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Advantages and Challenges with CLIL
-a study examining teachers’ thoughts on learner engagement and confidence within content and language integrated learning

Fördelar och utmaningar med CLIL
– en studie som undersöker lärares tankar om elevengagemang och självförtroende inom ämnes- och språkintegrierad undervisning

Charlotte Lundin
Linda Persson

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Examinator: Björn Sundmark
Supervisor: Shannon Sauro
Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate how content and language integrated language learning (CLIL) is applied in international school classrooms in the southern part of Sweden, and to elaborate on how confidence in language use and learner engagement is best triggered in a content integrated setting. Previous findings regarding common practices in language education in Swedish schools reveal that authentic materials are still scarce in language classrooms. Textbooks and workbooks are the primary teaching resource. On the basis of our own observations we have noted that students’ confidence in using the language in authentic situations seem low and learner engagement is often lacking in such traditional educational settings. Hence, in this study, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with three experienced language teachers at international schools were conducted. Our purpose was to explore how to bring the successful practices of those classrooms into the language classrooms of mainstream Swedish schools. A conclusion that can be drawn from the study is that both learner engagement and students’ confidence in using the language are characteristic. It can also be noted that content integration, with extensive focus on authentic materials and cooperation, promote language development. In their experiences, all different types of learners do benefit from the approach, but the main challenge outlined by the participants is the planning of the teaching units, as to provide the right support and challenges for the different learners, and to design the tasks so that natural collaboration will occur. According to the respondents, a key factor for introducing a content integrated collaborative language classroom to new students, is to inform them of the reasons for the change, and to allow time for adaption, taking small steps at the time.

Key words: CLIL, content integration
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Preface

Hereby, we both certify that this thesis has been planned, prepared and conducted in full cooperation. We have made the interviews individually, but have recorded them for both of us to be able to get full insight into the conversations. Thereafter we have made the analysis of the selected materials together.

Malmö, March 23, 2015

Charlotte Lundin

Linda Persson
Introduction

Background

With modern technology and with the vast supply of authentic materials available today on the internet, one might think language classrooms in our country should have changed drastically over the last decade, embracing all the new possibilities. In our own experiences however, that change does not seem to have taken place. English teaching in many Swedish classrooms is still mainly based on traditional education with textbooks as a main resource. The textbooks we have seen are often form focused, and texts are not selected to provide content knowledge or deeper insights, but are mainly there to be carriers of grammatical constructions. Furthermore, those teaching materials often reproduce limited and stereotypical cultural views. We have noticed that this way of teaching does not seem to motivate the pupils or encourage them in their language learning.

We have had several discussions with language teachers who teach in this way, and we have also had opportunities to teach several English lessons using textbooks as the primary teaching method. In most cases it is clear that this way of teaching is a result of teachers feeling comfortable using a familiar method and that they find it difficult to step out of their comfort zone.

In 2010, the Swedish School Inspection Authority made a quality inspection in a number of selected primary schools to determine if English teaching is performed in a way that will enable curriculum goal fulfillment, and if the teaching is adapted to different students’ needs. One of the conclusions from this inspection is that traditional teaching methods still dominate; textbooks and workbooks are used extensively, while magazines, the internet and movies or clips are rare (Skolinspektionen 2010).

The new Swedish curriculum, LGR 11, came into use in 2011. In comparison to previous curricula, focus is now on the individual pupil and his or her relations to others, and to the surrounding world. The importance of collaborative work is emphasized in the purpose and aims sections for the subject English: “These skills involve understanding of spoken and written English, being able to formulate one’s thinking and interact with others in the spoken and written language,” and “pupils should be given the opportunity to develop their skills in relating content to their own
experiences, living conditions and interests” (Skolverket 2011, p 32). In the core content section for English, the aspect of authentic and familiar texts and topics is one of the criteria for English language learning in school.

In our view, textbook based teaching will not live up to these standards. The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers in international schools in Sweden, with a vast experience in content and language integration, view their approach to these issues, all of which are integral to CLIL. The main focus for this study concerns the perceived advantages and challenges in terms of learner engagement and confidence in using the English language in practical situations, and our hope is that input and thoughts from these teachers can inspire and support teachers in ordinary Swedish schools that wish to achieve content and language integration in their teaching.
Aims and research questions

The aim of this study is to research how content and language integration is applied in international schools in Sweden, which have adapted this teaching philosophy for decades. Specifically we aim to go in depth with regard to advantages and challenges related to learner engagement, and confidence in practical language use.

With this we hope CLIL can become more accessible to a broader group of teachers in grades 4-6.

The research questions are as follows:

- RQ 1: How is CLIL applied in international classrooms in Sweden?
- RQ2: Which are the perceived advantages and challenges with CLIL teaching, in relation to learner engagement according to teachers that use the approach?
- RQ3: Which are the perceived advantages and challenges with CLIL teaching, in relation to learner confidence in language use according to teachers that use the approach?

These research questions are intentionally broad to allow us to give a comprehensive view of how language and content integration is applied, and how the approach affects the students. With regard to the first question, the themes that will be discussed with the respondents relate to which kinds of subject themes they have found beneficial, what kind of authentic materials are used, how tasks are designed to prompt collaboration and cultural awareness, and finally, how the teachers ensure that the cognitive thinking skills are activated in the pupils.

According to Johan Alvehus (2013) when writing a dissertation or research paper, the CARS model provides a way to work when you are still searching for your main issue. You start with examining the field and establish a territory. In this paper the main territory is CLIL as a teaching method, but with a focus on learner engagement and confidence in language use. In later years there has been an upswing in research on CLIL, and some of this research has been included in this section of the report. The second stage in the CARS model is to establish a niche. Here you look at the field and determine what is missing and what you can contribute with in the area. In our case we turned to teachers in international Swedish schools that have vast experience in integrating content and language teaching. We aim to summarize their experiences and specifically finding out what effect CLIL has had on learner engagement and on the learners’ confidence in using the target language in authentic situations. Finally you
occupy the niche. This means defining your problem area and purpose in relation to the first stages. In our case, this has lead us to our three research questions.

Disposition

The disposition of this paper is the following: First theories and previous research within the area are presented. Then we move into a theory chapter where we discuss our selected approach from a number of perspectives. Thereafter follows an analysis of our selected empiri, and our conclusions are presented in relations to the theories and the previous research, and finally, a discussion follow that outlines possible future research within the area.
Theory and literature background

In this section, the concepts of CLIL, learner engagement and self confidence is described in relation to the research we have conducted. We also touch on theories of constructing knowledge in relations to others, and about language learning challenges and support (scaffolding).

With this as a basis we then move on to describe some of the research made in these areas.

