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Practical Bilingual Education
A case study of teachers and students
at a secondary school

Praktisk Tvåspråkig Undervisning
En fallstudie av lärare och elever
på en högstadieskola

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Abstract

Content-based learning using English as a target language is a method which has been used for decades in Sweden. This thesis focuses on three practical subjects of and how they are taught through the medium of English. The intention was to highlight both benefits and problems using bilingual teaching and to look at language patterns in- and outside of the classroom between teacher and student. This was done using interviews and observations as research methods. Both teachers’ and students’ perceptions have been investigated and analyzed. The research showed that teachers find the teaching rewarding and worthwhile but there are some student issues regarding vocabulary and terminology. Furthermore instructional teaching patterns and code-switching was investigated. This thesis also contains students’ views on their bilingual education.

Keywords: Content-based learning, CLIL, SPRINT, bilingual teaching.
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1. Introduction

In the 1970s several schools in Sweden began exploring teaching methods using English to teach subjects like Physics and Social sciences. After several years studying at the School of Education in Malmö I have encountered ideas from both students and teachers that discuss the possibilities of using this method in the classroom. Reports have been written and research has been carried out in this field which cover both positive and negative aspects of teaching through the medium of English.

My own interest in bilingual education springs from Home Economics being my minor subject. Home Economics does not only consist of cooking but has several other elements that are practical such as cleaning, grocery shopping, organizing décor and items in the kitchen and home. Therefore I want to research a field close to my own being taught in English; Arts, Woodcraft and Physical Education.

1.1 Purpose and aims

There is extensive research done on teaching through the medium of English. On the other hand, few studies have focused on practical subjects and what the outcomes of this kind of teaching are. In this dissertation my purpose is to focus on three practical subjects, namely Arts, Physical Education and Woodcraft. How are they taught by teachers who are native speakers of English? The focus will be placed on language structures in- and outside the classroom and student-teacher thoughts of bilingual studies. My aim is to get a deeper understanding of how content and language are integrated and how the use of English influences the lessons, the students and the teachers. The study will be conducted in a secondary school and focus on two teachers and their classes. I have formulated the following research question:

- What are the perceived benefits and problems connected to the teaching and learning of practical subjects through the medium of English?
1.2 Definitions

CLIL stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning. In CLIL, teachers and learners of content subjects (e.g. geography, history, art and design) use a foreign or second language as the medium of communication and instruction. CLIL is an excellent tool to educate language and content at the same time. SPRINT (Språk- och innehållsintegrerad inlärmning och undervisning) is the Swedish equivalence to CLIL. Throughout this thesis SPRINT will be used when describing this area.

SPRINT is a Swedish umbrella term for language- and content integrated learning and teaching. Calling it SPRINT means that it is taught in a target language excluding Swedish. The idea is that the student is supposed to learn both a language and the subject simultaneously in one environment. This can be done by either teaching a subject like Social Studies in English or teaching English with a content base such as Social Studies. A wide array of SPRINT can be found in Sweden, from the most basic teaching in some subjects to the whole curriculum taught in English. The goal is that students should become increasingly exposed to the target language which can be German, French, Spanish, English and more. According to John Nixon 163 compulsory schools (4 %) and 122 upper secondary schools (23 %) were offering some kind of SPRINT education in Sweden of the total amount of schools in 1999 (Nixon 2001, cited in Falk 2001:20).
2. Background

*The Routledge Encyclopedia of Language learning and Teaching* explains that bilingual education is “used where two languages are used to transmit the curriculum” (Baker 2000:79), there are different ways to conduct this teaching. In some forms the child can only use their home language for a short period of time during the school day and the curriculum predominantly enforces the use of a majority language. A contrast to this is where “strong bilingual education occurs when both languages are used in school to promote bilingualism”. (Baker 2000:79)

According to Met in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Language learning and Teaching*, content-based learning is explained as a continuum where in one end there is content-driven approaches and in the other end of the continuum there is language-driven approaches. Somewhere in between there are different variations to content-based learning.

Content-driven approaches share the following characteristics:

- The primary emphasis is on the learning of content
- Language learning is important but appears as an incidental by-product from the content focus
- Learning content is the primary course outcome
- Lessons are taught by content specialists, not language teachers

On the other side of the continuum lie language-driven approaches:

- Language learning is the primary course objective
- Content is used as motivation
- Content provides meaningful authentic material to work with
- Content is used as a tool for language learning
- Lessons are taught by language teachers

Somewhere in the middle of this continuum lies a shared emphasis on content and language:
• Equal emphasis on both content and language
• Students learn the target language frequently as a subject in language classes
• Content is taught through the medium of English
• Students are required to show improvements in both content knowledge and language skills
• Lessons can be taught by both content and language teachers (Met 2000:137-9)

