified, through a qualitative research based on two L2 teachers, why the amount of code-switching being used in the language classroom differs depending on teacher. According to this article it also seemed to be related to teachers’ pedagogical beliefs. Moreover, teachers’ pedagogical beliefs appeared to be connected to experiences. In the article, the novice teacher used the L1 to translate words in the L2 to the L1, because it was considered a useful language strategy. The experienced teacher, on the other hand, used pupils’ L1 to create a safe language learning environment and to be more personal. The experienced teacher, in the qualitative research, believed that “this method encouraged the students to participate more effectively in the learning process” (De la Campa and Nassaji, 2008, p.755). Copland and Neokleous’s (2011) interview analysis also revealed that teachers code-switch due to different pedagogical beliefs. However, even though the reason to why they code-switched differed the teachers did not consider that a direct comparison between the L1 and L2 was advantageous.

The above articles clarified that teachers’ pedagogical beliefs might be the reason why the usage of code-switching in the language classroom differs. Celik (2008) on the other hand, studied, through a corpus based investigation, reasons to why the use of pupils’ L1 is useful when it is not directly connected to language development. In the article it is stated that pupils’ L1 is a great tool for handling classroom management. For instance, it is helpful when pronouncing classroom rules or in case of conflict, as Celik (2008) concluded that warnings in the TL appear to have lesser impact on pupils misbehaving compared to when being warned in the L1. During classroom observations Sali (2014) also concluded that teachers’ code-switch when handling classroom management. Bateman (2008, p. 18) conducted interviews, likewise noted teachers using the TL when it comes to classroom management. The interviews conducted revealed that by refusing to use pupils’ L1, the interviewees were afraid to lose control over the class. This indicates that pupils’ L1 is useful when it comes to disciplinary issues, which then can help the focus back to language learning rather than focus on conflicts in the classroom.
The articles above supported my experience regarding the varied amount of code-switching being used in the language classroom. For example, the amount teachers’ code-switch seems to depend on teachers’ individual pedagogical belief. This would support my experience, as a substitute teacher for two years and as a teacher student for 4 years, about the fact that code-switching in southern Sweden differs. It could be explained by teachers having different pedagogical beliefs when it comes to code-switching.

However, these studies only indicated that code-switching is beneficial for classroom management, but it does not answer whether or not code-switching supports language development, which the following subsection attempts to answer.

5.2.2 Teachers’ usage of code-switching in connection to language development

Macaro (2001) showed, through interviews, a conflict regarding the functions of teachers’ usage of code-switching in relation to the development of language learning in the classroom. Moreover, the author attempted to understand what influenced the usage of code-switching. Additionally, the case study examined a correlation between pupils’ usage of the L1 and the amount of code-switching being used by the student teachers. These examinations revealed that if teachers code-switch frequently, the students too will use their L1 rather than the TL more frequently, compared to when the teacher solely used the TL. By connecting it to this essay, it might indicate that code-switching should be avoided, since according to LGR11, pupils should develop the ability to, for instance, understand and express themselves in English. This can be interpreted that the pupils should avoid using their L1, because if they code-switch frequently and use their L1 more than the TL the pupils do not express themselves in English.

Through a qualitative research Xiaoil (2009) also discovered issues with teachers using the pupils’ L1 extensively, mostly because exposure to the TL is essential. This is something Macaro (2005), through a case study also explored and stated the importance of maximizing pupils’ exposure to the TL. Furthermore, if the teacher code-switch often the pupils will use the L1 rather than the TL, as this is the indications of Macaro’s (2001) case study. Consequently, this would lead to that both the linguistic input and
output would decrease. If frequent use of students’ L1 will result in a decrease of students using the TL it is not in line with LGR11. LGR11 mentions that teaching should give pupils the opportunity to interact with others in spoken language, as well as to cover confidence in using English. If regular use of pupils’ L1 will cause students to decrease their use of English it will reduce the pupils’ opportunity to interact in English.

Xiaoil’s (2013) qualitative findings suggested a risk of students’ usage of the TL will lessen if teachers tend to use students’ L1 frequently in the language classroom. The reason for this is because “teachers’ consistent use of the target language can arouse students’ awareness of its immediate usefulness” (Xiaoil, 2013, p. 1278). Likewise, it is stated that if teachers use the TL inconsistently it will de-motivate students to use the TL as well. As shown in Bateman’s (2008) case study students’ failure to see the utility of language learning can cause a lack of motivation to learn and use the TL. The participants in Bateman’s (2008) interviews also revealed that a consequent of pupils’ lack of motivation to learn the TL was that the student teachers used the TL less.