Definitions

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)

According to Do Coyle, Philip Hood and David Marsh (2010) “CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language” (Coyle et al. 2010 p 1). They point to the importance of cognitive engagement in order to learn effectively. Group work, problem solving and questioning are important vehicles the pupils need to master for the process of “constructing knowledge which is built on their interaction with the world” (Coyle et al. 2010, p 29). In CLIL, the cultural context is, together with cognition, content and communication, the cornerstones that create the setting for an engaging learning environment with clear linguistic and subject area goals.

From a language learning point of view, this connects to different approaches which will be discussed in later sections.

Learner engagement

In the Handbook of research on student engagement, Sandra Christenson and Cathy Wylie (2012) describe engagement as something “multidimensional, involving aspects of student’s emotion, behaviour and cognition” (Christenson & Wylie 2012 p 3). They also conclude that “engagement not only drives learning, but also predicts school success” (p 4). The behavioral engagement refers to how students put in effort, persistence, concentration, attention, asking questions and so on. The cognitive portion
means how likely the student is to put in an effort to solve difficult problems and to understand complex contexts, while the emotional engagement includes the student’s reactions to teachers, school friends, academic tasks and so on. Christenson and Wylie (2012) also describe the close, and often debated relationship between engagement and motivation. Some researchers use those terms interchangeably, while others make the distinction that motivation has to do with intention, while engagement has to do with the actual action. Since the two are difficult to distinguish clearly, we have chosen to treat them as one in this study.

Self confidence, self esteem and self-efficacy

These three terms all describe peoples’ view of themselves in different ways. From our point of view, our observations have been that lack of self confidence results in learners that hesitate or avoid interacting using the target language unless they have been given sample sentences that they can modify and reuse. Hence one of our research questions is geared to how exposure to CLIL can over time alter the self image of the learners, and make them more confident in using the target language. When talking about self image, there are mainly three different wordings used in literature and research: Self confidence is according to the Online Oxford dictionaries, “[a] feeling of trust in one’s abilities, qualities, and judgement”; Self esteem, according to Ulrich Orth and Richard W. Robins (2014) refers to an individual’s subjective evaluation of his or her worth as a person, while “[g]eneral self-efficacy is the belief in one's competence to cope with a broad range of stressful or challenging demands, whereas specific self-efficacy is constrained to a particular task at hand” (Luszczynska, Aleksandra, Scholz, Urte and Schwarzer, Ralf, 2005, p 439).

In this study we want to find out if teachers can see any change in the learners’ confidence in target language use when they have been exposed to CLIL over a period of time. Hence it is specific self-efficacy we are looking at in our research question.

CLIL in theory

From a theoretical viewpoint, the aspects of learning through cognitive thinking and cooperation are in line with the socio cultural perspective as outlined by Lev Vygotsky (Roger Säljö 2011). In the research area of language development, Patsy Lightbown and
Nina Spada (2013) point to research by Jim Lantolf, concluding that the cognitive language development does not necessarily involve frequent interaction between a learner and a teacher, but also takes place in learner to learner interactions. In her research Merrill Swain (1995) concluded that discussions between students regarding how to correctly formulate a language output triggers thinking processes that develops understanding of the language (Swain 1995).

Although CLIL as the full concept described by Coyle et al. (2010) can bring many advantages, Lightbown and Spada (2013) identify two potential drawbacks with the CLIL approach as the sole teaching method. Firstly they point out that meaning often becomes more important than form, i.e. that there is a risk that students produce language output, which is understandable, and makes sense from a content perspective, but which contains many flaws from a language perspective. Secondly they point out that oral interactions between students bring about confidence in language use, but with the important negative effect that the majority of the language produced remains without error correction. In many cases the teacher is not present to make any corrections, and the students might not correct each other even if they could.

From a linguistic perspective, even if this might be problematic, we however view this aspect in the light of our syllabus for English, where it is stated that students should learn to develop and use strategies for understanding and making oneself understood. In the aims section of the syllabus you can read that “[c]ommunication skills also cover confidence in using the language and the ability to use different strategies to support communication and solve problems when language skills by themselves are not sufficient” (Skolverket, 2011).

As with all methods there are both advantages and challenges and the same can be said when it comes to teaching through CLIL. Sheelagh Deller and Christine Price (2007) explain that an advantage for the language teacher is that since there are a lot of materials within CLIL some content is readymade and this avoids reinventing the wheel.

Deller and Price (2007) refer to the work of Howard Gardner (1993). His theory on multiple intelligences suits the way CLIL approaches pupils’ learning and progress. Since CLIL teaching is highly interactive, with various tasks, group formations and a communicative focus, these different intelligences can be supported and the pupils will be able to access learning more easily: “When we are teaching another subject through a foreign language it is likely that we will draw on more of the intelligences and this is likely to be helpful for our learners” (Deller & Price 2007, p 7). Lightbown and Spada
(2013) mention that among the intelligences the verbal one is the intelligence that is mostly associated with success in school.

To be able to discuss CLIL and the many aspects involved in this teaching method, it is necessary to first explain the background and development of CLIL.

**Background of CLIL**

Although the concept of learning through a foreign language is ancient (the theories of Socrates), the practical use of this has not been tried out until just recently. CLIL has its roots in the French immersion programmes in Canada (John Masih 1999). The term CLIL is European and the method is used in several countries across Europe, but has also spread to other continents such as North America and Australia. The main frame of CLIL is the same everywhere, but since it is a wide term and free to interpretation it is “diverse in aims, methods and outcomes” (Masih 1999, p 1).

In Sweden, the integration of language and content in teaching is called SPRINT (Språk- och innehållsintegrerad lärning och undervisning). The SPRINT methodology has primarily been used in secondary education, where English has been the sole language used in a whole educational program. During the late 90’s and beginning of the millennium, Skolverket conducted an investigation to map out and analyze the work and progress of content and language integrated learning in Swedish schools. This was summed up in a published report (Skolverket, 2001), the main results being that SPRINT had a positive effect on the development of the target language. No negative effects on the subject area knowledge had been observed. However, teachers involved in the SPRINT teaching explain that they sometimes loose flexibility, since they feel they need to stick to the materials they have prepared for each individual lesson and dynamic class discussions are limited. This is seen as a weakness by both students and teachers (Skolverket 2001).

In a later article by Liss Kerstin Sylvén (2013), Sweden is outlined as a country where CLIL has not been very successful in comparison with other European countries. A number of critical success factors are mentioned, two of which were lack of policy documents and lack of teacher training. She also points out that the general language proficiency in Sweden is relatively high, and hence it might not have a big effect on the students if one or a few of the subjects are taught in English. However, she hypothesises
that if CLIL were used in earlier grades of school, the language exposure could have positive effects on the students’ communicative skills.

By directing our research to confidence in language use in the lower grades, we are partially addressing the potential identified by Sylvén. Other areas within CLIL that lack research are addressed by Christiane Dalton-Puffer and Ute Smit (2013). They point to the need of international research in for example the following areas when it comes to CLIL as a concept: policies, stakeholder perceptions, and classroom pedagogy in comparison to non-CLIL classrooms.