2.1 Communication is the key

One of the key elements in bilingual learning is to what extent learning is context- and content embedded. Vygotsky’s pedagogical theories provide valuable background. Firstly Vygotsky claims that for a human being to function and manage in a social contextual society it needs to be under constant change. These changes include language, ideas and ways to think, feel and act. According to Vygotsky, the language not only decides people’s actions but also leads us into different directions. Both language and a language’s cultural values are visible in a group and needed for the group to function. Therefore his theory is based on communication in several forms, focusing on more than the pure communicational skills that conversation leads to. By applying this theory to the teaching environment communication in the classroom and language environment becomes the key to learning. The classroom should not only contain communication. The communication and language between individuals should also be useful and connected to culture and society. According to Vygotsky, students move between developmental phases. Teachers need to listen to students to understand which phase they are in. When the teacher has understood which phase the student is in suitable tasks can be handed out. Also a moderate amount of guidance for the student to reach the next developmental phase is applied. The teacher is in this case a mere guide that helps the student through conversational context-embedded social environments to transcend into the next zone where the student can evolve. Another key element is participation from the student. Vygotsky claims that a human can only become humane by being in contact with other human beings in a social context; it is through this form of communicational context you can reach true language development. (Egidius 2002:82)

Jim Cummin’s theory on BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) is an important source of knowledge for
SPRINT. The theory describes the distinction between BICS and CALP and their appearance in children’s language. A child exposed to the target language can achieve conversational fluency in approximately two years but it takes much longer to learn academic vocabulary. Research has shown that this has led to premature assessments made by teachers that students are more proficient in a language than they really are (Collier 1987, Klesmer 1994, Cummins 1981). Specifically, academic work has proved to be harder for these students since their CALP differs immensely from their BICS (Cummins 2002: 76).

Cummins has also developed the following Model of Academic Language which is a tool to explain if learning is feasible or not for a student. The model has two ranges. The first is from cognitively undemanding to cognitively demanding and the second ranges from context-embedded to context-reduced.

![Diagram of Cummins' Model of Academic Language](http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/fis/workshop/q0.gif)

The model explains where a teacher should place education levels for students to fully understand concepts. In box A, easy tasks including social conversations, story-telling with pictures, art and Physical Education lessons can be found. In box B, the material is cognitively demanding but still context-embedded such as a math lesson with visual explanations or science lesson with visuals or laboratory studies. Box C has a low cognitive demand but is context-reduced making it more abstract such as telephone calls, taking notes or giving or receiving verbal instructions. Finally box D describes context-reduced
environment and is cognitively demanding. This consists of tests, textbooks without pictures, lectures without visuals and other occurrences where you cannot make use of your eyes as an information gatherer. With this model Cummins explains that depending on where teaching levels are placed in this model the difficulty for the students will vary. From easy and concrete tasks in A to more cognitively demanding and abstract tasks in D.

2.2 Language exposure time

Bilingual learning does not mean that you teach everything in the curriculum in English. Some classes are taught through the medium of a target language and others use the native language. Skolverket has published a decree (Utbildningsdepartementet 2003) which states that it is fully possible to conduct experimental teaching in English in a Swedish school. There are two crucial conditions though. The first one is that the students cannot have more lessons taught in English than 50 percent in total. Secondly the teaching of a single subject cannot be conducted solely in English. If there is teaching conducted exceeding these conditions the school needs to apply for special permits to become an international school. The school mentioned in this thesis is well informed of this limit and according to the teachers less than 50 percent teaching is in English.

There is a large inconsistency between European countries as to how many hours per week a SPRINT classroom should use the target language. This does not only vary depending on the age of the students but also varies from region to region and school to school. The results in Eurydice’s survey show that everything from two hours a week to 75 percent is common. In the Netherlands the general recommendation is 50 percent target-language teaching in the first three years of SPRINT and after that at least 1150 teaching hours from year four to six. (Eurydice 2006:27)

2.3 SPRINT

Several topics can be investigated in the bilingual teaching area, most of them concerning benefits and problems. According to Viberg several factors need to be taken into account. He claims that when the first language is properly established it does not get influenced by the
bilingual teaching. Viberg furthermore recommends that the teaching should be adapted to increase the knowledge of Swedish concepts. The bilingual teaching should also be constructed using suitable methodical approaches, competent teachers and carefully constructed lesson plans. According to Viberg the benefits of using bilingual teaching involves students’ fluency and their will to use language and vocabulary. Two issues with SPRINT are that there are limitations to the improvements of pronunciation and grammatical skills. Viberg finally claims that subject content knowledge does not suffer once the target language has reached a certain level. This level decreases and increases depending on the subject and the method that the teacher uses (Viberg 1997:23).

According to research by Nixon, intensity and frequency can vary between a couple of lessons a week in certain subjects to almost all subjects and lessons. These variations can still be referred to as SPRINT education even though the schedule differs immensely. According to his research, the majority of SPRINT students in Sweden get exposed to SPRINT teaching once or twice every week in a few subjects.

Secondly the attitude towards SPRINT calls for attention. In Swedish secondary school the reasons for schools to use bilingual teaching are to increase motivation, increase the quality of language teaching and to raise the students’ appreciation and meet their demands towards English teaching. The use of SPRINT changes in upper secondary school and becomes a tool to increase competence, knowledge and the students’ future professional chances. Nixon also shows that 75 percent of the secondary teachers have the formal qualifications to teach the target language and only 50 percent have the education to also teach the target subject such as science. In upper secondary schools only 42 percent of the teachers have formal skills in the target language and 22 percent are formally qualified to teach the subject at hand, for instance science using English as target language (Nixon 2001, cited in Falk 2001:20).

