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Content and Language Integrated Learning in Swedish Primary School – Investigating the Effectiveness of the Approach

Ämnesintegrerad språkinlärning i svenska skolans tidigare år – en undersökning av dess effektivitet

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Grundlärarexamen med inriktning mot arbete i årskurs F-3, 240 högskolepoäng
Examensarbete i fördjupningsämnet (15 hp)

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Preface

We have been equally involved and shared responsibility throughout the process of the current study. This includes selecting previous research and appropriate literature, formulating the research questions, contacting participants for the study, conducting the interviews, transcribing the interviews, and analysing and synthesising the data. Some sections were initially written separate by one of us. However, they were all carefully read and revised by both of us.

__________________________________________  _________________________________
Evelina Brandin              Tove Ekstrand
Abstract

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual focused pedagogical practice in which a language other than the students’ first language is taught through content. CLIL has grown to become a popular pedagogic approach within education systems across the world. However, research conducted in Swedish primary schools is extremely limited. Therefore, the aim of this study is to provide an insight into what factors are of relevance for the practice to be successful, as well as whether an implementation of the approach in the Swedish educational system would be beneficial. The study presents an overview regarding previous research and relevant theoretical perspectives. Semi-structured interviews with five primary school teachers in the south of Sweden were conducted for this study. The results reveal numerous beneficial factors, such as the students’ language skills and knowledge skills developing simultaneously in meaningful contexts. An additional beneficial factor expressed by all the interviewed teachers is the development of the students’ interculturality, which is stated as a key skill to develop through English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching by the Swedish National Board of Education (Skolverket). However, the conclusion demonstrates that the major challenges are the lack of a set framework and adapted materials available in Sweden for the pedagogical practice.

Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning, CLIL, FL, language development, content knowledge development, EFL, FLL
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Introduction

During our teacher training in the field (VFU) at primary school level (K-3), we experienced a great deal of interest and an eagerness from the students to learn English. They are exposed to the language on a daily basis through various media, such as social networks, TV, films and video games, and they have already acquired a great deal of language knowledge when entering school. This gives the teachers a great opportunity to take advantage of the students’ genuine interest in the language. Our experience with English teachers is that the Foreign Language Learning (FLL) generally consists of vocabulary learning and often irrelevant content rather than actually teaching English in a meaningful context, which is argued to be a key to successful language learning (Gibbons, 2013, p.33-34). English is considered to be a lingua franca, which means that it serves as a bridge between speakers who do not share the same first language (L1) and gives them an opportunity to communicate through a common language, something that would not be possible without the Lingua Franca (Dalton-Puffer, 2011, p.183, Dewey, 2007, p.333).

Studies suggest that the optimal environment for learning is when the students can make connections and consider several perspectives while developing their knowledge (Park, 2008). Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual focused pedagogical method in which a language other than the students’ first language is used for teaching both the content of a subject and a language. In this method, language learning and subject content are of equal importance. The purpose of the method is that the learners will develop their language skills and content knowledge simultaneously (Coyle, Do, Hood, Philip, Marsh & David, 2010, p.1-4).

According to Skolverket (2011a), the English language surrounds us in our daily lives and occurs in diverse areas such as Politics and Finance as well as the international arena (p.32). Sylvén (2010) argues that knowledge of English would therefore give the students opportunities to integrate in both cultural and social contexts, and it would prepare them for their future studies and professions, something that Skolverket (2011a) argues to be one of the most important reasons for English language learning in the Swedish educational system (p.13), (p.32). Moreover, CLIL as an approach, aims to teach a language other than the
students’ L1 in contexts that are relevant and in environments that are authentic (Dalton-Puffer, 2011, p.193-194). As there are diverse ways of using a language, such as subject specific school language and everyday use of a language, and since all students are at different levels regarding their English language proficiency, Skolverket (2012) argues that in order to develop the different types of language simultaneously, the teaching must consist of interactive activities and authentic contexts, which is the main purpose of CLIL as a pedagogical method (p.10-15).

Skolverket (2011a) states that for the English subject:

- The teaching of English should help the students develop confidence in their ability to use the English language for different purposes, in different contexts and when communicating with different recipients;
- The students should develop all-round communicative skills, which involve the ability to interact with others, both in the written and spoken language;
- Communicative skills also involve the use of strategies in order to support communication and the ability to solve problems when the language skills by themselves are not enough;
- To be able to develop these skills, the students should be given rich opportunities to practise in relevant situations (p.32-33).

There are no aims and knowledge requirements from the national curriculum by Skolverket (2011a) that explicitly support the implementation of CLIL. However, they implicitly support the usage of the approach as they not only focus on subject content knowledge but also on language development, cultural aspects and task-based instructions, which are commonly used in CLIL. All the content subjects include language-developing elements. However, it is never specified what language (Dalton-Puffer, 2011, p.193-196; Skolverket, 2011a, p.22-254). Furthermore, Skolverket (2011b) explains the content of the curriculum and emphasises the importance of teaching English in contexts that promote interculturality and internationalisation, as well as in settings that are meaningful and capitalise on the students’ experiences and everyday surroundings (p.8). The curriculum does not explicitly promote the usage of CLIL. However, we propose that it is largely open for interpretation as the aims and knowledge requirements are arguably vague.
There is extensive research on the benefits and disadvantages of CLIL, but most of it is conducted on secondary and upper-secondary students. While there is extensive research on the subject in general, it is limited in the Swedish context, and research regarding the primary school years in Sweden is close to non-existent. CLIL is a common method in countries such as the Netherlands, Finland and Spain, though it has yet to receive recognition in the Swedish educational system. Research performed in other countries suggests that CLIL is a beneficial approach in primary school. As the English language is increasing in status and popularity in Sweden as in the rest of the world, an investigation as to whether it would benefit primary schools in Sweden is of importance in developing EFL teaching.
Purpose

Research regarding CLIL is very limited, especially research conducted in the primary school years (studies conducted on students in the ages six to ten) in a Nordic context. The purpose of this study is therefore to contribute to the research community in a relatively unexplored area. The aim of the study is to provide other teachers with relevant knowledge regarding the chosen subject, first and foremost Nordic primary school teachers. We would like to investigate if the pedagogical method CLIL would be beneficial in a Swedish context and if so, how would one implement this approach?
Research question

- Would CLIL be a beneficial approach within the Swedish primary school system? If so, how? If not, why?
- What individual factors are relevant for the approach to be effective?
Theoretical background

This section begins with explaining the pedagogical practice of CLIL. The term English as an International Language is described, and Karchu’s model is presented. Moreover, the sociocultural perspective is presented, and its relation to the CLIL approach is clarified. The 4Cs framework - regarding content, communication, culture and cognition - is described, and a section presenting the relationship between CLIL and culture follows. The Language Triptych, which highlights the interrelationship between language objectives and content objectives, is explained. The role that CLIL plays in the Swedish educational system and its evolvement is described. Finally, previous research regarding parents’ students’ and teachers’ perceptions of CLIL, as well as assessment within the practice and the need for a communal framework, is presented.

