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Teachers’ perceptions on the effects that a multilingual classroom has on TL acquisition

Lärares upplevelser av ett mångspråkigt klassrums effekter på målspråksinlärning

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Abstract

This degree project’s purpose is to gain some insight into what advantages and disadvantages on teaching and learning a TL exist in multilingual classrooms, as well as what impact these outcomes might have on teachers’ pedagogical choices. The paper provides an overview of theories relating to language learning and third language learning, as well as the research. Researchers contend that teachers should maximize the TL use in the classroom, however there currently exists a dispute about whether the L1 should be used as a resource in the TL classroom or not. The study is conducted through interviews with four active English teachers, in the south of Sweden. The major conclusions of this paper are that L3 learners can have an advantage when learning a TL, and that the presence of L3 learners can have a positive effect on the motivation of the L2 learner classmates with regard to learning the TL. A discrepancy exists between how research and the national curriculum encourage teachers to teach and how they actually do in their pedagogical practice. The paper identifies a possible explanation for this discrepancy, as well as possible implications of it.

Keywords: Confidence, Functions, L2, L3, Language Learning, Motivation, Strategies, TLA
Preface

Hereby, we both acknowledge that this degree project has been planned, prepared and conducted in full cooperation. Interviews were carried out and recorded by one of us, and transcribed by the other. The analysis of the materials was done together.
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Introduction

During the last two decades, researcher’s convictions with regard to the relationship between second language acquisition (SLA) and third language acquisition (TLA) have rapidly changed (e.g. Cenoz & Jessner 2000; Cenoz, Heufeisen & Jessner 2003; Herdina & Jessner 2000). Researchers have started conducting studies where SLA and TLA are viewed as different phenomena, whereas previously conducted research never made the distinction whether a pupil was learning a second language (L2) or third language (L3) (Jessner 2008). The main distinction between L2 and L3 learners is that L3 learners acquire language learning skills and strategies whilst learning their L2 and that these skills can then be utilized while learning the L3 (Herdina & Jessner 2000).

Turnbull and Arnett (2002) declare that there is a near consensus among researchers that teachers should maximize the use of the target language (TL) in the classroom and limit the use of the pupils’ first language (L1) in their teaching. Nevertheless, additional studies (Littlewood & Yu 2011; Copland & Neokleous 2011), as well as observations by the authors of this paper, suggest that teachers who are conducting TL teaching, in Sweden mainly utilize the recognized L1 (Swedish).

According to Statistics Sweden (2011), approximately 20% of children under the age of 18, which corresponds to about 380,000 children, were born in another country or had parents who had immigrated to Sweden. This number has continually increased since 2011 and is expected to continue to do so as a result of conflicts all around the world (Statistics Sweden 2013). An effect of these statistics and what they represent is that a large amount of pupils in Swedish schools will not have Swedish as their L1.

The Swedish curriculum (2011) describes language as the “primary tool” (p. 32) we use in our everyday lives. Hence, knowing several languages will open up the world to us by giving us new perspectives, increase our contact net and help us develop consideration for other people’s lives and forms of living. In addition, the Swedish curriculum (2011) states that English being taught in the classroom should aim towards developing different communicative skills in learners. Spoken and written English is important both for understanding and expressing oneself in English. Furthermore, the
curriculum emphasizes the need for learners to develop strategies for language learning and communication.

If the teacher uses the recognized L1 (Swedish) in the Foreign Language (FL) classroom, where some of the pupils have a different L1, it may increase the gap between the pupils which would then cause a violation of the Swedish educational act (SFS 2010:800), where it is stated that schools shall work towards eliminating the gaps between pupils which are caused by the individuals’ different preconditions and backgrounds.

As a teacher, it is important to be aware of what the effects of having pupils with different L1s in the classroom are, and how teaching can be adapted to incorporate and overcome these effects. This paper aims to ascertain what some of the effects on the TL are in a class with both L2 and L3 learners, based on teachers’ experiences and the impact these effects have on their teaching.

The study will be conducted through interviews with four currently active English teachers, at three different schools in the south of Sweden. As a complement the teachers will be asked to fill out an inquiry sheet to ascertain their thoughts on how different functions of language should be used in the TL classroom, this will be done during the interview. The interviews are semi-structured, and the data will be analysed using a phenomenological approach.

**Purpose and research questions**
The purpose of this degree project is to use teacher perceptions of their own classroom experiences within a particular context of the Swedish school system to gain some insight regarding the possible advantages and disadvantages for teaching and learning English as a TL in a class that has both L2 and L3 learners. Furthermore, this paper will examine how such perceptions impact teacher choices in their pedagogical practice.

- RQ1: What advantages do some teachers experience when teaching English as a TL in a multilingual classroom?
- RQ2: What disadvantages do some teachers experience when teaching English as a TL in a multilingual classroom?
This study focuses on the teachers’ experiences of TL teaching and has its focus on the early years of school, years K-3, within the Swedish school system.
There is a large variety of language learning theories, as well as different points of view on how pupils’ best achieve language learning. In this first section, some theories of language learning in general is presented, as well as research relating both to language learning and to the purpose and research questions of this paper. Further on, theories and research relating to L3 learners will be brought forward.