Furthermore, if students are demotivated to use English, they probably will not see the point in learning English and thereby perhaps not be confident in using English and consequently pupils’ opportunities to use the language will decrease. LGR11 (2011, p.35) cover confidence in using English and emphasises the importance of pupils be given the opportunity to use English and if demotivation and irregular use of pupils’ L1 leads to the opposite it should be avoided. However, Macaro (2005) indicated that pupils’ L1 should still be used, but as a valuable asset and resource and that the exposure of the TL should be maximized, but L1 should still be used if the TL is too difficult. The teacher needs to know at what language level the pupils are at and thereby also the pupils’ ZPD. Thereby, if it is needed for their language skills to develop, the usage of the pupils’ L1 should be considered.

Moreover, Xiaoli (2013, 1278-1279) also considered pupils’ L1 to be used as a tool and strategy, the findings from the qualitative research specified that an inconsistent use of the TL may demotivate students to use the L2, however, judicious and limited use of the L1 can be used as a tool to motivate pupils to acquire the L2.

This section indicates that pupils’ L1, in general, should be used with care and only when it is necessary for pupils’ level of comprehension. It is also suggested that maximum exposure of the TL is preferable, but that pupils’ ZPD needs to be considered and thereby pupils’ L1 can be used as a strategy and tool for language learning. The next section focuses on code-switching in connection to grammar.
5.3. Code-switching and grammar

Inbar-Lourie (2010) demonstrated, through qualitative findings, that the usage of code-switching seems to have common functions. The conclusion being drawn is that teachers’ usage of L1 is individual, depending on individual teachers’ pedagogically beliefs. However, there is still a common function of the usage of teacher’ code-switching. For instance, according to the article it seems to be common that oral grammar instructions are being held in students’ L1. Xiaoli’s (2013, p. 1282) classroom observation did not focus on teachers’ pedagogical beliefs, but it gave the same result; grammar instructions are being given in pupils’ L1. These articles support my observation of the teacher who barely code-switched during a lesson focused on content, on the other hand when she orally explained grammar rules she did so in the students’ L1, which in this case was Swedish.

The above articles and my observation indicated that it is common to avoid the usage of the TL during lessons focused on grammar; one of the reasons for this could be teachers’ preferences. However, it does not describe whether or not grammar lessons held in the L1 rather than the L2 are justified from the perspective of language development.

De La Colina & Pilar Garcia Mayo (2009, p. 327-328) investigated the use of L1 and its functions in the oral interaction of twelve low proficiency learners. The findings indicated that teachers’ usage of code-switching in connection to language lesson focused on function and form can indeed be beneficial for the pupils. For instance, code-switching and students’ L1 can be used as a tool when pupils’ language abilities are lacking and the TL becomes too difficult for the pupils to comprehend. The authors suggested that oral grammar instructions in students’ L1 can be valuable. However, they also noted that maximizing students’ L2 is important. Nevertheless, it should be taken into consideration if grammar instructions or the use of the TL becomes too difficult for pupils to grasp and in that case students’ L1 should be used as a tool. This can be connected to Vygotsky’s theory about ZPD (Vygotsky, 1998); students can only develop their English abilities if they are learning at a stage above their current level of knowledge with the support of other pupils or teachers. It can be advantageous to use students’ L1, in order for them to be able to develop at their ZPD, if the case is that oral grammar instruction is difficult for many students to comprehend.
Macaro and Tian (2012) also investigated code-switching in connection to grammar. They studied eighty L2 English students and randomly allocated the students to either an English-only setting or to a code-switching condition. However, compared to the articles above their study focused on the effects grammar had on vocabulary acquisition in connection to code-switching. The study focused on students’ listening skills. However, due to teachers’ oral instructions in the study, it is still relevant. The authors attempted to determine if pupils benefit from teachers’ code-switching, when it comes to vocabulary learning. It concludes that teachers’ code-switching improved pupils’ vocabulary learning to a certain degree when focusing on form. Nevertheless, the authors did not proposed that teachers should use the L1 extensively, as it was stated that the advantageous of doing so were minor.

Another reason to why code-switching is beneficial in connection to grammar learning is because it helps pupils to see linguistic differences between the mother-tongue and the TL. By making pupils aware of linguistic differences it can reduce L1 interference (Celik, 2008, p. 78).

The above text suggests that code-switching is a useful when it comes to oral instructions connected to grammar learning. It can help pupils to comprehend grammar rules better. Lastly, by using pupils’ L1 to explain L2 grammar concepts pupils may be more aware of linguistic differences and as a result it can reduce L1 interference.