Thirdly, Nixon discusses evaluation. Schools were asked how they evaluated their bilingual teaching using SPRINT and they answered that no such evaluation took place, however they did measure the students’ motivation and to what extent they were pleased with the education (Nixon 2001, cited in Falk 2001:20).

According to Knight there is no evidence that the students’ subject knowledge decreases and his report shows that SPRINT students show the same skills as the regular students examined (Knight 1990, cited in Falk 2001:21). This claim is contradicted by Washburn’s study (Washburn 1997, cited in Falk 2001:21) which implies that the students’ grades decrease after participation in the bilingual programme. High grades are decreased compared to previous achievements but also when compared to control groups. Some students have
expressed that if the teaching had been in Swedish they would probably have learned more. Even the teachers have expressed reservations. A report by Hägerfelth (Hägerfelth 1992, cited in Falk 2001:21) and Hall (Hall 1996, cited in Falk 2001:21) shows quite the opposite that very few students show any decrease in their subject knowledge (ibid 2001:21). In both Hall’s (Hall 1998, cited in Falk 2001:21) and Hansson’s (Hansson 1999, cited in Falk 2001:22) reports there is an advantage and improvement in subject knowledge and language skills from the students taught using SPRINT. Hansson’s study also shows that there is a tendency towards improved grades when students study using SPRINT.

2.4 Code-Switching

Throughout this text there will be references to the term code-switching. Code-switching is according to An Introduction to Language “when bilingual persons switch from one language to another, possibly within a single sentence. It reflects both grammars working simultaneously and does not represent a form of ‘broken’ English”. (Fromkin et.al. 2003:489) Furthermore Fromkin et.al. state that children may code-switch in several occasions while adult bilinguals do not code-switch to non-bilinguals.
3. Method

A case study using qualitative measures requires several angles and data sources. Therefore I needed to use several forms of data gathering. I used observations and then qualitative interviews with two teachers and five students. This was done to include a wide spectrum of angles and narratives making it possible for me to fully investigate my area. A case study requires boundaries or a unit of analysis that specifies and narrows down the case study to a single investigatory area (Hatch 2002:30).

3.1 Sampling

The data gathering was initiated with observations and the first step was to pick classes that varied in age and language skills. Observational methods were discussed with my supervisor and observation literature was considered. Three different classes were chosen for the observations. The classes chosen were 7, 8 and 9 and were all students of one of the Arts and Woodcraft teacher. Altogether four lessons were observed. The students had practical assignments outside of school which made it impossible for me to observe more classes and students. Therefore I had to observe the classes and students picked out for me. Even so the data collected proved sufficient to analyse.

The two teachers chosen for interviews were a natural selection. Their names are fictional in this thesis and they are called Adam and Jake. They both teach practical subjects that in several ways are similar to Home economics. Both teachers are native speakers of English, born outside of Sweden and they both instruct their classes in English. Jake teaches Physical Education and the Adam instructs students in both Arts and Woodcraft. There are of course differences in teaching methods and instructional methods in these classrooms but the general idea was that the teachers solely used English in their teaching.

When sampling students to be interviewed the teachers were used as experts and asked to pick a few students from their classes. The teachers were instructed to pick students that ranged both in language skills, aptitude and motivation.
3.2 Data collection

The first observational session was as a complete observer and without any obtrusion or participation in the lesson at all (Hatch 2002:73). This was done solely to get an overview of the setting. These are referred to as “grand tour observations” (Spradley 1980:77) and “during these initial observations, researchers pay attention to the major features of the social context rather than the particulars” (Hatch 2002:80). This initial observation enabled me to ask more focused observation questions. During the observations a few guiding questions were formulated as a foundation:

- What does the teacher-student communication look like?
- To what extent is there code-switching?
- To what extent do the teachers and students speak English outside the classroom?

In interviews some aspects are particularly important to focus on. First of all the reason to choose a qualitative approach to interviewing is to get as extended answers possible. It is also important to be careful during interviews neither to let it slide into casual conversation nor to be too strict with questions. The interviewee needs time to consider the answers. Furthermore questions are not to be influenced by values, hidden messages or implied questions. They should be open and without any obvious answer. (Johansson & Svedner 2006:41-53) This dissertation requires two different interview sections to neutrally and holistically present conclusions. The interviews provided sufficient data and reached the saturation criteria mentioned by Johansson & Svedner (2006:41-53).

No other members of staff in the school were interviewed. The teachers and students interviewed and observed are therefore expected to represent the SPRINT environment at the school. The study is limited to the teachers and students that were observed and interviewed.

3.3 Procedure

Three classes, grades 7-9, were observed in their educational setting of Arts and Woodcraft. The observations covered the entire lesson from the minutes in the hallway waiting for the
lesson to begin to the part where students left the classroom walking to the next lesson. The observations were performed as a “complete observer” (Reinharz 1979: 156) and with only minimal involvement from me. In all the observations I was located in a corner of the classroom using only a notepad and pencil to note down what was being said and done. I introduced myself to the students and explained in general what my intention with my observation was and the goal of my studies. If the students had any questions as to my presence or my studies I answered them. The observations were conducted by just listening to the teacher and the students and taking notes. The lessons observed lasted 80 minutes each.