**Theories of Language learning**

Most development theories focus on the individual child’s development. Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural development theory, however, has shifted the focus to considering the child as a product of social interaction. From this perspective, he continues on the basis that knowledge is constructed by each individual during interaction with others. As a result, when his theory is moved into the classroom, Vygotsky puts forward that the pupil’s learning and progression occurs during interaction with other pupils within the same zone of proximal development (ZPD) as themselves. This collaboration and interaction becomes a cornerstone to engage the pupils in their learning. By drawing on Vygotsky’s theory and extending it to embrace second language acquisition as well, the interaction becomes important to provide raw material for the learner’s progress (Lightbown & Spada 2006).

An additional theory with its focus on SLA is Krashen’s (1981) monitor model which is influenced by Chomsky’s theories regarding first language acquisition. The theory Krashen puts forward lays emphasis on the distinction between language acquisition and language learning when using it to develop competence in a second language. He describes the acquisition of the language as a subconscious process which occurs when the interaction conducted in the TL is meaningful and provides a natural communication where the conveying of the message is the focal point. In contrast, language learning is a conscious process and the pupils are able to have interactions about linguistic rules of the TL.
According to Turnbull and Arnett (2002), the majority of teachers are in agreement that input in TL is a necessity if any learning is to occur, which also is connected to Krashen (1982) who states that the pupils learn through meaningful interactions in the TL. Although in basic agreement with Turnbull and Arnett, Swain (1995), however, argues that the production of spoken or written TL output is essential to the learning process.

As indicated earlier, Turnbull and Arnett (2002) maintain that a near consensus exists among researchers that maximizing the use of the TL in the FL classroom is to be preferred. However, several studies (Turnbull 2001; Kim & Elder 2005; Liu et al. 2004; Littlewood & Yu 2011) have shown that there are discrepancies between what is advocated in theory and what is done in practice, demonstrating that teachers do in fact use a vast amount of L1 in the FL classroom.

Kim & Elder (2005) did a study of how much of the pupils’ L1 was used in the TL classroom and found that a range from 12% to 77% of the language used was the pupils’ L1. In this study, English was the pupils’ L1 and the foreign languages taught were Japanese, German, Korean and French. Liu et al. (2004) in turn, counted the L1 words use during thirteen teachers’ English lessons and worked out the percentage of L1 words used during the lessons to be 90%. A range from 28% to 76% was the result found in a Canadian school where four French teachers’ use of the TL and L1 were analysed (Turnbull 2001). Finally, Littlewood and Yu (2011) did a review of studies made on the proportions of the TL and L1 use. They found that the exclusive or near exclusive use of TL that is advocated in theory rarely, exists in a learning context. Furthermore, their result in percentage showed up to 90% use of the pupils’ L1.

Copland and Neokleous’s (2011) study was conducted through interviews and observations in a Cypriot context of an English language classroom with Cypriot teachers. They ascertained that the teachers decided to use L1 in a TL classroom for the function of translation, answering the pupils’ questions, as well as for explaining and clarifying. When 50 students were asked for what purpose their English teachers used the L1 most out of a list of nine, the collected result showed that the three purposes that the teachers used the L1 most for were explaining difficult grammar, disciplining the class and to establish a connection to the learners (Littlewood & Yu 2011).

Littlewood and Yu (2011) state that if the teachers were to use only the TL in the FL classroom, they would need to consider other strategies to overcome the difficulties in
TL teaching they otherwise would solve by using the L1, such strategies as repetition, simplifying and substituting by using synonyms. It is said (Littlewood 1981) that the learners’ trail of thought needs to be in the TL, therefore it is commonly mentioned that the TL and L1 should be kept as separated as possible to avoid interference. However, Butzkamm (2003) has, along with others, recently started questioning the separation of languages. He argues that the L1 can be used as a resource for learning the TL, although this claim have been met with varying degrees of recognition (Littlewood & Yu 2011). One who has recognised and argues for the use of L1 as a resource is Cook (2001), who states that if the L1 is used as a resource, it would assist in creating more authentic learner situations and thereby also more authentic learners of the TL. One way, which Littlewood and Yu (2011) present, of using the L1 as a resource, is to have the pupils brainstorm the task in their L1 and then produce a product, such as a written story, in the TL. This is supported by Turnbull and Arnett (2002) who argue that “the quality of the input is more important than the quantity of the input when it comes to intake, and introducing the L1 can enhance the quality of the input” (p. 205).

An advantage that Turnbull and Arnett (2002) describe, due to the fact of extensive TL use in the classroom, is that the pupils can see an immediate purpose and function for learning the TL, which in turn can boost their motivation to learn the TL. Turnbull (2001) goes one step further in stating that the pupils’ motivation can be impacted by teachers overusing the L1. When the L1 is overused, the purpose and need to learn the TL disappears, which can lead to de-motivation.

**Third language learners (L3)**

This is a study of four teachers who are currently teaching English. In their classrooms there are pupils that are learning English as their L2 as well as those who are learning English as their L3. Therefore, it is important to include L3 as well as TLA in this literature review.

Safont-Jordá (2005) defines TLA as any languages acquired after the L2, including third, fourth, fifty and any following languages. Since learners of an L3 already have acquired an L2, it is unavoidable that different L2 backgrounds will be involved in the learning situations in an L3 classroom. In the past, no distinction was made between learning a language as your second or third, however this is no longer the case. Learning
an L3 differs from learning an L2 (Jessner 2006). Herdina and Jessner (2000) state that the main distinction that exists between L2 and L3 learning, is the experience of previously having learned a new language. L3 learners have already acquired language learning skills, as well as strategies for learning a language, when they were learning the L2 and can thereby utilize these while learning the L3. In other words, L3 learners have a better understanding of the process of learning a language than L2 learners.