CLIL

CLIL is a pedagogical method in which a language other than the students’ L1 is used for the teaching and learning of language and subject content. The language knowledge development includes the development of communicative-, reading-, writing- and vocabulary skills. The content knowledge development includes the acquisition of subject specific content knowledge and activities that are typical for the subject of matter. To demonstrate, such methods and activities could be doing experiments and excursions for Science and reading maps for Geography (Skolverket, 2011a, p.107, p.120, p.137, p.151). These focuses are considered equally important in the CLIL approach (Coyle et al., 2010, p.1). Both the language knowledge and the content knowledge should be developed simultaneously as the idea of CLIL is for the learning to take place in a meaningful context. This would mean that the students develop subject specific vocabulary as well as developing their overall communicative skills while developing their content knowledge. CLIL is thus an innovative fusion of both language and content. The idea is that the students will learn subject content through a language (Coyle et al., 2010 p.27-29).

CLIL is considered to be the European counterpart of immersion, which is a North American pedagogical approach. Immersion originated in Canada and is considered a bilingual practice.
in which some content subjects are being taught in the students’ second language (L2). In
Canada, for example, where French serves as a second language, some subject content would
be taught in French in immersion programmes. However, what separates CLIL from other
bilingual practices is that it is content driven and not language driven, which most other
bilingual approaches are, including immersion (Coyle et al., 2010 p.7, p.27).

In some countries across the world, English, which is a foreign language (FL) for the majority
of the students, is used as the language of instruction. This is typical in some African
countries, such as Mozambique, where there are around 20 distinct L1s. In Africa, there are
over 2,000 recognised languages; and the need for a language of instruction, in this case
English, in the educational system is therefore crucial (Coyle et al., 2010 p.6). Furthermore,
developed English language skills are necessary prerequisites in order to increase the
students’ possibilities for their future since they will not be limited by only speaking their L1.
“[…] the ability to use a lingua franca is becoming prerequisite for individual success” (Coyle
et al., 2010 p.9). Moreover, one of the major purposes for the development of CLIL is to
internationalise countries so their citizens can partake in global interaction and increase their
abilities for higher education and future professions. This factor may be applicable in the
Swedish context as well seeing as Sweden is a relatively small country with only ten million
citizens and Swedish does not serve as a L1 or L2 anywhere else in the world (Coyle et al.,

**English as an International Language**

As previously mentioned, English is considered an international language and a lingua franca.
An international language is a language that has received a certain status and popularity in
countries where it does not serve as an official language. Such status could be represented by
the said language being integrated into the educational system, as well as into the daily lives
of the country’s citizens by, for example, anglicising words and adopting cultural phenomena
from English speaking countries, as is the case in Sweden (Skolverket, 2011b, p.8). An
international language also serves as a bridge between speakers who normally would not be
able to communicate with each other in their respective native languages, which is the
definition of a lingua franca (McKay, 2002, p.5-15). The global usage of the English language
can be categorised through Karchu’s model of inner-, outer-, and expanding circle countries:
The sociocultural perspective within CLIL

The ideas of Jerome Bruner (1915-2016), Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) formed the sociocultural and constructivist perspectives of learning (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 3). Vygotsky further developed the social constructivist perspective, which is based primarily on the idea that learning is a social event that occurs when the student interacts with others. Vygotsky recognised that all students are unique learners, and he emphasised that the
social environment has a great impact on the students’ learning process. Moreover, Vygotsky investigated what a student would be able to accomplish with support from a more knowledgeable peer. This concept is called “The Zone of Proximal Development” (ZPD), and it describes the difference between the student’s current knowledge level and the potential knowledge which could be gained with support from a peer with more knowledge. The support that is offered to the student in these situations should be given systematically, and it is referred to as “scaffolding”. The term was developed by Bruner and built on the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. Bruner, in line with Vygotsky, recognised that every student is a unique learner and that the scaffolding must be adapted to fit the individual’s needs (Pinter, 2006, p. 6-13). Scaffolding offers immediate and meaningful support through interaction, which enables the student to perform at a higher level. CLIL as a pedagogical approach is based on these theories and recognises the vital role that communication and interaction plays in the student’s learning process (Coyle et al., 2010, p.28-29).

The 4Cs Framework of CLIL

There are four contextualised building blocks that create the 4Cs framework within CLIL, and the building blocks are essential for the CLIL practice. The building blocks consist of content (subject knowledge), communication (the learning of language and the use of language), culture (developing global citizenship and understanding of interculturality) and cognition (the process of learning and thinking). CLIL acknowledges that there is a symbiotic relationship between these building blocks and that an integration of them will lead to authentic and meaningful teaching. While planning and organising lessons and activities, teachers should take these building blocks into consideration, as without them, the quality of the education would be insufficient (Coyle et al., 2010 p.41). According to Coyle et al. (2010), “[…] CLIL involves learning to use a language appropriately whilst using language to learn effectively” (p.42).

Figure 2: The 4Cs Framework
The figure illustrates the different building blocks within the CLIL practice. They are all of equal importance; and for CLIL to be successful, an integration of the building blocks is crucial (Coyle et al., 2010, p.41).

**CLIL and culture**

Over recent years, there has been a paradigm shift in what is important in teaching, as explained by Larzén-Östermark (2008, p.527-528). Previously, the prime focus was on linguistic competence and questions regarding ‘what’ and ‘how’, whereas now, intercultural communicative competence and questions regarding ‘why’ are the major focal points. As culture is a vital key to the CLIL approach and as society is arguably more technology driven than ever before, it becomes increasingly more important to teach students about internationalisation and interculturality. Interculturality can be defined as the ability to critically evaluate your own and other cultures. An intercultural person is someone who is curious and open to learning about other cultures without necessarily identifying with them, and who can view them in relation to their own culture and identify similarities and differences (Larzén-Östermark, 2008, p.528).

The Swedish Curriculum for English in primary school states that the education should introduce and teach students about “Daily life and ways of living in different contexts and areas where English is used” (Skolverket, 2011a, p.33), as well as for the students to “adapt
language for different purposes, recipients and contexts, and reflect on living conditions, social and cultural phenomena in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used” (Skolverket, 2011a, p.32). SNAE (2011b) states that interculturality should play a vital part in the teaching (p.8-9). As there is a diverse range of ethnicities in Sweden today, and the students should be taught about everyone’s equal value, this is a chance to explore these different backgrounds and talk about equality while simultaneously developing communicative skills (Skolverket, 2011a, p.9). This is also of significant importance due to what Pollock and Van Reken (2009) refer to as ‘third culture kids’, who have grown up in a home with one culture different from the one in the society they live in. These children struggle to fully relate to either of the cultures (p.13-14). Discussing them and sharing their experiences will not only help them relate to them, but also teach the other students about a culture in a meaningful and interactive way, and CLIL as an approach promotes and encourages such activities.

**CLIL in Sweden**

The main motive for CLIL in Sweden, as previously stated by Sylvén (2010), has been internationalisation and to encourage bilingualism in order for the population to be able to participate in the global market of higher education and work, with English as a lingua franca (p.13). The first introduction of CLIL in Sweden was through a small-scale experiment in the 1970’s where engineering students at Burgården upper-secondary school were partially taught in English. The results indicated that the CLIL students had not gained significantly more English language proficiency. However, they themselves perceived the experience as positive and that their English language knowledge had developed, more so than the non-CLIL control group (Washburn, 1997, p.9).