Both teachers accepted being interviewed without any hesitation. The interviews were conducted in a closed room with just me and the interviewees present. There were no interruptions to the interviews. Notes were taken on a notepad and the interviews were recorded digitally for later transcriptions. All interviewees were informed beforehand how the interview would take place. They were handed the questions so that they could prepare themselves. The interviewees were informed that the interview would be recorded. Concerning confidentiality all participants were told that their names would not be revealed, neither the name of the school. The participants were also informed of their right to ask questions regarding my study and that they could choose not to participate at any point.

The students were handed a consent form that their parents were to sign. These consent forms briefly informed the parents as to what my study entailed and that their children were asked to participate in interviews. After the consent forms had been returned the five students participating in the interview were taken to the Arts classroom, to begin the interview. All students were informed that they were there voluntarily and that they should feel no pressure. They were once more told the reasons for the interview and the background to the study. The interview was conducted similar to the ones with the teachers. Everything was recorded digitally and I also took notes in my notepad throughout the interview (Johansson & Svedner 2006:44).

### 3.4 Trustworthiness

The research leaves certain limitations. The observations were not ideally performed because of the scheduling problems that occurred. To increase the trustworthiness of the study the observations could have been conducted in different learning areas such as different
classrooms and with different teachers. On a positive note I got to observe the same teaching environment with the same teacher and the only thing that differed was the students. The teacher, in two of the three observation sessions, told the students in the beginning of the lesson that I was present and that they should consider their use of language. However, whether this affected the students or not is impossible to know. There were also quite a few interruptions created by one of the students in one of the observations, he seemed unsettled and created several distractions for the students and the teacher. It is hard to know if this affected the students or teacher in any way.

During an interview with one of the teachers I noticed I had problems asking follow-up questions in English. It is unclear if the interviewee used unnecessarily hard English to confuse me or that he was merely above my level. What is clear is that the interview could have been better handled if the interview had been conducted by another researcher. The choice to interview in English was made because the teacher felt that he could not express himself sufficiently in Swedish.

3.5 Setting

The school in this case study is a secondary school in the south of Sweden. It is a school with multiethnic and multicultural background. Therefore the students attending classes have a wide range of languages that they use as mother tongue. More than half of the students observed and all students interviewed had parents with immigrant background. The school has a reputation producing students failing their core subjects.
4. Results

This chapter contains three different areas. Together they cover observations performed in the classrooms of SPRINT teaching and also interviews with both teachers and students. The goal with this data collection has been to gather as much data as possible to be able to answer my research question. There are three parts to the result declaration and they are observations, interviews with teachers and interviews with students.

4.1 Observations

Typologies are used to fully analyze the data collected:

- Teacher-student interaction before and during the lesson
- Mixing English and Swedish

**Teacher-student interaction before and during the lesson**

All the students acted differently towards their teacher in the hall when they met him. Some asked questions related to the subject or lessons in English, others greeted him in English. The majority of students were silent or spoke to him in Swedish before the lessons began. Adam began his lessons with taking attendance, this was done in English and about half of the students spoke back in English to him, acknowledging his questions with a “here” or “present” and the rest answered in Swedish. After attendance Adam greeted his class in English to clarify that now the lesson would begin. He also informed the class that I was present and requested them to talk English and show their skills. This might have influenced the observational context but after a few minutes the students seemed very unaware of my presence.

**Mixing English and Swedish**

The teacher-student communication had the following patterns. Adam spoke English in his classroom and some students replied in English. Sometimes a student answered in English
and then directly after continued in Swedish. The students spoke even simple sentences
Swedish. A common occurrence was language based on set phrases by the students. Instead of
building a complete sentence of their own they picked a phrase from a movie or some
commercial and then used that as their answer to their teacher. Often these phrases were also
something students shouted out in the classroom. One student that spoke solely Swedish to
Adam suddenly said “I should get an A for effort” which was perfectly fine but not
constructed by the student, but instead cut and pasted into the conversation from another
context.

Adam spoke continuously to the students in English using quite complex words such as
process and concept. When he talked about a more complex area he went back to explain it
again using other words and angles so that the students understood. One student asked Adam
in English why she had to do the next drawing exercise and Adam explained that this was
because he wanted to make sure that she could skip one level of drawing and start with a more
advanced shading technique. I later asked the student whether or not she had understood the
entire quite complex conversation between her and her teacher and she explained it in detail in
Swedish to me confirming that she had understood it all. Whenever a student asked Adam a
question he always answered in English, even when he got frustrated or annoyed. In some
cases code-switching was present as in the following exchange:

Adam: What do you think of your picture?
Student: Den är fin.
Adam: Den är jättefin.

In a second example a student has asked Adam to make a copy of his sketch:

Student: Här är min bild.
Adam: I have copied your bild.

When I asked Adam about this later he was not aware that this had taken place. There were
also some instances where Adam asked the students to use their English:

Adam: What’s this right here?
Student: Torn?
Adam: What?
Student: Tower!