It is apparent that SLA is a complex process with numerous factors involved and can be approached from several perspectives (Ellis 1994). However, if SLA is described as complex how would you describe TLA, where you have added an additional language and therefore also to the complexity (Herdina & Jessner 2000)?

Jessner (2008) stated that L2 learners are beginners concerning the language learning process of a foreign language, whereas L3 learners are familiar with this process due to the fact that they have previously learned a foreign language. From this experience with language learning, Jessner describes how L3 learners have gathered strategies and are able to utilize them in various degrees. The next step in the development, which Jessner is supported by Hufeisen (1991, as seen in Jessner 2008) on, is that the L3 learner’s L2 now starts working as a bridge to support the language in TLA development. L3 learners have already established various strategies for language learning due to their previous experience with learning a foreign language, which L2 learners have no experience with, therefore they are not able to draw on these tools in their FL learning (Herdina & Jessner 2000).

**Brief summary**

Turnbull & Arnett’s research ((2002) supports using the TL both for input and output. In fact, Swain (1995) argues that it is not enough just to have input in the TL, but that for the learning process to occur, the pupil also needs to produce an output in TL. However, research reveals (e.g. Littlewood & Yu 2011) a discrepancy between what is said in theory, as well as what research has shown and the practice done relating to the use of L1 in a TL classroom. Recently, L1 has been put forward as a valuable resource to have in TL classrooms and have even gotten some recognition (Butzkamm 2003). Finally, it is shown to be easier for the L3 learner to learn a new foreign language due to
having already done it once and having those experiences and strategies to draw from, whilst the L2 learner is a beginner (Herdina & Jessner 2000).
Methodology

This paper will be based on four interviews with teachers that are currently teaching English in K-3 at Swedish schools. Through the interviews, the aim is to ascertain what advantages and disadvantages some teachers’ experience when teaching English as a TL in a multilingual classroom. Since the focus is on how the teachers’ experience and perceive these specific circumstances, as well as what effects these have on their TL teaching the method of using interviews will be the most effective tool (Alvehus 2013).

All the demands of the research questions are covered by the use of the interview method, which will help to reveal the teachers thoughts, perceptions and experiences concerning the effects of having a multilingual classroom on TL teaching, and how this impacts the teachers’ choices. Since the interest of this paper lies with the teacher, a phenomenographic interview will enable an investigation of the research questions from a first-person perspective (Brinkkjaer & Høyen 2013). As for the construction of the interviews, a semi-structured form will fulfil all the requirements and is therefore the most suitable approach. Furthermore, with a semi-structured interview form, open-ended questions can be used to guide the interviewer and still leave the respondents room to reflect freely (Alvehus 2013). As a complement to the interviews, an inquiry sheet will be used to investigate teachers’ opinions and beliefs regarding the respective extent to which the TL and the L1 should be used for different functions in the TL classroom.

Participants

Twelve schools were contacted requesting participants for interviews. From these schools four positive answers were received from teachers working at three different schools.

Teachers one and three (T1 and T3) work in a school in a neighbouring municipality in the vicinity of a larger city in the south of Sweden. This municipal school covers the years K-6, and also houses a youth leisure centre. There are about 270 pupils attending the school, and there are two classes in each year. The school lies in an area with mainly
lower and lower middle-class families, and a high percentage of immigrants. Many of the pupils at the school therefore have Swedish as their L2.

Teacher 2 (T2) works at a school located in a larger city in the south of Sweden. The area is populated by people of varying cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The school has about 420 pupils, covering the years K-6. The school also houses preparatory classes for years 4-6 for children who have recently arrived to Sweden.

Teacher 4 (T4) works at a school located in a larger city in the south of Sweden. The area is populated by people of varying cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. There are about 900 pupils attending the school, which covers the years K-9. The school also houses a youth leisure centre, and has specialized education for English or bilingualism in years 7-9.

None of the teachers’ education originally covered the subject of English. However, T1 has received further education for teaching English as a foreign language. T2 and T4 have taught English for less than a year; T1 and T3 have taught English for six and three years respectively. T2 was the only teacher whose education did not officially cover the age group of the pupils being taught.

The classes of T2, T3 and T4 were all in the range of twenty to twenty-four pupils. The class of T1 was smaller, with eighteen pupils. The number of pupils with a different L1s ranged from 50% to 90%. In each class, there were between three and eight pupils who were having difficulties with the Swedish language due to it not being their L1. The difficulties were mainly grammatical, such as conjugations and prepositions, or idiomatic expressions and proverbs, but in some cases, the sounds of the Swedish language were a difficulty.

**Materials**
For the interviews a series of questions were formulated as guidelines for the interviewer. The questions were constructed using different categories. The first seven questions were meant to give a clear picture of the teachers’ educational backgrounds and experience teaching English, and their classroom environment. Next were the central questions, starting with five questions concerning the advantages and disadvantages of having a multilingual classroom. Following these were two questions
inquiring about the attitudes of the pupils with regard to learning English as a TL. Finally came three questions focusing on the impact of having a multilingual classroom on their pedagogical practice. The questions vary between being open-ended and closed. With the closed questions, it was an aim to have follow-up questions for the majority (See appendices 1 and 2).