Theories about learning and language development

In this section we discuss language learning theories which we apply on specific aspects within CLIL, which relates to our research questions.

According to Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural development theory, collaborative work is a cornerstone when pupils engage in learning (Lightbown & Spada 2013). It is in the meeting with others that we learn and progress, a sentiment which goes hand in hand with the interactive learning focus of CLIL and the aims of the syllabus.

Stephen Krashen (1981) developed a group of hypotheses in the late 70’s, one in which he emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between language acquisition and language learning as ways to develop competence in a second language. Language acquisition is a subconscious process which “[...] requires meaningful interaction in the target language- natural communication- in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding” (Krashen 1981, p 1). Language learning on the other hand, is a conscious process in which the learner is aware of linguistic rules of the target language, such as grammar and syntax, and being able to talk about them (Krashen 1981, 1982). Krashen (1981) also mentions the importance of input and the necessity to provide input that is easy to understand and comprehensible to the pupils. In the CLIL classroom the input from teacher to learners and from learner to learner occurs not only in language situations but is a major part of the classroom always. Finally, Krashen (1981) posits an affective “mental” filter, in which input from learning situations can be blocked, depending on many different factors such as motivation, confidence and stress.
Swain (2012) relates to Krashen’s acknowledgement of an emotional filter, as a possible obstacle in language learning, but argues that emotional impacts can both slow and excel the language learning, depending on how the learner reacts to the emotion.

Coyle (in Masih 1999) discusses the importance of the four C’s: content, cognition, communication and cultural awareness. They all play key roles when it comes to language learning. With her own words, Coyle writes that

[...] it is through **progression** in the knowledge, skills and understanding of the content, by **engagement** in associated cognitive processing, **interaction** in the communicative context, and a deepening awareness and positioning of cultural self and otherness, that learning takes place (Masih 1999, p 53).

The four C’s are all integral aspects in foreign language teaching and CLIL teaching, as well as in this paper. We will be addressing both content and communication as well as the cognitive skills and cultural understanding of the pupils in our method and results section.

**Scaffolding**

Both Lynne Cameron (2001) and Pauline Gibbons (2002) focus on the scaffolding aspects of language learning. They describe how students need to be challenged to use their language abilities, and how challenges need to be balanced with the right amounts and kinds of support for language development to take place. What is described here is what Vygotsky calls the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is where knowledge is constructed in each learner (Säljö 2011). In CLIL this means task design needs to have both the challenge and support aspects covered from both the linguistic and the content perspective, which is of course an additional challenge when planning teaching.

**Previous research within the concerned areas**

In this research overview, we cover a few different areas. Firstly we establish the link that learner engagement actually affects academic success. Secondly we present the existing research on relationship between confidence and language learning. After that we look into the research areas of CLIL settings, where surveys have aimed to establish
if the CLIL approach has had any effects on learner engagement and confidence. Finally we look at some findings regarding academic results in the CLIL setting.

Research relating to student engagement and academic success

As one of our identified problem areas is lack of student engagement in language classrooms, we here establish the relationship between learner engagement and academic success.

Angus, McDonald, Ormond, Rybarcyk, Taylor and Winterton (2009), compared learning outcomes between students with a disruptive behavior and students with a disengaged behavior, and concluded that those groups had a similar learning curve during a two year period. The disengaged students did not for example, attempt challenging tasks and often chose not to participate in discussions or collaboration, which affected their learning outcomes negatively.

In a qualitative study containing interviews with students in the UK, the USA and Russia, the students emphasized effort more than ability when considering the reasons for academic success (Hufton. Neil, Elliot, Julian G., and Illushin, Leonid 2002).

Research relating to confidence and academic success

Again, relating back to our problem formulation, we have observed that many students seem to lack confidence in language use, and hence we here establish the connection between confidence and academic success.

In a research paper Theodore S. Kaniuka (2010) explains that students that are successful in an academic setting often have a more positive attitude to reading, and also has a higher self esteem within this area. Similarly, Mohammad Aryana (2010) points to the positive correlation between self esteem and school achievement in her study.

Ulrich Orth and Richard W. Robins (2014) conducted a meta study comprising a large number of studies regarding self esteem and concludes that “the general pattern of results has indicated that high self-esteem is a predictor, not a consequence, of life success” (p 384). Based on this conclusion they emphasise the importance of more research in the area of what can develop people’s self esteem.

In another study by Sophia Rou-Jui Hu (2011), it was concluded that language specific anxiety was one of the factors that had the highest negative impact on language
proficiency. Even if this study was performed with older ESL students, the results are possibly applicable also to students in year 4-6. Of course it is difficult to say if the anxiety comes from poor academic results or if the lack of achievement stems from having anxiety, but at least a correlation between these two factors can be seen.

Zina Romova and Pip Neville-Barton (2007) studied the development of oral skills in undergraduate students and one of their findings were that a higher confidence in one’s own oral skills encouraged the students to use a more varied vocabulary, to speak more and to take more risk in terms of word use and formulations.

Research relating to CLIL and student engagement and motivation

One of the aspects we focus on in our study is to find out from language teachers if they have observed changes in student engagement and motivation during exposure to CLIL. This section incorporates previous research within this area.

Looking at previous studies comparing more traditional teaching approaches to CLIL, in terms of motivational effects and engagement of students, there are contradictions. Many of the studies within this area were conducted in Spain, where the CLIL approach has been introduced extensively during the last decade. David Lasagabaster (2011) concludes in a study, that the CLIL approach brings positive effects to the students, both in terms of motivation and in terms of language development. Also Aintzane Doiz, David Lasagabaster and Juan Manuel Sierra (2014) show that students in the CLIL setting were more motivated than the control group, but also point to the possibility of other factors, such as for example socio-cultural background and gender, playing a role in the study results. A study, with results contradicting the previously mentioned, was conducted by Fontecha Fernandez, Almudena and Canga Alonso Andres (2014). In this research a gender perspective was added to the comparisons, but it proved that independently of gender, the groups of non-CLIL students were significantly more motivated.

Since the CLIL concept contains such a variety of aspects, it is however difficult to compare studies, and point out the exact reasons for the changes in motivation. In the studies mentioned, English was used for teaching other subjects over a longer period of time, but it is not clarified exactly which kind of teaching was taking place.

When it comes to research about collaborative work there are several studies showing positive effects on language learning. A study made by Katie Brooks and Linda P.
Thurston (2010) shows that pupils were more prone to engage in academic tasks when they were working in small groups and in one-to-one instruction.

Håkan Ringbom (2012) made a compilation of research performed during recent years in Sweden and Finland regarding language development. On the subject of content integrated learning he presents findings by Kjelle & Simes (2008), which indicate that students with high motivation but low proficiency seem to benefit more than others from written production.