CLIL is a popular approach in neighbouring Nordic countries. In Finland, an officially bilingual country where Swedish serves as an L2, the Immersion approach has been used since 1987, with Swedish as the language of instruction. Thus, the CLIL practice has naturally been introduced with English as the language of instruction. It has grown in popularity since the implementation in the early 1990’s, and numerous studies have been conducted with positive results (Sylvén, 2010, p.20; Washburn, 1997, p.319). In Norway, CLIL was
introduced in 1993, and students who complete such programmes receive a special note in their diplomas. According to Sylvén (2010), the implementation of CLIL in neighbouring countries such as Finland and Norway has been government initiated, with government supervised requirements, whereas the implementation in Sweden has been initiated by individual teachers and schools (p.19-24). Consequently, there is no government-controlled framework, which has proven to be a challenge since the teachers do not receive support or guidance. Teachers have been left to create and assess their own materials, which is not only time consuming but has also resulted in such a large variety of models that the definition of CLIL is misinterpreted at times (Sylvén, 2010, p.21). For example, Reierstam (2015) discovered that some teachers gave instructions and feedback in Swedish rather than in English during CLIL classes, which defeats the purpose entirely (p.97-98). Further examples of such misinterpreted varieties will be presented below. Teachers also expressed a lack of support from school administration and colleagues, and they perceive their peers as unwilling to cooperate in subject integration (Reierstam, 2015, p.93, p.107).

Research on CLIL implementation in Sweden has, as previously mentioned, mainly been conducted on upper-secondary levels. Washburn (1997) found that Swedish CLIL students outperformed their peers in EFL control groups regarding English language fluency, motivation and overall confidence in using English (p.319), a finding supported by Spada and Lightbown (1989) (cited in Sylvén 2010, p.23). Falk (2000) argues that CLIL students receive lower levels of content subject knowledge than their EFL peers. This is based on a study that Falk (2000) conducted, in which CLIL students were observed and recorded and were found to use little to no English in interaction with others (cited by Sylvén 2010, p.24). However, Reierstam (2015) found no significant difference between the groups (p.135). Sylvén (2010) found that CLIL students outperformed the control group regarding vocabulary acquisition and grammar but were on a par regarding reading comprehension. The results also indicated that the best results of CLIL were found in schools where only a portion of the subjects were taught in English (p.24). These studies were all preformed in upper-secondary schools.

**Learning outcomes and motivation**

One of the greatest benefits of CLIL, which is also one of the major reasons for the approach being implemented, is that the learning occurs in meaningful and authentic contexts. The students recognise that CLIL settings create a clear purpose for English language
development as well as making them aware of the connection and contextual aspects of content and language integration (Coyle et al., 2010 p.41-43; Pladevall-Ballester, 2015, p.49-51). Fielding and Harbon (2015) also found this to be a positive outcome as students developed these skills simultaneously as well as the content subject learned being of greater relevance (p.21-23). The students were able to make connections to their own experiences and interests, an aspect of great importance according to Gibbons (2013, p.90).

Mayo and Ibarrola (2015) came to the conclusions after conducting a study that found that students in a CLIL environment developed overall greater linguistic skills, by using strategies and conversational adjustments at a higher level than the EFL students did (p.50-51). This is supported by Fielding and Harbon (2015) who discovered that CLIL students surpassed the EFL students regarding language fluency (p.21). Heras and Lasagabaster (2015) found that students in CLIL settings developed academic vocabulary as well as subject specific language, whereas EFL students did not do so to the same extent. They also found the approach to reduce the gap between male and female students, where the female students had previously achieved higher results in language knowledge than the male. The CLIL environment made the male students more motivated due to the fact that the language was now taught as a tool to receive subject content knowledge. Neither did they find any evidence implying that the acquisition of subject content knowledge suffered at the expense of it being taught in an FL (p.79-84). This was supported by similar findings from Tragant, Marsol, Serrano and Llanes (2015, p.586-588). The students developed their problem-solving skills as a result of this approach, which encourages open-ended questions and discussions, with the FL as a resource for acquiring knowledge, rather than a hindrance (Gibbons, 2013 p.47-52).

Fielding and Harbon (2015) found the CLIL students to be more passionate than their EFL peers (p.23), and this is supported by a study conducted by Doiz, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2014), which found CLIL students to experience less anxiety in CLIL settings compared to EFL students (p.216-220). Students as well as parents perceived that the students’ motivation level increased significantly. The students even tried to expand their English language knowledge on their own initiative in their everyday life, and the parents witnessed an eagerness and thirst from the students to achieve higher results in CLIL (Pladevall-Ballester, 2015, p.50).
However, Pladevall-Ballester (2015) found that low achieving students did not benefit from CLIL in the same way their higher achieving peers did. The parents of these students had concerns with the advanced level of both language and subject content in the approach, and this was reflected by their children’s perception. The teachers agreed that some students fell behind and that this was a concern on a higher level, as they received limited support in how to best cater to these students’ needs. They also witnessed that the students got more frustrated in the CLIL programme than they normally would, creating a downward spiral as they struggled to regain their concentration. Some parents also expressed a fear that the students’ L1 development would suffer, as too much of their education was focused on developing their FL (p.49-51, p.55).

**CLIL framework**

One of the major challenges with the implementation of CLIL in the educational system is, as previously mentioned, the lack of a set framework for the practice. This leaves teachers in a position where they are free to use their own interpretation to a great extent when using CLIL. Consequently, CLIL programmes across the world differ a lot from each other, which also leaves teachers confused as to how and what they should actually implement when applying the approach (Reierstam, 2015, p.94-95, p.97-98; Sylvén, 2010, p.21). Furthermore, according to research conducted by Moore and Lorenzo (2015) has shown that there is an immense need among teachers for both materials that are specifically designed to fit the CLIL approach as well as models of instructional construction to guide them (p.11). Roiha (2012) also found that teachers expressed lesson planning to be difficult due to the students’ different levels of language proficiency (p.7). Björklund (2013) found that teachers perceived that a complicated area within CLIL is the evaluation and assessment of the students’ achievements and abilities as they were unsure of when to evaluate content and when to evaluate language. They found it complicated to arrange settings and materials that enabled them to assess one or the other (p.128-129). This is supported by Reierstam (2015), whose findings suggested that the assessment process was far more difficult due to the integration and that teachers tended to assess only one or the other, missing out on the dual focus. Chróinin, Mhurchú and Ceallaigh (2016) found that teachers tended to assess language skills less than they normally would since they had to make sure the students understood and completed the tasks (p.572). Teachers find that the national curricular guidelines are not adapted to the growing linguistic
complexity of society and globalisation, in general, which is a great challenge in itself (Björklund, 2013, p.126).
Methodology

Five primary school (K-3) teachers were interviewed for this study. They work at schools in two different middle sized cities in the south of Sweden. According to Alvehus (2013), interviews are a suitable method when carrying out qualitative research such as in the current study (p.80). The interviews were semi-structured, which gave us the opportunity to discuss and ask following questions related to the given answer while asking the same questions to all the interviewees. This led to an increase in the validity of the result (Bryman, 2011).

Ethical Considerations

According to Vetenskapsrådet (2002), there are four different ethical conditions one must take into consideration when carrying out studies such as the present one. The four ethical conditions are as follows: the information condition, the permission condition, the confidentiality condition and the utilisation condition. Below, they will be further explained and connections will be drawn to the present study:

The information condition states that all participants of a study must receive necessary/relevant information regarding the study. When we emailed the teachers and requested their participation, we explained the purpose and aim of our study. When we met the teachers, we informed them of the purpose of the study again and explained how the interview would proceed before we conducted the interview.

The permission condition demonstrates that one must obtain teachers’ permission for them to participate in the study. When conducting the interviews, we clearly stated that the teachers’ participation was completely optional, and they volunteered to part take. Information was given to them that they were free to withdraw their participation if they wished.