To get some insight into teachers opinions on how and when to use TL and L1 in the TL classroom an inquiry sheet was created. The inquiry sheet had a number/numbered scale for each function going from mainly TL to mainly L1 usage. The functions used are based on De La Campa and Nassaji’s (2009) study. The study describe a total of fourteen different functions, out of these the functions which the authors of this paper have observed most during the practicums were chosen, as seen in table 1 below. The functions were renamed to be more easily understood by the participants/respondents of the inquiry sheet. (See appendix 3).

**Table 1**

*Functions used in the inquiry sheet and a description of each function.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function areas</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give instructions</td>
<td>Giving instructions on what to do and how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the aim of an activity</td>
<td>Explaining the purpose and goal of an activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correcting pupil’s mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Evaluating pupils’ contributions to lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translate</td>
<td>Translating a previously spoken sentence or word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check for comprehension</td>
<td>Checking if a pupil or class has understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportions TL relative L1</td>
<td>To what extent is TL and L1 used generally in classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Procedure**

**Data gathering**

All interviews were conducted by one of the authors, to eliminate a source of errors due to different interviewing styles (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Each respondent was asked for permission to record the interview, all respondents agreed. Each interview was
digitally stored on a private computer after being de-identified. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach with pre-planned questions covering different research areas. However, the interviewer occasionally deviated from the pre-planned structure when the standard set did not elicit a sufficient level of detail from a particular individual’s responses.
Results and discussion

The respondents were de-identified by substituting their names with ‘T 1-4’ in the title of the recording and on the inquiry sheets. When the recordings were transcribed the new ‘names’ were used to ensure that the teachers remained anonymous. The results from the interviews were sorted into different categories and the results of the inquiry sheets were compiled into a table, which can be seen below (Table 2). The transcribed interviews and the results from the inquiry sheets stand as the data for analysis. To analyse the interview and inquiry sheet data a phenomenological analysis was used (Brinkkjaer & Høyen 2013). A phenomenological analysis allows for interpretation of the answers of the respondents based on not only what the respondents say but also how they say it. By using this approach, the advantages and disadvantages are viewed as phenomena that can be interpreted and studied, along with the respondents’ attitudes.

The mean values of the inquiry sheet are presented in Table 2 here below. The results were sorted into the table, showing where on the scale each teacher marked their opinion. After this, a mean value of each function was calculated by adding the number at which each teacher had placed themselves and then dividing the result by the number of participating teachers. The discussion of the results from this inquiry sheet will be integrated into the presentation and discussion of the interview data.

Table 2

*Individual and mean teacher responses to self-reported functional use and proportion of TL vs. L1 in the classroom.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>TL vs. L1 use by function</th>
<th>1 (TL)</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 (L1)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give instructions</td>
<td></td>
<td>T2 T3</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain goal of activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>T1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T3 T4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct*</td>
<td></td>
<td>T2 T3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate/comment on pupils activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>T1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T3 T4</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translate something previously stated</td>
<td></td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure pupils</td>
<td></td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>T2 T4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The focus of this section will now be shifted to the interview data. During the construction of the pre-planned questions for the interviews, there was one question concerning the effects on the cultural aspects of the language teaching which is included in the Swedish syllabus for English. This question did not generate enough data to be useful and was omitted from the results and therefore not used in the discussion or analysis. In the list of questions (see appendix 1 and 2) it is crossed out.

In the interviews, three out of the four teachers (T1, T2 and T4) experienced that the L3 learners’ confidence was positively affected due to having already learned one foreign language, Swedish. For example T2 says that, “I think it has affected them positively and that they have gotten more confident towards learning a new language if they have an L2 in the baggage” (Authors’ translation). T4 claimed that the L3 pupils get an extra confidence boost when they were able to make connections between the TL and their L1, but also to their L2 (Swedish). All three teachers agreed that the pupils with different L1 had a positive ‘can-do’ attitude towards learning a new language, which could be the result of having successfully learned a foreign language once already. This corresponds with Jessner’s (2008) statement that it is easier for the L3 learners to acquire a second foreign language due to their experiences and the strategies they have already gathered. Furthermore, Jessner points to the fact that L3 learners begin building bridges between the first foreign language they learned and the second one, which also makes the learning easier. T3, on the other hand, had not experienced any effects on the confidence of her L3 learners. T1 had observed that the L3 learners had more patience when learning English, because they knew from previous experience that it can take a while for a language to fall into place.

All four of the teachers agreed that their pupils in general are interested in learning the English language, however T1 and T2 experienced that the motivation of the L2 learners were positively affected by having classmates with different L1 than Swedish. T1 argued that the motivation and confidence of the L3 learners made the L2 learners feel that it is beneficial to know more than one language, which in turn gave these learners motivation to learn. T1 says that they feel that, “It is useful to know many
languages, which it is valuable, and that is a bit contagious” (Authors’ translation). This corresponds with Turnbull and Arnett’s (2002) claim that when pupils extensively are exposed to the TL in the classroom it will open their eyes to the immediate benefit that learning the language would be to them, which in turn will motivate them in their learning. T4 and T3 however had not noticed any effects on the L2 learners’ motivation.