Research relating to CLIL and confidence in language use

The effect CLIL has on confidence in language use seem to be an area where not much research has been done. However, one example that Ringbom (2012) points to is a study by Pihko (2007), who found that “while students learning with both traditional ELT and CLIL show generally positive attitudes to the learning of English, CLIL learners were more satisfied with and confident about their English proficiency” (Pihko in Ringbom 2012, p 503).

In 2011, a six week long CLIL survey, pointing in the opposite direction was performed. One of the observations regarding confidence and achievement was that, although language development was high in the more able students during the study, the students reported lack of confidence in language use. Possibly this lack of confidence was due to the relatively short time frame and the fact that this was an entirely new situation for the students. The students with lower language proficiency did not improve their academic results over the test period (Tessa L. Mearns 2011).

Research about CLIL and academic results

In a dissertation by Elin Gustafsson (2008) a study was conducted to investigate how SPRINT teaching affected pupils’ results on the Swedish National tests in English on upper-secondary level. The results show that the pupils receiving SPRINT teaching performed better in the tests than those who received traditional teaching. However, Gustafsson points out that in this particular case it could be due to the fact that pupils who choose SPRINT education are better in English when they start the programme.
Gibbons (2003) describe how science teachers interact in English with students, adapting the conversation to fit both the linguistic levels of a student, and his or her current knowledge of the science subject. By creating situations where both teacher and student are active participants in the conversation, both linguistic and curriculum knowledge develop. Here a lot of focus is on finding the zone of proximal development over the two dimensions.

One issue with CLIL is that assessment needs to be carried out on both subject area knowledge and on language proficiency. Within this framework it is important to create assessment situations that will guide the student to display his or her knowledge within both disciplines, and to adapt the assessment situations with sufficient support to allow students to display their subject area knowledge even if there are language difficulties.

A small-scale research project by Carol Morgan (2006) shows that when it comes to assessment, teachers believe that there are three vital aspects of pupils’ language learning which are furthered by a 'bilingual teaching context': good interactive skills, improved second language skills in general and improved cognitive skills.

Brief summary

In this theory and research overview we have presented research that point to that both learner engagement and confidence are likely to have a positive impact on academic success.

When we apply those two aspects to CLIL, however, there is contradictory research for both of them. Some research indicates increased learner engagement and motivation, while others point in the opposite direction. Similarly, there is research indicating that students’ confidence in language use increases during the CLIL setting, and some that shows the opposite result. In our analysis section we will compare these previous studies with our findings and discuss the differences and possible causes for those. This leads us on to the present study.
Method

This study aims to map characteristics of how CLIL is applied in international primary schools in the south of Sweden, as well as to find out how teachers applying this method view learner engagement and confidence in language use in their students.

With research questions of this kind, a qualitative study is required to get in-depth understanding of the teaching approaches in the selected classrooms. David Nunan (1992) discusses how to define and divide different types of research. He writes that “[q]ualitative research […] assumes that all knowledge is relative and that there is a subjective element to all knowledge and research, and that holistic, ungeneralizable studies are justifiable […]” (p 3).

Using interviews as a method is a good way of collecting the participants’ subjective opinions, thoughts and experiences (Alvehus 2013). The semi-structured interview enables both the respondent and the interviewer to be active and be able to influence the interview. In this forum it is also possible for the interviewer to ask for clarifications and for further examples if anything is unclear, and thereby, the researchers’ authority can be secured.

Authority refers to the researcher’s authority over the interpretation of the data- the right to claim that he or she has” got it right“ in reporting findings. On what basis does the researcher have (or not) authority to speak for the participants (the researched)? (Nancy Hornberger in Chalhoub-Deville 2006, p 223)

The interviews we conducted focused around the questions outlined in Appendix A. To ensure that we took note of all important input, we recorded the interviews. The interviews were transcribed and the answers categorised on a high level to give the basis for the analysis.

The aim of this research is not to make generalizations of the CLIL implementation in the Swedish classrooms, but rather to give an in-depth view of the experiences from a number of teachers applying the method.

Hornberger (2006) describes how credibility of the research can be established by consulting participants during analysis, and our participants were positive to clarify and describe in cases where interpretations of the results were not clear. Further on Hornberger (2006) writes: “Whether bottom up or top down, the quest is for holism. It
is, ultimately, the holistic and emic quality of the ethnographer's account that determine its validity and generalizability” (p 232). For us it means that we will attempt to describe our findings in a holistic way, using a top down approach where we start from the general findings and continue into details in our analysis. We analyse both differences and similarities between the different teachers and between the different aspects, and relating those findings to the previously presented theories and research. From an emic perspective we align with what Alvehus (2013) calls the U-model, although, the theoretical overview comes before the method description in our case.

Figure 1. The U-model as outlined by Alvehus (2013) Translated by the authors.

There are two aspects of research which are important for credibility and clarity. Nunan (1992) describes reliability as “[...] the consistency of results obtained from a piece of research” (p 14). Here replication plays a vital part, meaning that the results of one study can be similar to another one, if it was to be reproduced by another independent researcher. Since our study is qualitative and we have a relatively low number of participants, this aspect is not quite relevant. The same study with other participants would possibly show different results. However, relating to the U-model, Nunan (1992) refers to internal reliability, describing it as “[...] the consistency of data collection, analysis, and interpretation” (p 14). As mentioned, this paper is following the U-model referred to in Alvehus (2013). By doing this and by carefully connecting each section of the paper we believe that the internal reliability of our work can be considered high.

From a validity perspective, Alvehus (2013) describes validity as a measure of how well the research answers the questions that were to be researched. In our case, we are well
aware that we get the view of the teachers, rather than the view of the learners. Complementing this study with input from learners would be a natural continuation to this study.

Identification of participants

In this study three primary teachers at international schools were interviewed about their experiences using CLIL.

We have chosen to immediately contact teachers that have been recommended to us, for being devoted to this kind of teaching method. They are teaching in international schools, where students have a variety of mother tongues, and where new students join the classes during different times of the year. Here English is the main language of instruction in the different subjects, although it is also taught from a form based instruction perspective at times. One of the three teachers teaches lower primary level, which adds an age and language level aspect to our observations. From our perspective it is interesting to include lower grade students since year four students in Swedish mainstream classrooms tend to have a lower general language level than those of the students at international schools.

The reason that we selected different schools and a diverse age span is that we are interested in seeing if the perceived challenges and advantages vary in different settings.

In this case we are making what Alvehus (2013) calls a strategic selection. We avoid working with just one school, or one established group of teachers, or with completely similar groups of learners, since we want to avoid drawing conclusions that are valid for one homogenous group of individuals.

Procedure, Instrument and Analysis

The data collection process was initiated by the creation of the list of questions to use as a template for the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A). The nature of the questions are open ended which encouraged the participants to openly talk about their experiences within the area, and follow on questions helped steering the conversation in the desired direction if needed.
As a next step we contacted the interviewees, and set up a schedule for the interviews. All interviews were to be conducted within a three week period. We then sent out the questions to the respondents, so that they could start preparing their answers in advance, or look for materials to show us. The interviews were conducted and recorded separately, but all analysis work was conducted jointly.