The confidentiality condition states that any personal information about the participants of a study should be handled with great prudence. Any personal details of the participants should be inaccessible for people without authorisation. The teachers of the study were guaranteed confidentiality when participating.
The utilisation condition implies that personal details regarding the participants should exclusively be used for the purpose of research. The participating teachers were guaranteed anonymity; and in order to keep to that, all names of people, cities of employment and names of schools of employment were excluded. However, a transcript from all interviews will be included in appendices, which we made the participants aware of (p.5-16).

**The participating teachers of the study**

The participants of the present study were strategically selected based on three main criteria (Alvehus, 2013, p. 67). Due to our limited time frame for this study, it was necessary for the teachers to be available for interviews shortly after we had contacted them. The geographical area was also limited, as we had to be able to meet the participants in order to conduct the interviews. The final criterion was that the participants had to be primary school teachers working with CLIL. We discovered that practising CLIL teachers in mainstream educational settings were limited in our geographical area. Consequently, all of the participants of the study work at primary school programmes (PYP) at international schools. Having the previously mentioned criteria in mind, we contacted three different schools. Two of the teachers were recommended to us by a teacher at Malmö University, and therefore we were able to get in touch with them directly. We selected another school based on our criteria and emailed the administration office at the school. They replied that they would put our message of request on their staff website; and if there was an interest amongst the teachers to participate in our study, they would contact us directly. Thereafter, we were contacted by two of the teachers at that school who were positive towards participating in our study. We decided that we wanted to add a third school in order to broaden the perspectives’ of the teachers. Therefore, we contacted a teacher at a third school, which responded that they were able to participate in the study. All the teachers who agreed to participate are primary school teachers. Three of them teach primary school programme one (five to six year olds) and two of them teach PYP four (eight to nine year olds). The participating teachers will be further presented in the results section.

Table 1: The teachers’ backgrounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The interviewees</th>
<th>Years of teaching</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Native English Speaker*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

22
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Year they teach</th>
<th>Subjects they teach</th>
<th>Students with English as their L1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>PYP 1</td>
<td>Math, Language and Units of Inquiry</td>
<td>10 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>PYP 1</td>
<td>Math, Language and Units of Inquiry</td>
<td>10 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>PYP 4</td>
<td>Math, Language and Units of Inquiry</td>
<td>40 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>PYP 1</td>
<td>Math, Language and Units of Inquiry</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Native English speaker refers to speakers from countries where English serves as an official language.*

**Postgraduate Certificate in Education

**Current teaching**

**Table 2: Current teaching situation**
Table 2 demonstrates the participating teachers’ current teaching situation. It reports what school year they teach and what subjects they teach. The table also demonstrates the percentage of the students that have English as their L1.

**Semi-structured interviews**

The interviews that were conducted for the present study were semi-structured. Alvehus (2013) states that a semi-structured interview is when the interviewer has prepared mostly open-ended questions according to different themes. The chosen method gave us the opportunity to ask the teachers open-ended questions and receive in-depth answers regarding their opinions and views, and these were aspects of interest for our research questions (p. 82-84). The aim or the interviews was to receive the teachers’ perspective on the pedagogical practice of CLIL.

**Procedure of the interviews**

The questions for the interviews were carefully thought through and thematised accordingly. We decided to not send out the interview questions in advance to the participating teachers, as we wanted to receive their spontaneous perceptions and thoughts. However, we recognise that sending out questions in advance enables the participants to prepare themselves and give more thought through answers. All interviews were recorded, and the interviewees gave their consent to this prior to the interview. Although we were aware that recording the interviews might have intimidated the interviewees and made them feel less comfortable, we decided that it was necessary in order for the gathered material to be as relevant and valid as possible (Alvehus, 2013, p. 85-86). Moreover, the email, which includes our request for the interview, is attached in the appendix.

All the interviews were conducted in the respective teacher’s classroom at a time of their choosing. Both authors were present and equally involved in all interviews. Two of the
teachers requested to be interviewed together as they were teachers in the same class. Having considered this, we agreed. We recognise the fact that this interview differs from the others. However, we believe that it gave an interesting, additional perspective, and the teachers could support each other when answering questions. All interviews were conducted in English.

**Analysis of the data collection**

After conducting the interviews, they were all transcribed. We decided to exclude some parts from transcription, as they were of no relevance to the study. Nevertheless, the relevant parts were carefully transcribed. We also excluded pauses as well as fillers, such as “hm”, as they did not serve a purpose for the study.
Results

This chapter aims to present the results from the data collection. The answers from the interviewees are presented in relation to the research questions and what has been presented in the literature review. The research questions are: “Would CLIL be a beneficial approach within the Swedish primary school system? If so, how? If not, why?” and “What individual factors are relevant for the approach to be effective?”. The teachers are referred to as Teacher 1 (T1), Teacher 2 (T2), Teacher 3 (T3), Teacher 4 (T4) and Teacher 5 (T5). The results are thematised according to the beneficial and challenging aspects of the three main themes from the interviews, which are the following: lessons, materials, and assessment with this method. Additional aspects emerged from the interviews, resulting in a subcategory: parental influence on the effectiveness of CLIL.

Beneficial aspects of CLIL

When asked whether they preferred the CLIL method, all the interviewed teachers said that they did. T3 stated, “I do. Yes, hundred percent”, and that the general perception of the participants was that they felt that the English language is of great importance in the educational system, something T1 and T2 also reported. All teachers expressed that the method enables the students to learn in a meaningful context, something they would not do to the same extent in a mainstream programme. T5 stated, “[…] giving students context for using things is always the most beneficial way for their learning”. Overall, all the teachers were satisfied with working with this method. The specific areas that were at an especially satisfactory level will be presented below.

Teachers’ perceptions of assessment within CLIL settings

The previous research suggested that teachers had difficulties with when and how to assess language as opposed to content. However, when the participating teachers of the current study were asked when they assess language and content, they gave similar answers. T1, T2 and T5 stated that the assessment is a constantly on-going process and that they are always aware of what they are assessing. They do not find it difficult to separate the assessment of language and content; nevertheless, they often assess both simultaneously. T3 supported the latter by
stating that whatever they are assessing they are always taking the students’ language skills into consideration. However, T4 reported that it very much depends on the session as to what type of assessment is suitable. T5 stated that they always try to do summative assessment in multiple ways in order to make the assessment as reliable and as valid as possible.

“[…] (what) we’re looking at is going to be some sort of summative project that they’re doing, so when we’re now at past civilisations one of their summative assessments will be these diary entries so […] we will look at have you (student) got all the text features and the language features for a re-count and we will also look at do you have the understanding of the civilisation we’re doing […]”

The quote by T5 demonstrates the diverse and multiple ways of assessing and planning tasks that suit the profile. They also expressed that for many of their activities, the students can choose whether they want to present their knowledge in writing or verbally. This is due to the fact that many of the students will have limited English language skills, which means that the content knowledge might be there, but some of them might not, for example, have the ability to fully express it in writing, and therefore they will be given the opportunity to express it orally as well.