During the interviews, T2 states that she can see a positive trend on the interaction between the pupils when trying to understand English. For instance, she talked about a boy in her class who is new in Sweden but has a much higher level of English than the rest of the pupils, so his classmates will often ask him for help. That way a mutual exchange of learning exists in T2’s classroom. T1 also says that the pupils are interacting a lot, especially to collaborate. The pupils with higher levels of English can often help those who are having some difficulty with something in the lesson. This form of teaching with collaboration among pupils, who are paired together based on their level, is also something that Vygotsky (1978) advocates with his theories on language learning. However, T1 feels that her pupils interact a lot even in situations where no one is having troubles because they like sharing their thoughts on what they are learning together. According to research (Turnbull & Arnett 2002; Swain 1995; Littlewood & Yu 2011; Krashen 1982), the input learners are given needs to be in the TL for learning to occur, which Swain (1995) agrees with although, she also argues that having pupils produce an output in TL is necessary for the pupils’ learning process. The way T2 relays the interactions between the boy and his classmates could be a good place to start when creating an environment for interaction and communication in the TL. Depending on the amount of interaction actually used T2 has an interactive environment.

T1 is working in a project to enhance pupils’ participation in the classroom, which is based on working in pairs. This practice is in accordance with the research just mentioned above. T1 also states that she experiences that letting the pupils talk amongst themselves makes them view each other as a resource for learning. In her opinion the pupils grow in their role as carriers of knowledge when they get to explain something that they have understood to someone else. This gives the learners an opportunity to use the language skills they have acquired, especially strategies for communication.

The fact that L3 learners brought strategies with them from learning their L2 (Jessner 2008), was something that both T1 and T2 had observed. T2, for example, had
experienced that the learners search for similarities between words from their L1 and L2 when trying to understand the meaning of the English words that they do not understand. These similarities could be either in how the words sound or how they are spelled. T1 had also noticed this, but had observed that sometimes they would make out that a word seemed similar but had in fact a completely different meaning in either their L1 or L2, something which T4 also had noted.

Furthermore, T1 noticed that the L3 learners would try to reach the base form of a word and then work on figuring out how to conjugate it. Apart from being able to use the language strategies they had acquired while learning their L2 (Herdina & Jessner 2002), T1 experienced that L3 learners also could, to a certain extent, share the strategies with their classmates. For instance, she described observing that the pupils would try to explain a language phenomenon too each other and give tips on how to look for clues in words. T2 felt that she was starting to notice that the pupils were showing the same signs of sharing strategies that T1 previously described. T3 and T4 were both of the opinion that their pupils were in to early a stage in their English development for them to be using such strategies. However, T3 predicted that she would be able to see it in the future, and expressed that she based this prediction on her knowledge of current research.

T1 and T2 are both of the opinion that they at present use equal amounts of TL and L1 (Swedish) during their English lessons. However, they both feel that the aim should be to use mainly the TL, although right now their pupils are not ready for that. T4 also feels that her pupils are not ready for an extensive use of the TL and argues that it is important to create a basic word bank of commonly used words before moving on to working with full sentences, therefore she uses more than 50% L1 during her English lessons. She also feels that it is preferable to let the pupils get closer to the English language step by step, as to not overwhelm them. T3 states that she uses more than 50% of the TL, but that she still uses L1 for certain functions. T3 explains that, “I’m a SvA (Swedish as a second language) teacher. As a SvA teacher you use the base language, you use the target language. You can’t use the other language (L1). Translating all the time is something I do to have everyone with me” (Authors’ translation). The main function for which T3 uses L1 is to explain the goal of an activity, a choice also made by T4 and T2. They both add that the reason for explaining the goal of an activity in L1 is to make sure that the pupils know what the point of the lesson is; this way the pupils
know what to focus their efforts on. T1, on the other hand, uses close to equal parts TL and L1 and justifies this choice by pointing out that it is important that everyone understands, but also important to aim at using as much TL as possible. With difficult explanations she uses L1, but otherwise she uses the TL when explaining and then, when necessary, repeats the explanation in L1.

When looking at the result of the research conducted (Littlewood & Yu 2011; Copland & Neokleous 2011) it is apparent that the functions for using L1 that are most common are; translating, explaining or clarifying, disciplining and finally to establish a connection with the learners. When translating, T1 explains that she usually first uses the TL and then translates to L1. This also applies to T4 who, in addition, states that her reason for translating is to make sure that everyone understands. She says that, “If I say it in English first then I have to take it word for word and explain in Swedish because they are in year 1. (…) So I think it is important to give them a good base” (Authors’ translation). Both T4 and T3 translate in both directions, from TL to L1 and vice versa. T2 however does most of her translating from L1 to TL, but she does not give an example or explanation as to why she has made this choice. One situation when T2 does the opposite and translates from the TL to the L1 is when giving instructions. She is of the opinion one should aim towards using mainly the TL for giving instructions and then she translates to the L1 to make sure that all the pupils know what to do. This view is shared by T3, who has made the same choice. T1 uses equal parts TL and L1 when giving instructions and declares that her choice of language depends on the complexity of the instruction. T4 uses mainly L1 when giving instructions, because she feels that the pupils have not developed their English level far enough to understand instructions; she also wants to make sure that they get time to connect the English words to the L1.

When evaluating pupils’ participations in the lesson T1, uses more TL than L1 while T4, T3 and T2 are all of the opinion that they use equal parts TL and L1. T2 and T3, on the other hand, mainly use the TL when correcting mistakes. T3 explains that she usually responds by using a correct version of what a pupil was trying to say or write. T4 wants the pupils to understand and therefore explains what mistakes were made in L1, but shows how it should be done in the TL.