Two of the interviews were conducted in English, and one in Swedish. All Swedish quotes have been translated by the authors in this report.

During the analysis we broke down the interviews by research question, and made overviews of the responses, as well as dug into specific details which we considered to be more interesting. Here we made full transcriptions. Then we compared the responses from the different participants and looked for similarities and differences. We then related back to the theory and previous research section to draw conclusions regarding each research question.

All in all, data collection and analysis took four weeks.

**Ethical considerations**

The ethical considerations for this thesis might be that the researchers would like to see positive effects on learner engagement and confidence in language use with the implementation of CLIL, and that we might thereby, undeliberately have asked questions in a way that would prompt the respondents to give us answers we were looking for. However, we have been very careful in phrasing our questions as to eliminate this bias, and we have also included all parts of the responses, to not give a skewed picture of the respondents’ input.

In terms of participants, we have not represented individual respondents, schools or learners with names, as this could compromise their integrity. We have been open with our respondents of what their input will be used for, and we have given them the possibility to read the interpretations we made from their responses before those are published, to ensure we have not altered any of the information along the way. All of those are ethical principles outlined by Alan Bryman (2014).
Final words about the method

With all the considerations from this chapter we feel confident that the research we did is in accordance to the standards of qualitative studies, and we now move on to the analysis of our empirical data.
Results and Discussion

In this section we analyse and discuss our findings in relation to our presented theories. The section is organized so that we analyse each of the research questions by using quotes and material from the conducted interviews and draw parallels to the theories and research presented.

The application of CLIL in the classroom

This analysis section provides answers to the first research question, “How CLIL is applied in classrooms.” The section is divided according to the aspects we aimed to investigate.

Subjects suitable for language integration

Overall the teachers interviewed gave similar answers to several questions, but a few differences were noted. Being asked which subjects are suitable to integrate into language teaching, the participants agreed that both Social studies and Science provide extensive possibilities for language integration and language development. One teacher said:

*Personligen tycker jag nog att SO och NO är de som är enklast att arbeta med och ha språket samtidigt för man gör så många aktiviteter som är språkbaserade ändå (Participant 2).* [Personally I think Social studies and Science are those easiest to work with together with language, because we do so many activities that are language based.] (Our translation)

One of the participants also pointed out that subjects such as mathematics and music can be good starting points, since those subjects provide support for the learners by using international symbols, which can take the pressure away from the language use initially:

Well, things like maths and music are a language of their own which I think a lot of people sometimes overlook. Math seems to be very easy to teach because numbers are transferrable as that is a language in itself (Participant 3).

The interpretation we make from the full interviews is that any subject, or theme, can lend itself to language teaching, and that the key is the type of activities, rather than the subject area itself. We also note that all the teachers are careful to find a
starting point where all students can relate the activities back to their previous knowledge, since this connection is key for new learning to take place. This of course relates back to Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development as outlined in the theory section. If the activity performed is beyond reach for the student, no development will take place.

Use of authentic materials

When discussing the use of authentic materials with the participants, it was clear that this was an area where they placed a lot of focus. The spread of materials was wider than we had anticipated and included use of internet sites, movie clips, news broadcasts, lab situations, field visits, analysis of artefacts and visits by guests in the classroom. Workbooks were used occasionally in one of the classrooms for form focused activities, which were then separated from the content integrated projects. None of the participants were using textbooks extensively, and hence select a lot of materials from different sources. The materials selection is a time consuming and important part of preparation work in the CLIL setting:

"Jag tittar nog mycket på att de, även om man inte ska förstå språket så ska man förstå vad man ska göra eller vad som händer [...] Så länge där är saker runt omkring som hjälper dem att förstå, så brukar det fungera rätt bra (Participant 2). [I try to make sure that even if they cannot understand the language, they should be able to understand what to do, or what happens [...] As long as things around them help them understand, it usually works out well.] (Our translation)

Ehhm well I think that if the kids can relate to it, they use it more regularly” (Participant 1). I think that if the kids- again it’s sort of if the kids understand and can relate to what we are talking about in the classroom then they will learn faster and be able to keep it for themselves and gain independence. If it’s either the topic or the language that we use (Participant 1).

Using the internet as a source of information is very common according to the participants, but can be problematic, and some screening needs to be done to direct the students to relevant sites. One participant refers to a colleague who has come up with a very useful method for this:

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So she has file folders for all her units and all kinds of maths and language and then she sends that to all her students and her students then get access to a whole bunch of bookmarks (Participant 3).

In general we find our participants tend to use video clips in their teaching. One of the participants said:

Yes, YouTube is my best friend, I have discovered there is nothing you cannot learn from YouTube, and the children quite often use YouTube with things as well, for a project or a presentation. If we’re doing research they’ll go to YouTube and look up things, which is particularly useful for the children who either struggle in English, or they have very little language to begin with, because it’s much more visual (Participant 3).

Two of the participants underline the extensive use of practical applications and authentic situations, and their positive effect on language development. Examples of this are lab time and practical demonstrations where the children participate.

We’ve been able to discuss, you know, what does it mean - expanding, contracting, what does it mean to absorb something. So we’re building this new vocabulary that they wouldn’t have been experiencing on a day to day conversational level. And that’s been really good for them, and writing, learning how to write lab reports, and things like that. It’s been really easy to boost the language orally and written, following instructions, for the reading. It ties in really really well (Participant 3).

After analysing the interviews we find, in sum, that our three participants spend a lot of time and effort on identifying suitable authentic materials and situations to expose the students to, both in thematic settings and for bringing discussion subjects about the world around them into the classroom. Talking about materials and task selection they also discuss the balance in terms of challenges and support, both considering language and content. If the language is on the difficult side in a material, it has to be balanced by visual support, a familiar content, and a task which is not overwhelmingly difficult and vice versa. This is clearly in line with the ideas of Cameron (2001). Here lies also a potential for differentiation. Materials and tasks can be similar for a whole group of students, but different learners can be challenged and supported in different ways, depending on their previous knowledge and abilities.
Collaborative focus

When it comes to collaboration, the participants agree that this is very important for language development, and that tasks need to be designed to trigger communication between the students.

*Jag tror jag försöker se att det är något de behöver prata om (Participant 2).* [I think I try to make sure there is something they need to talk about.] (Our translation)

That collaboration is a natural element of oral language production might not be so surprising, but the collaboration also stretches into the competence area of writing skills:

There is usually a collaborative element in writing tasks, even if it’s the planning stage or it is discussing this idea before you go off and write something or if they’ve written something, they have to self edit and they have to peer edit so there’s some collaboration going on there (Participant 3).