Moreover, T5 emphasised the importance of assessing in creative ways and that the students should be a part of the process in choosing the most suitable way of assessing according to their abilities. For example, the students will be given the opportunity to choose whether they want to show their content knowledge by creating a PowerPoint, writing a book, making a poster or creating a model. In contrast, T3 stated that they would in some cases primarily focus on assessing language due to the limited English language skills that some of the students possess. When the students have developed their English language, a reliable and valid assessment of the content can be made. T3 explained this by “[…] (the students) focus on the language a bit, especially at the beginning. And then they’re (parents) probably hoping that the content side of things will develop when the language is there”. All teachers agreed that the summative assessment mainly focuses on content, whereas the formative assessment, which is constantly present, will in most cases assess both language and content. Furthermore, neither of the teachers found it complicated to create settings that enable them to separate the assessment of language and content.
Development of L1 within the CLIL practice

The teachers were asked if the students’ L1 knowledge falls behind as a result of the education being taught in English. T1 stated that from a scientific perspective research has shown that students at the primary school age can take on and develop four or five languages simultaneously. From a personal perspective, they stated that from their own experiences the English language had been a useful tool that helped strengthen the learning and development of another language.

“[…] I started to learn and speak my mother tongue and I thought that my knowledge in English helped me to pick up my mother tongue faster so I think maybe it’s the reverse for our students when they learn English it strengthens their own mother tongue because they now have new understandings and new words and new concepts that they might have not known previously with their mother tongue […]”

T3, T4 and T5 all agreed that it depends on the individual and that it is difficult to generalise. T4 stated that the students’ L1 might have to be put on hold for a while as the students’ primarily focus on developing English language skills as quickly as possible. Once they are confident in using the English language, the focus on the L1 returns; therefore, their L1 language proficiency will not suffer. All teachers stated that their schools offer mother-tongue education and that they encourage the students to take these classes.

The teachers were asked questions regarding their perceptions of the students’ motivation levels considering that they are not being taught in their L1. T1 and T2 agreed that in general the students are motivated and excited to learn and explore the English language. They reported, “[…] overall in the school situation and the class situation I think it’s really fun to deal with these types of situations (language development) because they really love it. They celebrate it and they are really proud of it”. This is supported by T5, who revealed that the students generally have a high level of motivation since many of them come from countries that place a high value on education.

Contextualised learning and FL development within CLIL

T1 referred to the fact that the approach being student-centred and student-led is a major benefit of the method. According to T1, everything should revolve around the students and
their language development, and the approach is doing just that. T2 maintained that the main benefit of the approach was that it holistically develops the students as the language education is contextualised, a view that all the interviewed teachers expressed. They all expressed the view that teaching language in contexts that are of actual relevance and meaningfulness to the students helps to motivate them. T4 especially highlights the students’ abilities to make connections across subjects due to this method. T4 stated, “[…] you are in a position to get them to improve their communication skills through something that is very often quite interesting for them, or you can get them enthusiastic about”. T5 found that the students really remember what is being taught and that their students remember certain things from years ago, because it was taught in a context that was interesting and meaningful to them. T3 also stated that the method is mainly beneficial for students who are open-minded and who like problem-solving and investigating subjects. In addition, T3 said that the approach increases the students’ communicative and social skills as it is largely based on communicative group activities, something that will help them in their future education and professions, as English is an international language with great status across the world:

“I think that students here with this approach have a big advantage when it comes to social and communication skills, which is obviously very important when you get older and you have to get a job and to work in a team or work for different organisations it’s usually important.”

and “And also I think that they’re thinking of the future that they want their children… They seem to think that English is a very important language to have and for their children to have their education in English” regarding why parents chose the CLIL approach for their children. T4 put forward that when teaching language to such young learners, this method is beneficial due to the language rich opportunities and tasks, where the students hear language in different forms and from different sources. When asked what they found to be the major challenges with the method, all the teachers agreed that it was the time spent planning and inadequate time for it, which has previously been mentioned.

**Possible challenges with CLIL**
When the teachers were asked if they were dissatisfied regarding any specific aspect within the CLIL approach, T3 felt that there was an immense lack of both support from the administrative staff and a lack of materials. T3 expressed, “I thought that there would have been more resources or more techniques that the school would have developed but there isn’t really”. T4 stated that there is a lack of materials in Sweden in general and that they would have to order suitable materials from abroad. Furthermore, T5 stated that they felt that the access to materials was sufficient; however, the planning of lessons and activities were very time consuming due to the different levels in the class. The specific areas that the teachers expressed dissatisfaction with will be presented below.

**Access to CLIL materials in Sweden**

All the interviewed teachers expressed a lack of CLIL materials in Sweden. T4 ordered materials from abroad or web-based materials from other countries, explaining that available Swedish materials were insufficient and scarce to non-existent. T1 and T2 did not use any ready-made materials and text books, but they created their own and used visual representation that they had found on the internet. They stated that they mainly work communicatively, discussing with the students whatever unit they are currently working on and that they perceive that to be the main purpose of this method. They take the students’ wishes and interests into consideration during units and lessons, which might take a completely different turn than previously expected. T1 expressed that, "[…] if you have conversations about the unit like right now we’re talking about extinction. If you have conversations about the questions that they have then you can go home and you know make something, like a fun game or an activity”. Therefore, ready-made and structured materials would hinder the developmental approach that is allowed and expected to change as you go along. T3 expressed an immense lack of materials provided by the school, which only provided out-dated, repetitive British grammar booklets: “I was given booklets, very old-fashioned booklets, English grammar booklets, very, very repetitive. And I definitely think that there’s a lack of support with that”. Simple materials such as nametags and flash cards had to be created from scratch. T5 reported that the available materials regularly function as inspiration as they are not adapted to what they are currently teaching. If they are teaching a specific text type integrated with the social or science studies, there might be a useful ready-made task for the specific text type. However, they are not specific to the content knowledge,
so they must adapt it. All the interviewees agreed that most of their materials are created by themselves and adapted to cater to all the students’ needs.

**Lesson planning within CLIL**

All the interviewed teachers strongly agreed that the planning of lessons is extremely time consuming due to the range of different levels of students in the class. They all agreed that most of the time they have to plan one lesson in several different ways to cater for the different students’ needs and mind-sets. Some of the students are fluent in English, while some of them have no experience with the language at all. Furthermore, the children come from diverse educational backgrounds, different educational cultures, and they have different levels of maturity. T4 states:

“[…] you have to do a lot more differentiation and […] not just because of language but also because that many of the students in the class have had extremely different experiences of schooling, so some of them by the time they come to us at five will have already had a couple of years of formal education in say the UK. […] Others will have never been to school before, literally never.”

Consequently, the teacher is required to differentiate the tasks and goals to a great extent. Therefore, it is not only a matter of high and low achievers and different ways of preferred learning styles, but also about adapting the language used and taught to several different levels.

**Content knowledge development in CLIL**

The teachers in the current study were asked if they thought that the students received an equally adequate content subject knowledge considering that they are not being taught in their L1. T1, T2 and T4 strongly agreed that they did not think that the students received equally adequate content subject knowledge because it is not possible without a certain level of English language knowledge. T1 stated, “[…] every student has their own learning goal in relation to what they’re able to do […]”. T5 contended that they did not find that students’ content knowledge suffered as a consequence of them not being taught in their L1, rather that they were in some cases unable to express the content knowledge in English, even though
they possessed the knowledge. Furthermore, all teachers agreed that most students at the primary age develop their English language skills extremely quickly, which means that they are not missing out on a lot of the content knowledge, and with the right support they are able to catch up quickly on what they have missed. T3 expressed that with the right support from parents it would be possible for the students to receive equally adequate content subject knowledge, but even so it depends on the individual and differs from student to student.