Making sure that the pupils understand is a recurring factor mentioned in all interviews T2 and T4 say that when checking comprehension they use mainly the L1, since the
The purpose of the language function is purely to make sure pupils have understood. T2 points out that she has pupils who might say that they haven’t understood, and that for their sake it is very important that the questions regarding understanding are always understood. T1 uses mainly the TL for this purpose and T3 use equal parts TL and L1. They both think that their pupils are far enough in their learning of the TL to be able to understand that the teacher is asking if they have understood something.

Something that T2 has noticed is that some of her pupils avoid telling her when they do not understand something, which she feels makes it harder to find an appropriate level of TL usage and difficulty. An effect of this, according to T2, has been that she has extended her use of L1 in the TL classroom, because she does not want pupils to misunderstand and fall behind. T2 expresses that she would like to only speak English, but she feels the pupils would not understand enough for this to be an efficient way of teaching, rather she would end up translating everything into the L1 for the pupils. However, many researchers (Turnbull & Arnett 2002; Littlewood & Yu 2011; Jessner 2006; Swain 1995) would applaud her wish, due to the fact that all of them promote and argue for maximizing the TL use in the classroom. Although, Littlewood and Yu (2011) also put forward that if you were indeed to maximize the TL and only use it, other strategies would need to be considered, such as repetition, simplifying and substituting the language. One example of a strategy that can be used is given by T1, who reads a story to her pupils without stopping to translate to L1, because in her experience they can understand enough of the context to be able to understand the story. Instead of pausing, T1 finishes the story-time by talking about and explaining important words, concepts and events that might be difficult or have occurred during the story.

Something that T1 experiences as a problem is the difficulty of balancing the TL level in the classroom; this is a similar problem to the one T2 has. She wants to use more TL as well as more advanced English, so that she can challenge the pupils that are far along in their TL development. However, she cannot disregard the pupils that have difficulties in English and let them fall behind. She says that, “You put the level of the language a little lower when you have many with a different native tongue and that is of course a bit inhibitory for those with Swedish as a native tongue, because you might never reach these nuances of the language that they might need to develop further” (Authors’ translation). One way to solve this is to have half the class or an extra resource in the classroom.
T3 has a pupil who is far ahead in his TL development. In the interview, she tries to explain how she goes about challenging him by asking him to translate something from English to Swedish and then to Arabic, which is his L1, whilst the other pupils are just translating from English to Swedish. She argues that this provides value to his L1, and shows him that she thinks that his L1 is important.

T1, T2 and T3 would like to have the possibility to work with smaller groups, for example, only having English with half the class at a time. T1 says that it would enable her to balance the TL level more easily during her lessons, and give her a chance to make bigger challenges for the pupils who have gotten further in their TL development, or to give the pupils the freedom to work on their own in smaller groups. T2 would like to combine smaller groups with an additional resource such as a teacher’s assistant, because then she could focus on teaching English and less on managing the classroom. Apart from this, T2 and T4 would like more materials to work with. T4 was of the opinion that there are not enough materials aimed specifically towards the younger learners, and feels that a large part of her time is consumed by making her own material. T2 did not feel a lack of material, though she still wanted more technical resources, such as computer games or educational apps for the Ipad. The main supportive measure the teachers wanted for themselves was further education on teaching English as a TL. The only teacher who did not want further education was T1, who had already gotten it.
Conclusion

The interviews showed that the teachers perceived L3 pupils to have an advantage when learning English as a TL, due to them having already experienced learning a new language. According to the teachers, the L3 learners could apply the language strategies they had acquired while learning their L2 to the learning of English as a TL. Furthermore, three out of four teachers observed an effect on the attitudes of the pupils, towards learning English as a TL, due to having a multilingual classroom. Three teachers observed that the L3 learners’ confidence was positively affected by having previously learned a new language, and one teacher experienced that they also had more patience when learning the TL. Two of the teachers could see a positive effect on the L2 learners’ motivation towards learning the TL, because they could see from the L3 learners that learning a new language is both doable and useful. These findings are in concurrence with the theories and research covered in the literature review.

All four of the teachers agree that the goal should be to speak only TL in the classroom, but they all have different ideas on how to reach that goal. Three of the teachers spoke 50% or less of the TL during their English lessons, even though two of them said they would like to speak more TL during lessons, but that it was too difficult for them to find a balance in the level of the TL. One teacher spoke more TL than Swedish, and argued in favour of maximizing the TL exposure. This is something that Hawkins (1987, as seen in Littlewood & Yu 2011) agrees with: he compares FL teaching to “gardening in the gale – the teacher plants seeds but these are constantly blown away between lessons” (pp. 65-66). Based on this, he argues that it is imperative to maximize the pupils’ exposure to the TL in the limited time that is available to them.

Relevance and implications
As previously mentioned, the majority of researchers believe in maximizing the TL, however the results of this study show that most of the teachers interviewed use 50% or less of the TL during TL lessons. This has many possible implications, one of them being that the pupils do not get a chance to immerse themselves into the TL, something that is encouraged in the national curriculum. Krashen (1985) adds that languages are
learned most effectively when learners are exposed to lots of “comprehensible input” in contexts of real communication. Depending on how the Swedish language is used during the TL lessons, it may be used to make the input of the TL more comprehensible. Another implication is that pupils whose L1 is not Swedish have to process two foreign languages at the same time, which may be difficult for the learners who are still having difficulties with Swedish. Our conclusion is that there is a discrepancy between how teachers teach English as a TL, and how research and theories are of the same mind regarding what the teachers should be doing.