In the exchanges between the students the language was almost exclusively Swedish. Some students who were friends or attended class together spoke English in some cases, but only concerning lesson-based areas and only during a very limited time period. When speaking about private matters none of the students used English and when Adam left the classroom the entire class spoke Swedish to each other. Adam finished off one of the lessons by saying: “We need to go over to the matsal”.

**Reflections on the observations**

The observations showed one teacher and his teaching methods in three different classes. The students that greeted him in English or spoke to him prior to the lesson using English were also the ones that spoke the most English during the lesson. The communication between the student and the teacher differed depending on the language skill of the student. In some cases the students constructed perfect sentences and interacted with the teacher. In other cases the students were very limited in their use of English.

The observations established that this was not a classroom where all communication was in English. The students communicated with each other mostly in Swedish and the majority spoke to their teacher in Swedish. Only some of the students spoke to their teacher in English. The observations gave a clearer understanding of the students and laid the foundation for a deeper understanding of what takes place in a bilingual classroom at this school.

**4.2 Interviews with teachers**

Two teachers were interviewed and the results are presented using the following typologies:

- The teachers’ background and their thoughts on teaching SPRINT
- Code-switching inside the classroom
- Language used outside the classroom
- Perceived advantages and disadvantages using SPRINT
The teachers’ background and thoughts on teaching SPRINT

Both teachers are native speakers of English. Adam was born in the United States and got his teacher education at the University of Virginia. He moved to Sweden and taught in Helsingborg. He has taught Arts and Woodcraft in the bilingual programme for nine years. Jake was born in the United Kingdom where he got his formal teacher training. He moved to Sweden directly after his training was completed. He has worked at the school for sixteen years and taught at the bilingual programme for eleven of those. Currently he teaches Physical Education through the medium of English.

Both teachers prefer to teach through the medium of English because it is their mother tongue. Adam felt that he can also teach the students different ways to think. He can also explain things in English that he can not in Swedish. According to Adam English is a richer language and allows for terms and universal concepts to be explained in their invented language. He also thought that English is a more advanced language when it comes to theory, technology and development.

Jake felt that it is very gratifying to teach English because of the high motivation and interest amongst students to learn English. He also felt that it is important that the teacher wants to teach using English. Jake said that when you can get a student to use English in a casual conversation in the classroom, that is when the student learns the most. Another reason why Jake teaches through the medium of English is because the principal at the school asked him to help construct the bilingual programme. He had studied a course at the School of Education and the thoughts of SPRINT seemed to coincide with his own values.

Code-switching inside the classroom

Both teachers felt that it is important and necessary to communicate to learn a language. They both referred to conversational teaching styles and methods to improve communication between individuals in the classroom. In certain aspects Adam and Jake felt the need to alternate between the instructional languages. If a typical Swedish expression is discussed and there is no good way to translate it into English with the same meaning, they will either continue the discussion in Swedish or just say the word in Swedish. A typical example of this is “utvecklingssamtal” which can not be translated to English without its original meaning.

In Adam’s case communication is based on any language being used to communicate and not only limited to one. He referred to body language and switching between several different languages. This also means that his teaching is varied depending on which student he speaks
to. If the student is not ready to understand a concept he returns to this subject at a later point when Adam felt that the student is more receptive.

Jake explained that in some classes the students are taught using Swedish even though it is a lesson which usually is taught through the medium of English. In Science the students have every fourth lesson in Swedish because of laboratory studies. These lessons are also used to catch up on Swedish theoretical terms and the teacher gets the opportunity to assess the students’ knowledge.

Furthermore Jake explained that it can be quite hard to continue speaking English in a classroom where students speak Swedish. It is easy to start talking Swedish to the students. He claimed that this is why the teacher’s personal interest and ambition to teach SPRINT matters.

**Language used outside the classroom**

Adam and Jake explained that the language structure outside the classroom is the same as with a bilingual child with parents speaking different languages. Depending on which parent the child speaks to it will choose a different language. The bilingual students presented in this thesis speak English to their bilingual teacher whether it is in the hallway or in the city. The students talk to their teacher using their instructional language. This is visible during Adam and Jakes’ mentor hour in 9th grade. The class is taught using English when they have Adam as their teacher and they are taught using Swedish when they have Jake as their teacher, this dependant of the subject being taught. This leads to the class addressing Adam in English and Jake in Swedish even though they know that both are native speakers of English.

**Disadvantages using SPRINT**

There are some issues that both interviewed teachers addressed. First, there is a problem with the students’ range of language proficiency and cognitive maturity. As with any subject it demands that the teacher prepares different materials depending on the students’ level. SPRINT teaching also demands that the teacher considers at what level the instructional language should be.

Second, Jake stressed the need to avoid “Swenglish” or badly constructed English because of its destructiveness to the language process. Adam felt that the students sometimes have a hard time to name concepts, but when the concepts are explained to them students fully understand them and can account for them.
**Advantages using SPRINT**

Adam felt that his lessons in Art are more genuine when he can teach using original theoretical terms. There is no need to translate anything and he can speak freely using concepts in English. He feels he can teach the students things they cannot find in a textbook. According to Adam English is also a more complex language and contains more concepts and words for descriptions. This allows teaching the students theories and concepts in a language with more extensive vocabulary. Instead of explaining a concept by giving the students the Swedish word Adam tries to explain it to them using other words in English.