Parents’ influence on the effectiveness of CLIL

Something that was brought up by all teachers throughout the interviews was the importance of parental support and involvement. They all agreed that if the parents were positive and ambitious, it would not only aid the teacher but the students as well. T1 and T2 expressed that at the start of the year they had two students with the same English language proficiency and the same L1. One of them had parents who were supportive of the teachers and mainly spoke English at home to further their child’s language development, as this was recommended by the teachers. The other student’s parents refused to practise English with their child and argued that it would only be used in school, so they only spoke their L1 at home. T2 expressed, “[…] today honestly if we compare both the students, one parent who actually cooperated, that child’s talking, walking, sleeping, drinking English and the other one still stammers a little bit, is not so confident of giving answers […]”. T3 felt that a factor of great importance for learning language at their students’ levels was parental involvement, such as helping with homework and reading, an opinion that was shared with T5. T4 expressed that the homework is an extension to what is being taught in school and that motivated and engaged parents are ideal to help and support the students. T4 also maintained that the students who were reluctant toward school especially benefit from involved parents as they tend to mirror the parents’ attitudes. If the parents are positive toward and supportive of the teacher, the students will be too. T1, T2 and T3 stated that parental support was the main influence on the students’ level of motivation. T3 stated, “I think that parents have a lot to do with how they feel about English really”. T4 expressed that they do not have as much one-on-one time with the students as they would like, some days as little as three minutes per student. However, if parents read, do homework or simply talk to them about school for 15 minutes a
day that is five times as much one-on-one time, which helps the students’ language development.
Discussion

This section aims to discuss our findings in relation to the research question and previous research; and the positive factors are weighed against the negative factors. The discussion synthesises the relevant aspects of the results into new themes: subject knowledge development, language development within CLIL, internationalisation and interculturality, support for teachers and parental involvement.

Subject knowledge development

Fielding and Harbon (2015) concluded that a major positive outcome when applying CLIL in education was that the subject that was taught was of greater relevance to the students (p.21-23). This was supported by T5, who expressed that the students’ knowledge is consolidated as a result of them being taught in a meaningful setting. Moreover, they stated that they experienced the fact that their students remember subject knowledge from years ago, as it was taught in a context that was interesting and meaningful to them. This is supported by Gibbons (2013), who emphasises the importance of teaching students in a meaningful context, which enables them to draw connections to their own experiences and interests (p.90). This implies that CLIL is in fact a beneficial approach for the age group in Sweden regarding the subject knowledge development acquisition. It might take longer to consolidate due to the language barrier, but once it does, it is likely they will be able to apply it and make connections to different contexts as the learning occurred in settings that were relevant and interesting to them.

Pladevall-Ballester (2015) found that some students fell behind on the acquisition of content knowledge as a consequence of them being taught in an FL (p.49-51, p.55). Contrastingly, T5 argued that they did not find that students’ subject content knowledge suffered as a consequence of them being taught in an FL. However, in some cases they were unable to express the content knowledge in English, although they possessed the knowledge. Moreover, all the interviewed teachers agreed that most students at the primary age develop FL skills extremely quickly, so they are in fact, not missing out on a lot of the content knowledge and with the right support they are able to catch up quickly on what they have missed. Furthermore, Tragant et al. (2015) did not find evidence of the content knowledge suffering in CLIL settings (p.586-588). As Pladevall-Ballester (2015) and 40 % of the interviewed
teachers found this to be an issue, it still must be taken into consideration. As a consequence, one might argue this to be a challenge of additional relevance to implementing the approach in Sweden, as the content knowledge requirements for primary school are stated in the curriculum (2011b) whereas such requirements for English do not exist. This suggests that SNAE recognises the content subjects as more important at that age than the subject of English. However, English is arguably increasing in status in Swedish society, which suggests that it should receive greater acknowledgement within the educational system. One might even argue that it is highly probable that it will increase in importance in the not too distant future.

**Language development within CLIL**

Heras and Lasagabaster (2015) found that students in CLIL settings developed academic vocabulary as well as subject specific language (p.79-84). This is supported by all the teachers in the current study. T4 expressed that the CLIL method frequently enables them to give the students language rich opportunities and further stated, “[…] you (teacher) are in a position to get them to improve their communication skills through something that is very often quite interesting for them, or you can get them enthusiastic about”. Furthermore, T2 argued that the CLIL method is greatly contributing in holistically developing the students as the language learning is contextualised. Mayo and Ibarrola (2015) found that students in a CLIL environment developed overall greater linguistic skills by using strategies and conversational adjustments at a higher level (p.50-51). This is supported by Fielding and Harbon (2015), who concluded that CLIL students surpassed the EFL students regarding language fluency (p.21). This further implies that it is a beneficial approach to language development as well as to the previously mentioned content development.

T5 reported that it is crucial to assess in multiple ways and to differentiate the activities. Many of the students in their class have limited English language skills, and a valid assessment would not be possible without differentiation and various types of assessment. Furthermore, T5 stated that even though some students’ English language skills are limited, they might possess the content knowledge required. Therefore, it is of great importance to find activities that stimulate both the students’ language development as well as their cognitive abilities. This is supported by the ideas of The Language Triptych, which aims to demonstrate the necessity to integrate language learning with cognitively demanding content
(Coyle et al., 2010, p.36). Arguably, this supports the implementation of CLIL as the teaching is adapted to cater for every individual’s abilities, whether it concerns their language development or content knowledge development. One could argue that this is something every teacher should strive towards, regardless of which pedagogical approach is being used. The education should be adapted and differentiated to fit every unique learner.

T4 stated that the students are given language rich opportunities and tasks, which enhances their overall language development. T3 supported this and reported that they often use communicative group tasks in their teaching, which both stimulates the students’ language development as well as enables them to support each other. This is in line with the sociocultural perspective and the ZPD, developed by Vygotsky. Through group work and interaction with others, the students with limited English language skills are able to perform at a higher level than they would have been able to on their own. This also gives the students great opportunities to learn from each other. Moreover, T3 stated that the CLIL practice enhances the students’ social skills through the multiple group activities. This is supported by the ideas of Vygotsky, who emphasised that learning is a social event, and the social environment in which the student is present has a great impact on their learning (Pinter, 2006, p.6-13). One could argue that this is yet another reason to why CLIL should be implemented in the mainstream educational system in Sweden. It gives the students language rich opportunities, which enhances their linguistic development as well as enabling them to learn from each other and becoming active in their own learning process. Furthermore, the development of the students’ social skills could benefit them in their future careers since most jobs require their employees to work well in teams and to interact with others in various ways.

**Internationalisation and interculturality**

When asked why they thought parents chose the CLIL approach for their children, all the interviewed teachers stated that a major reason was that English is an international language, and that English language proficiency is an important skill to develop. As previously mentioned, Sylvén (2010) reported this as the main reason for implementing the approach in Sweden (p.13). T3 stated:

> And also I think that they’re thinking of the future that they want their children…
> They seem to think that English is a very important language to have and for their
children to have their education in English. […] I think that students here with this approach have a big advantage when it comes to social and communication skills, which is obviously very important when you get older and you have to get a job and to work in a team or work for different organisations it’s usually important.