This brings us to one finding that was not part of the purpose of this study, but that has to be mentioned none the less, which is that even though none of these four teachers had English covered by their original education only one of them had received further education to make up for the lack there of. We believe that this may be a reason as to why the teachers did not teach in the way that is advocated by the majority of the research and encouraged by the curriculum. This is important since according to the Swedish Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and the national curriculum, the teaching in schools should be based on research and tested experience. However, without education on how to teach English, it is on the teachers themselves to try and navigate the vast collections of research regarding TL teaching. At one point in her interview, T1 touched upon that the teachers have less and less time for teaching because of the increasing administrative role they are getting. To expect teachers to have time to also study enough research to make up for the lack of English coverage in their education is to expect a lot. Our conclusion of this is that there is a risk that the teaching of English as a TL becomes based, not on research and tested experience, but on more or less qualified guesses on the best ways to teach a TL. One reason for teachers teaching without authorized qualifications may be that there are simply not enough teachers with the right educational background to teach English as a TL, since the teaching of English as a TL in years K-3 is a recent change in Sweden. This makes it all the more important to make sure that future generations of teachers get sufficient training in English as a TL teaching during their education.

To summarize this section of this degree project, three major conclusions have been drawn. Firstly, that the L3 learners have an advantage when learning a TL, and that their presence in a classroom can affect the motivation of their L2 learner classmates. Next, the conclusion is made that there is a discrepancy between how some teachers are
teaching, and the way of teaching that research and the national curriculum encourages. And finally, the conclusion can be drawn that a necessary step to ensure that the teaching in schools is based on research and tested experience is to make sure that all who teach English as a TL have the authorized qualifications and education to do so.

**Study’s limitations**

This study should be seen as only a first inquiry as to how a small sample of teachers perceive the effects of a multilingual classroom when teaching English as a TL, and how it affects their practice, in a very specific setting.

The study has some limitations, one of them being the small sample of participants. Another is that sample of respondents is in some aspects homogenous. It consists of only women, with similar educational backgrounds. Furthermore, it is also highly geographically localized.

The reliability of this study would have increased had the group of respondents been larger. Another way to get a larger and perhaps more reliable data sample would have been to use classroom observations as a complement to the interviews. However lessons in English during the first stages of TL teaching in this setting are very short, often only about thirty minutes a week, which made it difficult to do any valuable observations within the ten week time-period for this study.

Having greater knowledge of interviewing techniques would have allowed us to go deeper into the interviews and perhaps get more valuable data. That in turn, would have increased both the validity and the reliability of this study.

**Further and future research**

Compared with SLA, the study of multiple language acquisition is still in its relative infancy. It is the hope of the authors of this paper that more research will continue to be done to shed light on this important topic.

Within the area of L3 learners it would be interesting to do more research on what strategies L3 learners bring with them from previous language learning, and how those can be used to give support to both the individuals and the collective learning of a TL.
Another interesting research area would be to make a larger study of the role of L3 learners in L2 classrooms.

Apart from the area of L3 learners and TLA, it would be interesting to study pupils’ levels of English in year four in the Swedish school system to ascertain the effects of introducing English as a TL already in years 1-3 instead of in year four. Has this reform had any effects? And if so, what effects can be found as a result?

As a concluding comment the authors of this paper feel that it would be beneficial to the whole school system if studies were made to evaluate the effects of the reform recently made in Sweden that state that only teachers with authorized qualifications should teach in every subject. How is this followed, and what effects does it have when it is and is not followed?
References


Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions – English version

Background questions

1. What teachers’ education do you have – English teaching?
   a. What age group was your education focused on?
   b. Was English teaching included in your education?
      i. If not, have you participated in any further education in English teaching?
2. How long have you been teaching English?
3. In what years (grades) are you teaching or have taught English?
4. Have you always had pupils with different native tongues than Swedish?

Environment

1. How many pupils do you have in your class?
2. How many of your have another native tongue than Swedish?
3. How many of them have trouble understanding and/or speaking Swedish?

Central questions

General:

1. Do you experience a difference in teaching English to children who have a different native tongue than Swedish as opposed to Swedish as a first language?
2. For what functions should one use TL and L1-in your opinion?
3. To what degree do you use TL and L1?
4. Why do you use TL and L1 the way you do?

Opportunities and challenges

1. Have you experience any positive effects on student-student interaction due to the variations in first language of the pupils
   a. If so, what are they?
   b. Have you adapted your way of teaching because of this?
2. Have you experienced any positive aspects on the teaching of English that is specific to the children with a different first language?
   a. If so, what are they?
   b. Have you adapted your way of teaching because of this?
3. Have you experienced any difficulties when teaching English, specifically, to pupils with different mother tongue?
   a. If so, what are they?
   b. Have you adapted your way of teaching due to this?
4. Have you experienced any difficulties when teaching a class due to the variations in first languages?
   a. If so, what are they
5. In your experience, can children benefit from having already learned a foreign language?
   a. If so, how?
   b. Can they apply strategies that they used when learning Swedish to their English learning?
      i. Can they share these strategies with their classmates?

Attitudes

1. Do you experience that the confidence of the pupils with different first language than Swedish gets affected by having already learned a new language?
   a. If yes, how? Is it in a positive or negative way?
2. Do you experience that the motivation of the pupils with Swedish as a first language is affected by the pupils with different first language having already learned Swedish as a foreign language?
   a. If yes, how? In a positive or negative way?