5.4. Functions of code-switching

De la Colina & Pilar Garcia Mayo (2009) clarified, through a qualitative investigation, that individuals use private speech (PS), PS is when individuals use language to process their experiences. Thereby, individuals use PS in problem-solving activities and to process experiences. Moreover, the authors reported that PS has three functions: firstly as a solving tool, secondly used socially, as a collective understanding and finally PS is used to externalize feelings. Furthermore, the authors also claimed that PS “is a key factor in the process of reasoning” (Del La Colina & Pilar Garcia Mayo, 2009, p. 327). This is relevant for this paper, because the article described PS as appearing spontaneously and in the L1. Furthermore, the article indicated that PS and students’ L1 can be used as a tool to support students’ ability to perform tasks at a higher level, as
well as to analyse language better compared to if students just used the L2. This suggests that code-switching should be used as a tool to support students’ language development when it comes to performing tasks at a higher level and when analysing language.

Sampson (2012) explored how code-switching functions in the language classroom. During classroom observations of two Spanish monolingual groups studying English, Sampson (2012) declared that code-switching has several different functions. For instance, code-switching is used by both teachers and students to ensure that everyone in the group understood what has been said. One example of this from the article is a group of students requesting equivalence in the L1:

E: So how do you say frontera? [border/boundary/frontier]

T: Er ...

F: It’s like a border, or a boundary.

D: (to C) I thought frontera was frontier?

C: (to D) Yes, I think frontier and boundary are the same.

(Sampson, 2012, p.297).

This type of student’ code-switching is on the one hand quicker than trying to paraphrase in the TL. However, it also serves to be valuable for language learning as it is “essential for the contrastive analysis” and in this case “learners examine the difference in connotations between semantically similar L2 lexical items for which there is a single L1 equivalent” (Sampson, 2012, p. 297).

A second function of student’ code-switching, discovered through observation, is when students discuss about tasks, rather than doing tasks. However, the author considered this type of code-switching to be unaccommodating and stated that teachers should, in this case, try to encourage pupils to use the TL. Moore (2013) had similar findings. During observation of a research group, consisting of 12 intermediate learners in a research classroom, Moore (2013) noted that pupils’ code-switched when talking about task control. The study also suggested that the amount of L1 used in the classroom was, to a certain extent, related to proficiency level.
Anton and DiCamilla (2012) explored the use of the L1 and L2, by studying two L2 classes, when solving a writing task. Even though the pupils focused on writing, the study is relevant due to the fact that it investigated what languages the pupils used orally. Anton and DiCamilla (2012) reported another reason to why English learners use their L1 as a tool to understand the L2 better, for instance to support each other’s learning. Finally, it was concluded that the L1 functions as an important tool for low proficient students to learn the L2. This can be connected to Meiring and Norman’s (2002) conducted questionaries that teachers tend to use the L1 less if the pupils are at a higher level. Anton and Dicamilla’s article is relevant for this study, since it indicated that the use of L1 might be beneficial for students with low proficiency in the TL. Not only is the use of pupils’ L1 significant when it comes to students with low proficiency in the TL, but it is also a helpful tool for learners in the early stage of language learning. Centeno-Cortés (2004) investigated 18 pupils with different language levels during a problem-solving task. The pupils wrote down their answers, but they asked questions in the L1 and L2 orally. The author also noted the beneficial functions of pupils’ use of the L1. Pupils with difficulties understanding the TL used the L1 significantly more compared to high proficiency pupils. However, one of the low level learners scored second best, but the different was that the low level learners had to orally ask more questions in the L1 in order to understand the task and they spent more time solving the task.

The interviewees in Bateman’s (2008, p.21) article also points to the usage of pupils’ L1 being necessary when it comes to pupils with low abilities in the TL. They stated that the pupils seem confused when only the TL is used. However, as the students’ abilities in the TL develop the usage of code-switching can be more and more limited.

Another function of pupil’ code-switching, as noted by Sampson (2012), is the fact that low proficiency pupils sometimes code-switch because they are not understood adequately. This type of code-switching is called reiteration, meaning that a message has already been given in the TL, but is repeated and clarified in the L1. The author consider that it would be preferable if the teacher instead asked the student to rephrase in the TL, rather than using the L1, as this may have a positive affect for the pupils’ confidence in using the L2. This is highly important in the context of Sweden, as, it is mentioned already, that one of the aims of English lessons is for pupils’ to feel
confident in their ability to use the English for different purposes (Skolverket, 2011, p. 32).