McKay (2002) explained that English serves as a bridge between native English speakers and countries with non-native English speakers, making it a medium for communicating across borders and in multiple contexts (p.5-15). As cultural phenomena from English speaking contexts are integrated into the Swedish society, one could argue that the significance of the English subject in the Swedish National Curriculum (2011a) is not on a par with the status it holds throughout the rest of society. Such phenomena could be the widespread celebration of Halloween, shopping on Black Friday and adopting or adapting English words into the Swedish language. SNAE (2011a) does not specify at what age the English subject should be implemented, something that it does regarding the other core subjects; nor does it include knowledge requirements for K-3. Arguably, as the students are more interested in, and naturally more exposed to the language than ever, capitalising on this and developing the curriculum accordingly should be the encouraged. This suggests that internationalisation and interculturality are beneficial factors for the approach to be effective and a major argument for implementing it in Swedish primary schools.

We argue that offering CLIL programmes that are government (SNAE) supported and regulated would be a natural next step, not only due to it developing the students’ language proficiency, but also their intercultural skills. SNAE (2011b) mentions interculturality as one of the major skills to develop through EFL teaching in Sweden today (p.8-9). As culture is one of the four Cs in “The 4C Framework”, it is a natural aspect of the CLIL education (Coyle et al., 2010, p.41). Hence, the implementation of CLIL would integrate interculturality in the students’ education in a natural and meaningful way, creating opportunities for them to interact in intercultural and international arenas. As Larzén-Östermark (2008) explained, interculturality is gaining status in EFL teaching globally, which further suggests that it should receive a greater focus in the Swedish educational system (p.527-528).
Support for teachers

Fielding and Harbon (2015) found that in order to create a sustainable environment for CLIL, the programme needs more financial support (p.25). Moreover, an additional challenge experienced by teachers applying the CLIL practice is the integration of language in the content subject lessons. Several studies found that this is mainly due to the fact that teachers lack competence in integrating language in subject lessons as well as the fact that in some cases their own language proficiency is not as developed as they would wish. Pladervall-Ballester (2015) argues that since they have not received any training in how to perform a successful integration the teachers express that planning lessons and developing materials becomes very time consuming (p.55). This is supported by multiple studies (Fielding & Harbon, 2015, p.22-24; Reierstam, 2015, p.86-107; Roiha, 2012, p.7-8; Sylvén, 2010, p.21). T1, however, expressed that the planning of lessons was not time consuming since there are two teachers in the class. They divide the planning between them, and they also stated the fact that they can bounce ideas off each other, and this is very helpful in making the planning efficient. However, these opinions can be explained by them simply having a colleague to rely on and share the workload with. T3, T4 and T5 did not express difficulties with the integration as such being due to lack of training; rather it was time consuming and challenging as a consequence of the differentiation in the students’ language proficiency. According to Fielding and Harbon (2015), Reierstam (2015), Roiha (2012) and Sylvén (2010), the lack of time for planning and assessing has been highlighted as one of the major issues with CLIL, and the teachers plead for both adapted CLIL materials and structured guidelines in order to increase the effectiveness of the approach (p.22-24), (p.86-107), (p.7-8), (p.21). The teachers also expressed a need for a communal platform for inspiration and support from their CLIL teacher peers (Moore & Lorenzo, 2015, p.11; Pladevall-Ballaster, 2015, p.55). All the interviewed teachers concluded that the lack of adapted materials was indeed an issue, though, not a vital one. T4 expressed that they searched outside of Sweden and found great materials from the UK and the US that were free, making the process more time consuming, but not impossible. Nevertheless, T3 expressed this to be a major disadvantage as they had to create and adapt close to everything by themselves, and that the materials available to them were out-dated.
Parental involvement

The additional aspects of the effectiveness of CLIL that emerged from the interviews mainly concerned parents. All the interviewed teachers expressed the importance of parental involvement and support as key factors to the effectiveness of CLIL, mentioning this in more than one context. One of the contexts was whether the parents were supportive of the teachers and their working methods, and the influence this had on their child’s individual level of motivation and attitude towards school. T4 stated that their students tended to mirror their parents attitudes regarding the teacher and school, and students who were reluctant and unmotivated towards school to begin with fell further behind due to their parents’ reluctance. Pladevall-Ballester (2015) found similar results in their study, where students and parents tended to have similar perceptions of and attitudes toward the CLIL approach (p.49-51, p.55). As motivation is arguably a vital component for learning, this could be damaging for the student, not only regarding their attitude, but also their actual results and learning outcomes.

Another factor was whether they were supporting their children outside of school settings, helping them with homework or using the English language at home. T1 and T2 gave an example of such relevance, explaining that they had two students with somewhat similar prerequisites to a successful CLIL education, where one developed at a significantly faster rate than the other, as a consequence of what language the parents chose to speak at home. All the interviewees felt that if parents had chosen a CLIL education for their children, then they were partially responsible for the language development as well. The parents knowingly placed them in settings where they would exclusively use and learn an FL, knowing this would be challenging as the education would be executed in an FL. The reason for doing so, according to the interviewees was for their children to learn English at an early age, at a different rate and level than they would in mainstream educational programmes. They argued that if the students were not developing their English to the desired level, it is the parent’s, as well as the teacher’s responsibility to evaluate and take action, as they made a conscious decision when placing their children in the setting.

However, one could argue that the responsibility should primarily lie with the school and the teachers, as it is their responsibility and job. Parents should be able to dispose of their free time as they wish. Nevertheless, if the teachers expressed that certain methods would be
beneficial to implement at home, it is the parents’ responsibility to either take the advice or not, for better or worse, and deal with the consequences. Furthermore, as parental involvement has proven to be a key for the students to succeed within the approach, it should be a priority for the parents, but not a requirement.

**CLIL in Sweden?**

As previously mentioned, research on the effectiveness of CLIL in the primary years in Sweden is limited. Studies by Sylvén (2010, p.24) and Washburn (1997. p.319) conducted on upper-secondary levels have concluded that the approach is beneficial for grammar and vocabulary acquisition and general confidence in using the English language. In addition to this, Doiz et al. (2014) found that CLIL settings increased the students’ motivational level (p.216-220). Falk (2000) found that CLIL students received lower levels of content knowledge compared to the EFL control group (cited by Sylvén 2010, p.24). This was also discovered international studies, such as Pladevall-Ballester (2015), as well as by the current study (p.49-51, p.55). Two out of the five interviewed teachers agreed that the content knowledge acquisition suffered, as a consequence of the teaching being in an FL. However, all the interviewed teachers used the TL (English) in all of the teaching, as opposed to partial CLIL, where only a portion of the subjects are taught in the TL. This could explain the dissatisfying subject knowledge learning outcomes, as Sylvén (2010) found that partial CLIL in Sweden was more beneficial than a CLIL approach where all the subjects are taught in the TL (p.24). Moreover, Reierstam (2015) did not find evidence of such a difference in content subject learning outcomes either, further pointing to partial CLIL being more effective, as that study also focused on partial CLIL programmes. Hence, CLIL in Swedish primary schools would not benefit nor hinder the content knowledge acquisition as such, if it were partially implemented.