Jake strongly believes that content-embedded teaching through the medium of English is the proper way to teach. He returns to the benefits of communication and conversational exchange in the classroom. Jake claims that there is no difference between reading a chapter about Scotland in a textbook corrected for Swedish students or to speak about Scottish history through the medium of English in the history lesson. The content can remain the same and the students learn the language in an authentic language environment. Students also gain a deeper understanding of the target language. According to Jake this can be noted in the results from the national tests in English where the bilingual students receive higher than average grades.

**4.3 Interviews with students**

Five students were chosen in total. To make the students feel as comfortable as possible the interview was made in a group setting. This allowed the students to discuss with their peers and to express more extensive answers.

The interviews are presented using the following typologies:

- The students’ background and general thoughts on SPRINT
- Code-switching inside the classroom
- Language used outside the classroom
- Advantages and disadvantages using SPRINT
Students background and thoughts on SPRINT
None of the students mentioned their parents as a reason why they studied at the bilingual programme. Their all explained why they were there with reference to their future. They expected to be able to pursue academic studies and later work abroad. All the students wanted to continue their studies at an international programme. They all seemed to agree that they were there to learn English and that their expectations were high. The bilingual programme had high status in the school and they expressed a certain pride in participating. All the students claimed that they had to be interviewed to be able to study at the bilingual programme. They had been very nervous about the interview. The students described their daily work in school and their lessons as nothing out of the ordinary. They attended the classes with the same motivation whether it was a lesson taught in English or Swedish. After a few months the students stopped thinking about differences in language in their classrooms and both languages felt as the instructional language.

Code-switching inside the classroom
The students stated that they no longer thought of Swedish and English as separate languages. Instead they claimed that in the classroom they simply communicated with their teacher without thinking of what they were saying. If they wanted to explain something it could be done in many different ways:

- During a bilingual class the student speaks English to their teacher “I don’t want to do this test.”
- During the same class a student speaks English for half the sentence and then switches to Swedish “I don’t want to do this prov.”
- During the same lesson a student gets help from the teacher.
  
  Student “I don’t want to do this …”
  Teacher “test?”
  Student: “test!”

- During a lesson taught in Swedish the student can show the exact opposite pattern. Perfect sentence, sentence with parts in another language or sentence which is filled in by their teacher.
Therefore several different code-switching patterns could be found according to the students. The students did not consider this a flaw in their language. They claimed to know when to use what word and that this code-switching was merely used to speed up conversations and communication.

**Language used outside the classroom**

When the students spoke to a bilingual teacher outside the classroom they would talk English, at least to the extent they could. If the students experienced any problems expressing what they wanted to say or if there were any questions from the conversation they switched to Swedish immediately. Sometimes the students would speak Swedish to the teachers when they had their friends with them.

**Advantages and disadvantages using SPRINT**

The students felt that sometimes they did not understand what a friend or teacher meant if they mentioned a topic or concept in Swedish. Then they had to have it explained to them and when they understood the concept everything was fine. The lack of a complex Swedish vocabulary seemed frustrating to them but nonetheless they felt that this was of minor impact considering the benefits they had from the bilingual program. Most of the students said that the workload was heavier from the subjects they had in English and that this was because they had two textbooks in some subjects such as science (NO) and that the lessons in fact were in English.

A majority wanted to study at an international programme in upper secondary school and there were almost no thoughts of grades, they were all going to get in. The level of education and the threshold of ambition were higher in their class than they had felt before they started the bilingual programme. “We knew it was going to be harder … but it is good for our future” one said. They all agreed that they felt proficient in English and that they could manage on their own in an English speaking country. Furthermore they felt there were no problems communicating with their teachers or peers. They had also acquired fluency in English. None of them were nervous concerning the national tests coming up later on and they all agreed that they would handle them just fine. Several students said that they had very good teachers, that they were a contributing factor to their motivation. They also preferred teachers with a native tongue of English because they were easier to understand. Another factor was that they said that they learned English and their subjects at the same time.
4.4 Conclusions of interviews

Here is a summary of the teachers’ thoughts on their bilingual teaching method:

- Both teachers felt that teaching through the medium of English is something invaluable and worthwhile. They both appreciated it and felt that it is the right way to teach. Neither of them felt that what they are doing costs their students anything; instead they felt they give their students extended language proficiency using English.

- The teachers felt that the students have a slight deficiency of academic vocabulary but that the students grasp concepts. Both teachers constantly use English in their classroom but in some cases there is code-switching.

- The language used outside the classroom by the teachers depends on the counterpart, the language used is the language chosen by the student or colleague.

- Both teachers use the same instruction strategies when teaching namely repetition and variations in their descriptions. To increase understanding they also change angles and viewpoints when explaining a difficult area to students.

Here is a summary of the students’ thoughts on their bilingual learning method:

- The students appreciated the fact that they study at a bilingual programme and are proud to be there. All interviewees seem aware of their future choices and they all aim for academic studies.