Even though collaboration in groups or pairs is pinpointed by the participants as being a crucial factor for language development, one of the participants highlight that it can also be problematic:

The problem is that they can’t really help each other if- with pronunciation for example and that sort of aspect to it but I think that having confidence in the language is more important than sounding like you know the language perfectly, because confidence will ensure you to actually use the language which in later stages will develop your language forward because if you dare to speak and to be listened to and to be you know heard… (Participant 1).

Collaboration in groups provide a safe and limited environment for using the language in a practical way, focusing on the LGR 11 ideas of understanding and making oneself understood. The participants illustrate how children are very helpful in assisting each other when getting into language difficulties, but underline that creating a safe and respectful environment is absolutely crucial for making this happen.

The theories presented by Lantolf (in Lightbown and Spada 2013) and Swain (1995), state that cognitive language development occurs in learner to learner interaction and discussions between students. All of the teachers interviewed, claim that they let their
pupils work in groups or pairs and that them learning from each other is a huge asset in the classroom.

In most of the collaborative tasks, the focus is on the practical use of the language, rather than the form, and hence, in Krashen’s theories, it is language acquisition that takes place in the collaborative activities (1981). At least one of the interviewees however, claim that form knowledge and language learning is built through tasks where the children assist each other in improving written tasks for example. Here attention is paid to grammar and syntax, and the students sometimes discuss rules of the language to get it right. In this type of collaboration, what Vygotsky (in Säljö 2011) call socially constructed knowledge; the children excel by finding things out together.

Assessment in the collaborative environment

Since collaboration was concluded to comprise such a large part of the work in the classrooms, we aimed to find out how these teachers work with assessment and student feedback, in order to cater for every individual student’s development. Again, the situation in the three classrooms did not vary so much. All the teachers used activity specific rubrics for summative assessments, to make sure the students were aware of the expectations, and to be able to objectively follow up on their results. The rubrics were also in some cases used for self and peer assessment situations. They all worked extensively with oral and written feedback in relation to formative assessments. One of the techniques highlighted for formative feedback was turning the feedback positively, even when it is of the constructive kind.

*Så att jag säger väl inte direkt till dem att det här är det du behöver utveckla, men mer säger jag “jag skulle vilja veta lite mer (Participant 2). [So I don’t say to them they need to develop something. Instead I would say “I would like to know some more about this.] (Our translation)*

In the feedback situations, the participants also note that it is important to separate content and language as well as to make very clear what the feedback is about. This requires you to be specific when you word things. One of the teachers mentioned that it is easy to forget giving the pupils feedback, but that it is a crucial part of your teaching and the pupils’ learning.
it is such an important thing but it’s easy to forget because I know where the kids need to be and if I know that they’re there then that’s it, isn’t it? Then I realize no, it isn’t enough! So I try to do peer assessment as much as possible to give each other feedback because you grow strong seeing other people reflecting on your own work and it also makes you reflect in a different way and have a different perspective on things (Participant 1).

Regarding how formative feedback can be a natural part of any classroom, one of the participants emphasize that it is important that the students get a chance to act on the feedback they get, in order to make it truly useful, and to underline to the children that the feedback is not a judgement, but a tool to use for development of skills they need.

Another interesting thing that was mentioned during discussions about self-assessment was that students in one of the classes did not only assess their own accomplishments in relation to a certain task, but also assessed the effort and focus they had put into completing it.

Cognitive thinking

The cognitive thinking aspect is a natural part of the three classrooms described in this study. The method of reading and learning something by heart hardly exist. Instead the classrooms are set up for exploring, trying things out, for discussing new facts or concepts and for connecting those to previous knowledge and real life. This is expressed by all the three participants, but is highlighted by the following quotes:

Ehhm… We… a combination, I think, of both sort of brainstorming, to get them thinking about what they know from previously and sort of learn from each other. And then also a lot of using the same structure and then applying it to different areas (Participant 1).
I think that… if you don’t have it [authors’ note: cognitive thinking tasks], it won’t work, not really. Because ehmm… because if the kids don’t think about it in a cognitive way then they haven’t learned it because they can’t apply it on anything else. And that sort of makes sense, especially with language (Participant 1).

I try very hard to never answer student questions as much as possible and turn it back on them and have more experience focus than reading things out of a textbook (Participant 3).

Concerning the cultural aspect

As the cultural aspect is one of the cornerstones of CLIL, we have included it in this section, even if this is not an area that we focused extensively on in the interviews. In the international settings of our three teachers, we were told that cultural considerations were often initialized by the children. When covering a subject, they spontaneously made connections to differences from their own cultural heritage, and shared those with the group. Here one of the teachers highlighted the importance of being able to incorporate those discussions, but to make sure they stay on the right level where it is interesting for the whole group, and where it adds something to their understanding:

And have- remember to have flexibility and the calm to be able to take on those conversations… but also read the group (Participant 1).

The strong cultural aspect in CLIL is also supported by the LGR 11 where it is stated that “pupils should be given the opportunity to develop their skills in relating content to their own experiences, living conditions and interests” (Skolverket 2011, p 32).

CLIL and learner engagement

In this section we will discuss and analyse the findings of our interviews in regard to our second research question: Which are the perceived advantages and challenges with CLIL teaching, in relation to learner engagement according to teachers that use the approach?

Throughout the interviews, learner engagement was mentioned by the participants in relations to several different questions. One of the aspects pointed to by two of the three teachers was the importance of catching the students’ attention, and the readiness to
change approach if the group does not engage. They both conclude that without engagement, not much learning will take place.

Och är det något som de inte tycker är intressant, ja då får man hitta ett sätt att göra det intressant för dem. När man väl har hittat det så är de jätteinne i det (Participant 2). And if it is something they don’t find interesting, then you have to find a way to make it interesting from them. Once you found that, they are really into it. (Our translation)

It’s hard work realizing four years’ of doing something that maybe is not the most relevant thing anymore and that maybe I need to change my texts [...] I mean it’s such a good song and the kids really relate to it but if I- maybe there’s a newer song instead of you know [...] I think that’s important, keeping it fresh (Participant 1).

Finding an angle that will engage the students is of course one of the challenges with the CLIL approach, but analyzing the answers from our respondents we conclude that, just as CLIL is described by Coyle (in Masih 1999), a lot of the learner engagement is triggered by the cognitive thinking processes and the collaborative and authentic work environment. The teachers also stress the importance of authentic and up to date materials to engage the students.

Another aspect that is stressed throughout the interviews is that freedom and control has to be balanced in order for learning to be optimized, here illustrated by participant 1:

[...] but instead having small goals they can achieve separately or together as a group that stops them from going too far in one direction. Yeah…and just sort of making sure that not everything is completely set in stone when you start it so that there is a bit of freedom for the groups to tell and how they want to do it, how they want to make it look at the end (Participant 1).

By giving some freedom in these situations, the multiple intelligences, as described by Gardner (1993), can be used, and thereby learning will occur for different types of learners.