Pedagogical practice

1. Have you made any changes in your teaching of English for the whole class for the sake of the children with a different first language than Swedish?
   a. If so, what changes?
   b. Are there any changes you would like to do that you can’t at the moment?
2. What specific measures have you taken on an individual level for the children with different L1?
   a. If so, what changes?
   b. Are there any changes or specific measures you would like to do that you can’t at the moment?
3. Is there any support you wish you would get for your teaching of English in a classroom with a varying language base? (Such as for example Further education, tools to use in the classroom, collaborative measures with other teachers?)

Cultural aspects

1. Do you feel that having pupils from different cultural backgrounds impact the cultural aspect of your language teaching?
   a. If yes, how?
   b. If no, why?

Finishing summarizing question
1. Can you give any specific example related to what we talked about now in order to illuminate a classroom situation?
Appendix 2: Interview questions – Swedish version

Bakgrundsfrågor

1. Vilken lärarutbildning har du?
   a. Vilka årskurser fokuserade din utbildning på?
   b. Var Engelskundervisning en del av utbildningen?
      i. Om inte, har du då gått någon fortbildning för att undervisa i Engelska?
2. Hur länge har du undervisat i Engelska?
3. I vilka årskurser har du undervisat i Engelska?
4. Har dina klasser alltid haft elever med olika modersmål?

Omgivning

1. Hur många elever har du i din klass?
2. Hur många av dina elever har annat modersmål än Svenska?
3. Hur många av eleverna med annat modersmål har svårigheter att förstå/tala Svenska?

Centrala frågor

Allmänna frågor

1. Upplever du att det är annorlunda att undervisa i Engelska då du har elever som har ett annat modersmål än Svenska?
2. För vilka funktioner anser du att man bör använda TL respektive Svenska?
3. I vilken utsträckning använder du TL respektive Svenska?
4. Varför använder du TL och Svenska på det sätt du gör?

Svårigheter och möjligheter/fördelar

1. Har du upplevt några positiva effekter på klassen som helhet på grund av förekomsten av olika modersmål bland eleverna?
   a. Om ja, vilka positiva effekter?
   b. Har du anpassat din undervisning på något sätt på grund av detta?
2. Har du upplevt några positiva effekter på individnivå hos de elever som har ett annat modersmål än svenska?
   a. Om ja, vilka positiva effekter?
   b. Har du anpassat din undervisning på något sätt på grund av detta?
3. Har du upplevt några svårigheter på individnivå för elever med annat modersmål än svenska?
   a. Om ja, vilka svårigheter?
   b. Har du anpassat din undervisning på något sätt på grund av detta?
4. Har du upplevt några svårigheter för klassen som helhet på grund av förekomsten av olika modersmål hos eleverna?
   a. Om ja, vilka svårigheter?
   b. Har du anpassat din undervisning på något sätt på grund av detta?
5. Upplever du att eleverna kan dra nytta av att redan ha lärt sig ett främmande språk?
   a. Om ja, hur då?
   b. Kan eleverna tillämpa strategier för att lära sig ett nytt språk som de har med sig från då det lärde sig svenska?
      i. Kan de dela med sig av dessa strategier till sina klasskamrater?

Attrityder

1. Upplever du att självförtroendet hos eleverna med annat modersmål än svenska påverkas av att de redan lärt sig ett främmande språk?
   a. Om ja, hur?
2. Upplever du att motivationen hos barnen med Svenska som modersmål påverkas av att ha elever med annat modersmål i klassen?
   a. Om ja, hur?

Pedagogiskt utövande

1. Har du genomfört några förändringar i din undervisning ritad mot hela klassen på grund av de elever som har annat modersmål än svenska?
   a. Om ja, vilka?
   b. Är det några förändringar du skulle vilja genomföra men inte har möjlighet till i dagsläget?
2. Har du genomfört några åtgärder specifikt för eleverna med annat modersmål än svenska?
   a. Om ja, vilka?
   b. Är det några åtgärder du skulle vilja genomföra men inte har möjlighet till i dagsläget?
3. Är det något stöd du skulle vilja få för att underlätta undervisningen av engelska i en klass med elever med annat modersmål än svenska?
   a. Om ja, vad?

\textbf{Den kulturella aspekten av ämnet Engelska}

1. Upplever du att det påverkar den kulturella aspekten i undervisningen av Engelska att eleverna kommer från olika kulturella bakgrunder?
   a. Om ja, hur?
   b. Om nej, varför inte?

\textbf{Avslutande sammanfattande fråga}

1. Kan du ge något specifikt exempel relaterat till det vi pratat om nu för att belysa en klassrumssituation?
Appendix 3: Inquiry sheet for function – English version

Central questions - general-2

Give instructions

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>L1</th>
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Explain the aim of an activity

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<th>4</th>
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Correct

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Evaluate

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Translate

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Check for comprehension

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Central questions – general 3

Proportions TL relative L1

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<th>L1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix 4: Inquiry sheet for functions – Swedish version

Centrala frågor-Allmänna-2

Ge instruktioner
TL 1 2 3 4 5 L1

Förklara målet med en aktivitet
TL 1 2 3 4 5 L1

Rätta/korriger
TL 1 2 3 4 5 L1

Utvärdera/bedöma elevernas delaktighet
TL 1 2 3 4 5 L1

Översätta – översätta en redan uttalad mening
TL 1 2 3 4 5 L1

Stämma av elevers förståelse
TL 1 2 3 4 5 L1

Centrala frågor-Allmänna-3
TL 1 2 3 4 5 L1