- Concerning their language proficiency they felt that their English is a lot better than their non-bilingual peers but they worry about their shortage of Swedish vocabulary. They felt confident that in the long run this should prove to be no problem. They felt
that their understanding of concepts is sufficient and that they can learn theoretical vocabulary in Swedish once they need them.

- The students hardly think of what language they use in the classroom or outside it. In the classroom they speak English when asked but they can just as easily switch back to Swedish. When they speak to their bilingual teachers outside the classroom they alternate between languages depending on situations and teachers.

4.5 Reflections on interviews

It is interesting how the teachers share ideals and thoughts on teaching methods and language learning. Both students and teachers agree that there is code-switching in the SPRINT teaching but none of them seem to think it poses any threat to their language development and proficiency. The language outside the classroom is based on what language history the teacher and student have together, if the student is taught using English it would be the preferred communication language for both parties. On the other hand, when students felt that their English was insufficient they would pick Swedish. There are some issues with students Swedish vocabulary that concerns all interviewees though this seems to be outweighed by the benefits of the bilingual programme. These benefits consist of fluency and language understanding. In total the interviews provided sufficient data for conclusions to be drawn.
5. Discussion and analysis

In this chapter I discuss and analyse the teachers’ and students’ comments as well as the result of my observations.

5.1 Quality assurance

The national tests in Swedish, English and Maths are instruments to bring some sort of quality control to the Swedish school system. They are obligatory tests to make sure that all students reach the national proficiency goals. The tests can show teachers if the methods they use are working well at a group or individual level. The teachers studied in this thesis claimed that their students are skilled conversationalists and get excellent grades in the national tests in English. In accordance with this the students claimed that they have no problem speaking English in the classroom or abroad. This is hardly surprising since the students in this study get a lot of exposure to English. What this bilingual programme might need is further evaluation to ensure that the students really get taught in the most beneficial way and increase their skills at their full capacity. It is also necessary to ensure that the bilingual students do not lose anything by having some subjects taught in English. According to Jake much work is put into making sure that the students’ Swedish skills do not deteriorate. This is not done in other subjects. Will a bilingual student in Arts or Woodcraft get the same theoretical framework and understanding of terms and theories as a regular student? With this increased exposure, should not students’ entire repertoire of English skills improve?

5.2 The Teachers’ aptitude

Ekman’s study shows problems with teachers’ language proficiency (1993-94, cited by Falk 2001:22). Language proficiency is an important factor of the students learning. Jake and Adam agreed that the best teachers were the ones being native speakers of English. Jake expressed the importance of correct English in the classroom and the teachers’ proficiency level. The research also showed students with higher proficiency of English than the teacher
in some SPRINT programmes, which led to students talking more than the teacher. Jake commented this by stating that communication was not only between teacher and student but also vice versa and in between students. According to the teacher there are no problems for a school to hire an English teacher without an English mother tongue, and there are no tests done before the language teacher is hired. The school in this thesis uses language proficiency tests for teachers employed to work in the bilingual programme. The teachers’ aptitude is taken for granted because of the degree from the School of Education. Why is it then so important for the SPRINT teacher to have sufficient skills in the target language but not for regular English teachers? In a perfect world all language teachers have native or near-native proficiency of the language taught.

Teachers also need to be aware of the Model of Academic Learning. To fully teach your students it is important that the method of learning is adapted to their cognitive and language skill. Students need to grasp concepts and be able to use their language without getting exposed to false language input.

5.3 Language structure

Both teachers claimed that bad English in any form is hazardous to the students’ language development. Therefore language errors and inconsistent use of English language should be avoided. My observations and interviews with students showed that the teachers try their best to avoid these traps but fall into them sometimes. Both Adam and the students mentioned that they use whatever language they can to get their point across. The students at some point even stop to think about which language they use. Form gets replaced by function. According to Jake there is a Swedish teacher present in the bilingual programme’s workgroup to ensure the Swedish language quality and development for the students. Should this not be done in English as well? There is a limited amount of code-switching present both in- and outside of the classroom. Does this create obstacles for the students or help them to achieve fluency in their language use? It is obvious that the perception of the amount of code-switching and English used in teaching varies depending on who you ask. The question is if it matters or not? Does code-switching in the SPRINT classroom cause problems or help the students and teacher?
6. Conclusions

The school has succeeded in establishing English in the bilingual programme. This study shows both benefits and problems teaching SPRINT but the teachers and students involved believe the benefits outweigh the problems. They all appreciate content-based teaching through the medium of English. The students’ language skills improve and the teachers believe that this is the proper method to give students good academic tools for the future. Practical subjects seem to be suitable for SPRINT teaching, allowing the teacher to instruct and explain using different methods. Let me return to the posed research question:

- What are the perceived benefits and problems connected to the teaching and learning of practical subjects through the medium of English?

This research highlights communicative competence and language fluency as highly potent benefits. Both teachers and students agree on that their skills using English as a language has improved. The observations show a somewhat reluctant use of English as a whole but still the students’ show fluency and language proficiency. In contrast to this problems are present as well. The students have a hard time using proper English during the lessons and their vocabulary using Swedish terminology is weak. It seems unavoidable to have code-switching to some degree. The school should use some sort of quality control apparatus to ensure that the students can reap all the benefits with the SPRINT programme. There are also indications that using a native speaker of the target language to teach SPRINT is beneficial both for students and teachers.