Another important function of students’ code-switching, which Halasa and Al-Manaseer (2012) discovered, through an empirical study conducted on 50 students studying English communication skills, is that the L1 can be used as a way to scaffold each other’s’ learning, in the early process of language learning. Likewise, did Celik (2008, p.78) propose, through a corpus based investigation of academic essays, that the usage of students’ L1 can be useful. It was especially emphasised that it was useful for pupils with low ability to comprehend the TL. Furthermore, the article stated that teacher’ code-switching can be useful for teaching complex concepts and in these cases pupils’ mother tongue are used to verify pupils’ comprehension.

The authors above reported that students’ and teachers’ usage of code-switching can be used as a tool for pupils to support each other’s language learning. This is relevant to LGR11, where it is stated that pupils should use “language strategies to contribute to and actively participate in conversations”, furthermore students should use “language phenomena to clarify, vary and enrich communication”, additionally they should use strategies “to understand and be understood when language skills are lacking (Skolverket, 2011, p. 35). If two students are engaging in a conversation and one of them does not understand a particular word and the other student’s vocabulary is not sufficient enough to explain it with other words, code-switching might be useful. In this case, to code-switch and say that particular word in Swedish can be seen as a language strategy used to make the other pupil understand the conversation better and in this case the code-switching would contribute to the conversation, instead of risking the conversation to abate.

Another argument for code-switching in the language classroom is that it is beneficial for the teacher because “LI is extremely effective during teaching to provide a swift and clear-cut synonym or paraphrase of a complicated concept or an utterance, which otherwise would take a long time for the teacher to clarify” (Celik, 2008, p. 78), it is also mentioned that if the teacher would use the TL it is not assured that it would be understood adequately by the students. Findings from Bateman’s (2008) interviews also described time limitation as a reason to code-switch. One of the student teachers being interviewed explained that she sometimes use the pupils’ L1 rather than L2, because it takes too much time to provide explanations in the TL and another interviewee
explained that when she is running out of time doing an exercises it is easier to use pupils’ L1.

However, even though Bateman’s (2008) findings indicates that code-switching is beneficial when it comes to time-saving and it is stated that pupils perhaps do not understand complex ideas if they are being explained in the TL. This only indicated that teachers will save time using pupils’ L1 for, example, paraphrasing. It did not suggest that this would be more beneficial for the pupils’ language development, as it was only stated that pupils may not understand adequately, but the emphasis was on time-consuming.

Karuo (2011, p. 374-375) also pointed to the significance of using of pupils’ L1 when it comes to students with low proficiency in the TL. However, the article concluded that high proficiency pupils preferred class to exclusively be held in the TL, whereas pupils with limited abilities in the L2 needed support from the L1. Nevertheless, the results of the study indicated “that a significant number of students believe that they need the target language with less support from their first language for the sake of their /…/ language learning”.

If the results of the study would give the same indication; that some students prefer English only lessons because the students consider it to help their language development the most, whereas some prefer the use of Swedish in the language classroom as they need it to acquire proficiency in English, it would be an issue. It becomes problematic in the Swedish school system because it is stated that the teaching should be adapted to each individual’s need (Skolverket, 2000, p. 2000). If some pupils think that their English will develop more if the teacher use only the L2 and others consider the language lessons to become too difficult if the L1 is excluded, it will probably be difficult for the teacher to adapt the lessons for everyone’s needs. However, Skolverket (2000, p. 30) also stresses every student’s right to pass all subjects in school and that if a student is at risk of failure, the school will give enough support to the student for him/her to pass. One interpretation of this is that teachers should use students’ L1 as a tool, if this supports pupils with low proficiency in English to reach a passing grade.

Above it is described that using code-switching for pupils with low abilities in the TL and for pupils to support each other language learning is beneficial, as long as it is not for reiteration. Ahmad’s (2009) results from 259 questionnaires also concluded that the teachers use of pupils’ L1 can be beneficial when it comes to supporting the pupils.
Nevertheless, Celik (2008, p. 79-80) mentioned other cases when pupils’ L1 should be avoided. For instance, during communicative tasks such as during debates and role play. In these cases it is more important to give the pupils the opportunity to practise using their target language. Moreover, through a corpus based investigation Celik (2008) suggested that persistent use of the L2 is advantageous when it comes to learning pronunciation: “during pronunciation tasks helps the students to better identify and overcome their weaknesses in suprasegmental aspects of L2” (Celik, 2008, p. 80). This is relevant for LGR11 (Skolverket, 2011, p. 34) as pronunciation and intonation is a language phenomena students’ should learn to use in order to be able to clarify and enrich communication.