However, one of the major challenges with the approach in Sweden, according to Björklund (2013, p.126), Reiserstam (2015, p.95-95; 97-98) and Sylvén (2010 p.21), is the lack of materials and set framework. All of the interviewed teachers expressed this to be an issue, as they had to search for internationally adapted resources. However, Björklund (2013 p.126) and Chróinin et al. (2016 p.571) actually found this to develop and inspire them as teachers, as they had to find creative and outside of the box solutions to fit the approach, something T1
and T2 agreed on. Nevertheless, the other three interviewees found it to be extremely time consuming. If SNAE would create and adapt materials and a set framework, as neighbouring Nordic countries’ counterparts have, the situation would arguably be another. As previously stated, SNAE (2011a) promotes the approach implicitly, so one could argue that it is only a matter of time before it does so explicitly. These aspects were the two main possibly challenging focal points from previously conducted studies, as well as the current. As the possible beneficial aspects outnumber the disadvantaging aspects, and the disadvantaging aspects are somewhat solvable immediately or in a not too distant future, one might argue that the approach would indeed benefit primary school students in Sweden.
Conclusion

This section demonstrates the relevant aspects from the findings of our study, as well as previous research, in order to answer our research questions. The limitations of the study will be presented in this section and suggestions for further research will be given.

Our research questions are: would CLIL be a beneficial approach within the Swedish primary school system? If so, how? If not, why? A sub-question to this is: What individual factors are of relevance to the effectiveness of the approach? The findings imply several beneficial factors, such as all the interviewed teachers expressing that their students develop their language knowledge and their content knowledge in meaningful contexts. Previous findings indicate that students in CLIL settings surpass their EFL peers regarding language knowledge development. Heras and Lasagabaster (2015) came to the conclusion that the CLIL students develop subject specific and academic language proficiency, something that all the interviewees agree with. Moreover, Fielding and Harbon (2015) found CLIL students to outperform the EFL students regarding language fluency, something that further supports that CLIL is beneficial regarding overall language development and skills. Additional beneficial aspects are the development of social skills, communicative skills and the ability to work well in group settings, as well as supporting each other. T3 reports this to be a consequence of the frequent usage of communicative group tasks in the CLIL environment, as well as T4 highlighting the numerous language rich opportunities the students are given as a beneficial factor for this. This is supported by Gibbons (2013), as well as by the ideas of Vygotsky (as cited by Pinter, 2006).

All the interviewed teachers agree that internationalisation is a major argument in favour of CLIL implementation and it is of great relevance for the students’ futures. Larzén-Östermark (2008), McKay (2002) and Sylvén (2010) report that CLIL is encouraging students to partake in international settings regarding education, politics and finance, only to name a few. Furthermore, Larzén-Östermark (2008), McKay (2002) and SNAE (2011a) highlight interculturality as an increasingly more important skill to possess; and all the interviewees consistently create tasks and activities that promote and enhance the students’ skills and awareness regarding this.
Two out of the five interviewed teachers report that they find CLIL students to acquire less subject knowledge than EFL students, as a consequence of them being taught in an FL. This is supported by Björklund (2013), Pladevall-Ballester (2015) and Sylvén (2010). However, the remaining three teachers, as well as Reierstam (2015) and Tragant et al. (2015), do not conclude such differences in subject knowledge acquisition. An explanation for this may be how much of the education is taught in English, as Sylvén (2010) found the approach to be more successful when the education was partially taught in English as opposed to exclusively. These findings suggest that there are challenges with the approach. However, as neither the current study nor previous studies have reached consensus regarding this, it can not be concluded as a challenge, but should be taken into consideration.

All the interviewed teachers strongly agree that there is a major lack of adapted CLIL materials available in Sweden; and this is supported by Björklund (2013), Reierstam (2015) and Sylvén (2010). As a consequence, three out of five teachers find the planning of tasks extremely time consuming, something that is supported by multiple studies (Fielding & Harbon, 2015; Reierstam, 2015; Roiha, 2012; Sylvén, 2010). This finding can be argued to be the major challenging factor of CLIL and one that needs to be carefully considered before pursuing the approach. However, it is not a challenging factor of the approach as such, rather than it lacking in governmental support.

A recurring theme within the interviews is the teachers’ addressing the importance of parental involvement. The parents’ perceptions of the educational approach tend to be mirrored by their children, which has a crucial effect on their level of motivation and language development. This factor is also expressed by Pladevall-Ballester (2015) to play a vital part in the overall successfulness of the practice.

A possible challenge with the study is that we were unable to find practising CLIL teachers that work in mainstream Swedish primary school settings. All the interviewed teachers work at international schools, thus they do not follow the same curriculum. This may have had an effect on our results, although we argue that they are applicable, since the method of CLIL as such is the same regardless of the setting. However, the lack of CLIL teachers in mainstream settings may further imply that it would benefit the Swedish educational system to integrate CLIL in teacher training programmes and the national curriculum.
Limitations of the study

The current is limited in a number of ways, which may have an effect on the reliability of the findings. The participating teachers of the study were strategically chosen, which might decrease the overall credibility of the study. One of our main criteria was that we wanted to interview the teachers in person; and therefore we experienced a geographical limitation, which led to the results not being representative for the whole of Sweden. We only interviewed five teachers and, as a consequence to the low number of participants, the results are not generalizable. We interviewed three teachers at the same school; two of them worked in the same class, which one might argue creates a homogenous group. Therefore, the opinions of the participants are not necessarily in accordance with a majority of teachers in Sweden. An additional possible limitation could be that neither of the interviewed teachers had previous experience working with mainstream EFL teaching.

Further research

As previously mentioned, there is an immense lack of research conducted on Swedish primary school levels; and this needs to be explored further. Our suggestions for further research are based on what the current study found to be the main limitations with the approach. As the lack of set framework and adapted materials is scarce, this is a field that should be investigated further. As an example, a comparative study could be conducted on two different CLIL schools or settings, where one has been provided with adapted materials and set framework, and the other has not. This would establish whether such factors have a crucial impact on the practice, and possibly learning outcomes. Another interesting factor to explore further is whether CLIL is more or less effective depending on how much of the education is taught in English. Sylvén (2010) found partial CLIL to be more effective, although this was not a main focus within their study, and was merely discovered as an additional finding. Therefore, it would benefit the Swedish schooling system to investigate further.
References


Skolverket (2011a). *Curriculum for the compulsory school system, the pre-school class and the leisure-time centre 2011*. Stockholm: Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket). Date: 2017-01-22


Appendices

Appendix 1 – request for interviews

Hi
Our names are Evelina Brandin and Tove Ekstrand and we are on our eighth term at Malmö Högskola training to become primary school teachers. We are currently working on our degree project about CLIL in Sweden. CLIL (Content and language integrated learning) is a pedagogical approach where the students learn a content subject through a language other than their first language. Seeing as all your teaching occurs in English we would really like to interview one or more teachers in primary school. The interviews would be no longer than 30 minutes and both the school and the participating teachers will be anonymous. Would this be possible? We would really appreciate it.

Many thanks

Kind regards,

Evelina Brandin and Tove Ekstrand

Appendix 2 - Interview questions

Background
- For how long have you been teaching? How long have you been teaching CLIL? Do you prefer this method?
- Where did you do your teacher training? What was the degree? When did you do it?
- What year do you currently teach? What subjects?
- How many of your students do not have English as their first language?

Lessons
- Do you consider it being more time consuming when planning?
- How do you perceive your students’ attitudes and feelings in general? (considering lessons are in English, motivation?)
Materials
- Access to materials?
- Would you be interested in a communal platform for inspiration and support?

Assessment
- When do you assess language/ content?
- Do you believe your students to receive an equally adequate content subject knowledge considering they’re not being taught in their first language?
- Do you believe that your students first language knowledge suffers as a result?

General
- Do you feel that the approach is successful for all students? (Why? Why not? Who benefits?)