I have yet to come across a student that cannot engage and interact in this type of curriculum, and the reason for that is because it becomes so individual. It automatically differentiates to all students and their needs, regardless of what type of learners they are but it is particularly good for those kinesthetic and tactile learners that need to touch and move around, because they are not just sat at a table with a textbook (Participant 3).

Relating to learner engagement, we also wanted to find out how these teachers make each child willing to work to their own potential, even if they would be more skilled than their
peers in a specific area. Here, the key factors mentioned were that tasks have an open design to allow for different levels, but also, that expectations from the teachers are displayed clearly to each student.

In the classrooms it is also a matter of creating an environment where the children are proud of the work they do. This is often accomplished by displaying work to other students or classes, or to parents in different settings.

And we’ve practiced all of those things and they role play mum and dad and they take them around to all the centres and they practice how to demonstrate the centres and how to show them their portfolio and all of that so when mum and dad really come in, they can do it all on their own. It really is wow! (Participant 3).

There is not much doubt that the participants were convinced of the advantages of CLIL for creating learner engagement. However, one aspect we wanted to look into was if it would benefit all students, or if certain students would have a harder time engaging, due to their learner profile or due to some other difficulties. Here the teachers agreed that most activities they do in their classrooms are engaging for all students, but that there are cases when it is more beneficial for certain students to get different tasks and work with an adult outside of the classroom. It might for example be difficult for a student with very limited language abilities to participate and get something out of a classroom discussion about a complex subject, and sometimes, some students need some more time or guidance for a task.

 [...] they might sit in the first ten minutes while I introduce the concept, and watch me go through it and then go off with an assistant and practice it and then come back in and rejoin the activity (Participant 3).

Så han behöver gå lite till sidan ibland och få göra annat. ... Oftast så brukar jag inte behöva dra, gå och dra i dem som har lite lägre språk, för att de är engagerade i det vi gör (Participant 2). So he needs to go to the side sometimes and do other things … most of the time I do not need to pull the ones with a lower language ability, because they are engaged in what we do. (Our translation)
However, even though some adaptations might be necessary for certain students, the teachers agree that language learning benefits from this sort of learning environment, and that children that might have problems to engage in the traditional setting might well perform better.

[...] in fact, my special needs students have some of the best topic talks presentations with enquiry, out of all the class...They can actually do the cause and effect and test something or watch something happen or experience it, and it’s a deeper learning process and you can see that (Participant 3).

The cognitive element of learning is crucial to direct the student engagement in the right direction. One of the teachers made a comparison with previous experiences from a mainstream setting. In her view, the content integration truly directs the focus to the content to be learned, no matter what subject.

[...] vi hade fått en mattebok och den var vi tvungna att använda. Och eleverna var jätteengagerade att de skulle bli klara med matteboken, men inte i att lära sig (Participant 2). [...] we had a book for mathematics and we had to use it. And the students were very engaged in finishing the book, but not in actually learning. (Our translation)

In conclusion, the teachers agree that learner engagement is promoted by the varied ways of working with CLIL. As Coyle (1999) mentions, learning takes place when there is a progression in the knowledge, engagement in the cognitive processes, an interactive and communicative context and a cultural awareness in the pupil. These are all aspects that the teachers mentioned and discussed throughout the interviews as being important for both learner engagement and confidence.

**CLIL and learner confidence**

In this section we discuss and analyse the findings of our interviews in regard to our third and final research question: Which are the perceived advantages and challenges with CLIL teaching, in relation to learner confidence in language use, according to teachers that use the approach?

As with learner engagement, confidence was also an aspect which was mentioned by all the participants throughout the interviews.

Confidence in pupils’ own language was one of the things that the teachers found important and which they strived towards in their teaching.
but I think that having confidence in the language is more important than sounding like you know the language perfectly, because confidence will ensure you to actually use the language which in later stages will develop your language forward because if you dare to speak and to be listened to and to be you know heard… (Participant 1).

Referring to the theories of Krashen (1981), lack of confidence is one of the factors that can affect the mental filter in the language brain. However, this aspect was, according to the teachers, not a common problem since the engaging materials and tasks often made the pupils so committed and engaged in what they did, that they forgot about their insecurities.

... i och med att de är så engagerade i det man gör, så glömmer de lite bort det här att de kanske är lite osäkra på språket (Participant 2). [...] since they are so committed in what we do, they kind of forget that they might be a bit insecure about the language. (Our translation)

Och de glömmer helt bort att de är lite osäkra för de är så inne i det de håller på med. Så hittar man bara något sätt att engagera dem, och det kanske är mer att man får ändra någonting för att just den eleven ska bli engagerad. Om de är det, då är de så inne i det att man kan göra vad som helst (Participant 2). And they completely forget about their insecurities because they are so into what they are doing. If you just find a way to engage them, and that might mean that you change something so that one particular pupil will be engaged, then they are so committed to it that you can do practically anything. (Our translation)

The teachers all mentioned that a key factor with confidence is using the pupils’ own experiences, thoughts, and things they already know, as a means to boost their confidence.

Again, thinking that they understand what’s going on and that they have experienced it themselves or something is happening around them right now (...) they become more confident- the kids. They use it more frequently; they talk about it and hear about it so it becomes more relevant to their world. And because what they know about it, they gain confidence because they have at least the knowledge of it. So it only helps them really (...) (Participant 1).

This fits well with the authentic and familiar context expressed in LGR 11.

One of the participants claimed that risk taking in language production was more to be seen in oral interaction than in written form. It was however noted from all
participants that risk taking was encouraged in the language use, and it was made clear to the children that development comes from extensive use of the language.

Så länge det är att de ska tala, så tar de chanser, i och med att vi är så många i klassen som är från olika länder, de är på olika nivåer, och det är samma sak på hela skolan, så är alla väldigt tolerant med att ’jo vi kan olika mycket' (Participant 2). As long as they are to talk, they take chances. Since we are so many in the classroom from different countries, they are on different levels and it is the same thing in the whole school, so everyone is tolerant with us being on different levels. (Our translation)

When asked which key factors the teachers identified as important for raising confidence, the consistent and frequent use of the language was one of them.

Ehhm getting them to use their language [...] If they don’t use it then they’ll never be comfortable with it. And it’s really hard. It’s such a hard balance (Participant 1).

Another factor was that a secure and helpful classroom environment has to be established for the student to feel confident about their language use. Again, the balance between freedom and structure was underlined as a key factor:

Mmm, the most important is instilling an open welcoming, non-judgemental classroom environment. Where everyone can be a risk taker and not be concerned with being laughed at or being criticized (Participant 3).

I run a very tight ship, and that helps for them to have that sense of security (Participant 3). So it’s about keeping the confidence building, at the same time as you sort of start from scratch with the language (Participant 1).

That the confident students dare to take risks and use a varied vocabulary points in the same direction as the study by Romova and Neville-Barton (2007). The balance between challenge and support and between structure and freedom in the CLIL classrooms are all means to enable the students to work within what Vygotsky refers to as the zone of proximal development.