The above section discusses the difficulties with code-switching. For instance, it is stated that low proficiency pupils probably need code-switching in order for language development to occur. High proficiency students, on the other hand, do not benefit from code-switching as a language strategy as much. One of the main findings in this section, indicates that teachers need to know their pupils’ language abilities and the purpose with a specific task. By knowing this, the teacher needs to evaluate if code-switching in the given situation and for the specific pupils is preferable or if English-only is better.
6. Conclusions

This paper has discussed both pupils and teachers’ usage of code-switching in connection to whether it is beneficial when it comes to oral language development. Furthermore, the paper deliberated what needs to be considered when code-switching is used in the language classroom in secondary school in Sweden. The investigated articles above conclude that code-switching does support oral language development in the L2 classroom. Specifically, code-switching can be used as a language strategy in the classroom, as it may contribute to conversation and keep conversations to abate. However, it can be a language strategy in the classroom, but in the real world it is harder to use code-switching as a language strategy when speaking to a person who only knows English. Nevertheless, it can support language development if used in the right way. Therefore, it is important for language teachers to consider when it is appropriate to use pupils’ L1 in regards to oral language development.

Furthermore, previous studies revealed that low proficiency students’ benefit mostly from code-switching used as tool, both when used by the teacher, as well as by the student themselves. High proficiency pupils, on the other hand, seem prefer an English only classroom. It is problematic to adapt the lessons to every pupil’s individual need as high proficiency learners benefit more from lessons held in only the TL, while low proficiency learners benefit from lessons when the L1 is used as a tool in the language classroom. This may result in teachers having to use pupils’ L1 in case there are low proficiency learners in risk of failing the course. However, teachers should try to encourage students to rephrase in the TL, as a way to motivate them to use English, if they code-switch because they are not being understood.

Another function of code-switching is when it is used in connection to grammar instructions. In this case, code-switching can be beneficial for pupils’ oral language learning when it comes to understanding grammatical rules better. Furthermore, it is also indicated that it can be useful to explain instructions in pupils’ L1, when instructions in the TL are too complex and out of the pupils ZPD. In addition, it seems to be beneficial for pupils to use the L1 in order to understand linguistic differences in
both languages and in that way avoid language errors caused by the L1. However, when it comes to vocabulary learning in connection to grammar lessons, the benefits are minor and thereby not necessary. Also, maximum exposure to the TL is crucial and as a result pupils’ L1 should only be used when grammar instructions are too difficult to comprehend.

On a different note, it is suggested that teachers should discuss, together with the pupils, the functions of code-switching. In that way the pupils can understand when the L1 can be used for their language learning and when it should be avoided (Sampson, 2012, p. 301). Teachers should, together with the pupils, create a guideline to create awareness of when the use of code-switching is counter-productive and when it is useful for their language development. Hopefully, this can help to reduce the feeling of guilt some pupils feel when code-switching.

As Celik (2008, p. 77) stated “English should remain the primary medium of instruction, and the use of the mother tongue should serve a purpose and not be a random process and an excuse to make up for our deficiencies”. Instead, teachers need to know when the usage of pupils’ L1 is beneficial for their language development and when the teacher truly should emphasis only usage of the TL, as for instance when it comes to communicative tasks. However, even for communicative tasks it seems that code-switching sometimes can be beneficial, for instance when it serves for pupil continuing conversation.

It is significant for teachers to know the students well and their language abilities and language level, in order to understand when it is beneficial for them to be scaffold with the help of code-switching and when the code-switching is unnecessary.

Finally, I like to discuss some of the limitations of the study, as I believe it is an opportunity to make suggestions for further research. Firstly, as mentioned in the methodology section I have only included articles that are published. One of the limitations and problems with this is that this research paper is in risk of what Ortega (2010) mentioned as publication bias. Publication bias is studies that only focus on statistically significant or research that focus on expected results, whereas others do not get published. Since this paper only includes published studies there is a risk of publication bias. The issue with this is that the results perhaps would have been different, if studies not published were to be included.

Another limitation of this degree project is the fact that none of the articles being investigated were focused on Sweden. This is one limitation, as the result might differ
due to factors not being included in the articles being investigated. The results of this study can be applied if all students in a classroom share the same L1. However, one thing that should be taken into consideration is multiculturalism in Sweden, as Statistiska Centralbyrån (2014) stated that migration to Sweden continues to increase, due to for instance war refugees. If this also means that schools will consist of pupils with different native languages, it should be considered. For example, is code-switching beneficial if pupils have different first-language backgrounds? And in that case, what should be considered when using code-switching in the language classroom if the pupils have different first-languages. I suggest that further research needs to be done on code-switching and especially in the Swedish context.
7. References