There is more to be explored in this area. The shortage of time and limited workload has made it hard to achieve any deeper investigation into the bilingual programme of this school. It would have been interesting to explore a few students’ daily experiences in their bilingual environment and observe more lessons and record students’ language exposure. Does the language change in different environments and how do the students react to different teachers and subjects?

Another possibility would be to observe and interview all teachers in the bilingual programme to be able to discuss differences, abilities and what language aspects teachers find interesting in their work.
Furthermore one could investigate possible differences between bilingual and students taking the ordinary programme and look at their language proficiency. To investigate students’ aptitude and motivation would also be possible.
References


Collier, V.P. (1987). Age and rate of acquisition of second language for academic purposes, TESOL Quarterly 21, 617-41


Jag bedriver forskning i ämnet engelska som undervisningsspråk och har de senaste veckorna observerat och intervjuat XXXXXXXX och XXXXXX på XXXXXXXXXXX. För att få ett brett fält med svar och åsikter i min forskningsstudie skulle jag därför vilja intervjua ditt barn. Frågorna går ut på att ta reda på hur ditt barn ställer sig till undervisningen på engelska och vad de tycker om det. Allting kommer att ske anonymt och mina resultat kommer maskeras på det sätt att det inte går att utläsa vem som svarat och hur. Vid eventuella frågor eller liknande bifogar jag min kontaktinformation nedan.

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Härmed intygar jag att ____________________________ får medverka i ovanstående beskriven intervju.

______________________________  ____________________________
Namn    Ort & Datum
The Interview Questions to Physical Education Teacher

What is the background to your present teaching environment?
Vad är din bakgrund fram till din blivande undervisningsmiljö?

What are the reasons why you started teaching PE in English?
Vad är anledningarna till att du började undervisa gymnastik på engelska?

For how long have you been doing it?
Hur länge har du gjort det?

Why did you choose to conduct your P.E. lessons in English?
Varför valde du att undervisa gymnastik på engelska?

How do you feel that the students respond to the fact that PE is taught through the medium of English?
Hur tycker du att eleverna reagerar på faktabet att du undervisar gymnastik med engelska som språk?

Are there any situations where you or they switch to Swedish?
Finns det några situationer där du eller eleverna byter till svenska?

In what ways does PE lend itself to being taught in English? What strategies do you use to get instructions across?
På vilka sätt tillåter gymnastik att bli undervisat på engelska? Vilka strategier använder du för att få ut instruktioner och upplysningar?

What happens in situations when you meet your students outside the classroom?
Vad händer i situationer där du möter dina elever utanför klassrummet?

To what extent do you use English outside of PE?
Till vilken utsträckning använder du engelska utanför gymnastiken?

What happens when you speak to the students’ parents?
Vad händer när du talar med elevers föräldrar?

When you meet the students outside of lessons?
Vad händer när du möter elever utanför klassrummet?

What are the benefits and possible problems of using English when teaching P.E.?
Vad är fördelarna och möjliga nackdelar med att använda engelska när du undervisar på engelska i gymnastik?
Appendix

The Interview Questions to Arts and Woodcraft Teacher

What is the background to your present teaching environment?
Vad är din bakgrund fram till din blivande undervisningsmiljö?

What are the reasons why you started teaching Arts and Woodcraft in English?
Vad är anledningarna till att du började undervisa bild och slöjd på engelska?

For how long have you been doing it?
Hur länge har du gjort det?

Why did you choose to conduct your Arts and Woodcraft lessons in English?
Varför valde du att undervisa bild och slöjd på engelska?

How do you feel that the students respond to the fact that Arts and Woodcraft is taught through the medium of English?
Hur tycker du att eleverna reagerar på faktumet att du undervisar bild och slöjd med engelska som språk?

Are there any situations where you or they switch to Swedish?
Finns det några situationer där du eller eleverna byter till svenska?

In what ways does Arts and Woodcraft lend itself to being taught in English? What strategies do you use to get instructions across?
På vilka sätt tillåter bild och slöjd att bli undervisat på engelska? Vilka strategier använder du för att få ut instruktioner och upplysningar?

What happens in situations when you meet your students outside the classroom?
Vad händer i situationer där du möter dina elever utanför klassrummet?

To what extent do you use English outside of Arts and Woodcraft?
Till vilken utsträckning använder du engelska utanför bild och slöjd?

What happens when you speak to the students’ parents?
Vad händer när du talar med elevers föräldrar?

When you meet the students outside of lessons?
Vad händer när du möter elever utanför klassrummet?

What are the benefits and possible problems of using English when teaching Arts and Woodcraft?
Vad är fördelarna och möjliga nackdelar med att använda engelska när du undervisas på engelska i bild och slöjd?
Appendix

Group interview with students – guiding questions for discussion

Why did they choose to study at the bilingual programme?

How did they attend?

Do they experience any code switching?

What are their thoughts of English outside the classroom?

Are there any issues with studying bilingual?

Are there any benefits with studying bilingual?