All interviewed teachers believed that working with content and language based teaching promoted confidence in all pupils in the classroom. The open classroom, authentic and engaging context and material, and a collaborative environment connect to Vygotsky's ideas of collaborative development (Säljö 2011).
Conclusion

Here we provide a summary of key points and draw our conclusions from the conducted study. We also discuss the relevance and implications this study has on the teacher profession as well as the curriculum. Lastly we discuss how this study and research can be taken further.

Summary of results

Looking at the findings from our study, we conclude that the participants are very positive to using content and language integration as a means to enhance learner engagement and confidence in language use as well as to giving the students a deeper knowledge of the subject areas.

The participants all emphasize the importance of creating activities that trigger cognitive processes and collaboration to be able to construct knowledge on a deeper level, and to engage the learners. They also stress that freedom and structure need to be balanced to create learning situations where all children can use their abilities to their best potential.

In terms of confidence in language use, this factor seems to be tightly connected to the engagement. The participants testify how engaged students tend to forget to feel insufficient, and instead focus on participating and making themselves understood. This however, can only occur if the classroom setting is secure and supportive. Challenges mentioned are time constraints in preparation work, since every module need to be carefully prepared, not just in terms of content and language, but also in terms of how the collaboration should be set up, and how the cognitive thinking should be triggered in the participants.

Implications for our profession

In our view, the CLIL concept fits LGR 11 really well, and can be used to develop all the abilities needed to reach the learning goals in a way that the traditional textbook centered approach does not. Our hope is that this thesis can give valuable input to teachers that wish to try the method.

A teacher who is new to the concept can start small, and get both themselves and their students into the habit of working in a new way. Choosing smaller modules, there
are even pre-made materials online, which can be adapted to suit certain work areas, such as science, maths and so on.

As pointed out by one of our participants, a change of work method needs to be explained and justified to both students and parents, and you have to allow some time for the new ways of working to sink in and develop.

**Limitations**

For this study, we had ten weeks at our disposal, which is a factor that caused us to drastically reduce the scope of the research. In terms of selection of participants, had we had more time, the study would have been initiated with a broader questionnaire to English teachers in a variety of schools around the county, and then, from there, we would have identified interviewees. Alan Bryson (2008) describes this as a purpose steered selection process. With this limitation in mind, we have chosen to immediately contact teachers who have been recommended to us, and who are devoted to this kind of teaching method.

For data collection, if the time frame had been longer, we would have opted for complementing the semi-structured interviews with repetitive visits to the concerned classroom, using classroom observations as a major method component of the study. Another complementary method that would have been possible, would have been to interview some learners directly about their experiences with CLIL. Those two methods would have given us true insight into what happens in the learner group when they are exposed to CLIL. With the limited frame however, one single visit in a classroom could instead lead us off in the wrong direction, since what happens at one occasion might not be representative for what normally occurs. Similarly, if choosing to interview one learner, that would only be input from one individual, and hardly representative for the whole class.

Johan Alvehus (2013) mentions that the use of several different methods to investigate a phenomenon (triangulation), may lead to more accurate and in-depth results. However, a disadvantage is that using different methods may lead to different results, which may cause difficulty to pin down the object of the study.

Finally we opted for using semi-structured interviews with the teachers as the sole method for this study. By doing this, we can go in-depth on all the aspects we wish to cover. A possible draw back from using this approach could be that the views we are
presented can be subjective, and sometimes the answers might be the teachers’ perception or wish regarding the state of some aspect, rather than what the learners truly experience. In future research, with the possibility of a broader scope, this angle could be covered by complementing the teacher interviews with our suggested additional methods.

Suggestions for further research

Summarizing our findings, we immediately want to know more about CLIL and its use in Swedish schools. First of all, it would be very interesting to compare Swedish speaking schools having adapted this teaching approach to the international schools, to find out if the challenges and advantages are the same, or if they look different when dealing with a group of students that to the greatest extent have a different social language than English for communicating among themselves.

Furthermore, we think it would be interesting to find one or several schools in a socially challenging area that are using CLIL, and find out if the confidence and engagement gains can be achieved also in this setting, where children struggle to learn Swedish and at the same time learn English in school.
References


http://www.skolinspektionen.se/Documents/Kvalitetsgranskning/enggr/kvalgr-enggr-slutrapport.pdf
Appendix A - List of questions for semi-structured interviews

We are intending to investigate how Content and Language Integrated Learning is used in your classroom. If it is used, we will ask some questions about your experiences. If not, we will ask you which main challenges and opportunities you see from your perspective.

The aspects of CLIL we are focusing on are:

- Themes
- Authentic materials
- Collaborative tasks
- Cognitive thinking
- Cultural aspects

First we are interested in finding out if and how you work with these aspects in your teaching.

Later on we would like to discuss how this teaching approach is affecting the students. We are primarily focusing on the aspects of learner engagement and confidence in practical language use.

About Content and Language Integration in your teaching

1. Do you use or have used content integration in your language teaching?
2. Do you find certain subjects easier to integrate into your English language teaching? Why?
3. Which kinds of authentic materials do you use in your language teaching?
   i. Which criteria do you apply for selecting suitable media?
   ii. Do you adapt them to suit the audience? Differentiation?
4. How much of the time spent in teaching language in your classroom is focused on collaborative tasks with a content focus?
   i. Do you use mixed or same ability groups?
   ii. Roles in the groups?
   iii. How do you design tasks to trigger good cooperation?
      2. Differentiation?
5. How do you manage feedback in the collaborative environment?
   i. Summative and formative?
ii. Peer?

iii. Focus on language and/or contents?

6. Which kind of tasks do you primarily use to trigger a cognitive thinking processes. I.e. making sure that the children internalize and relate the new contents to previous knowledge and create new? How important do you consider this aspect to be?

7. Do you attempt to add a cultural aspect to content integration. How do you best achieve that, and how important do you think it is?

About learner engagement and confidence in language use

1. Have you observed any changes in learner engagement when dealing with authentic content in language teaching?
   i. Do different types of students react differently?
   ii. Who would benefit the most?
   iii. Which challenges do you see?
   iv. Are there any strong relationships between any of the above discussed aspects and learner engagement as you see it? (for example: engagement is improved when dealing with authentic media…)

2. Which changes in learner confidence have you experienced when dealing with authentic content in language teaching?
   i. Which of the language abilities (reading, writing, listening and speaking) are improving most with this method?
   ii. Do different types of students react differently? Who would benefit the most? The least?
   iii. Which key factors have you identified as important for raising confidence in language use?
   iv. Which challenges do you see?
   v. Are there any strong relationships between any of the above discussed aspects and learner engagement as you see it? (for example: engagement is improved when dealing with authentic media…)

Final question: Is there anything else regarding your experiences with CLIL that you would like to share with us?