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Interdisciplinary work through the medium of English

- an investigation among teachers and pupils at a compulsory school concerning integration of English into an interdisciplinary setting

Ämnesövergripande arbete på engelska

- en undersökning gällande lärare och elevers syn på integration av språket engelska i ett ämnesövergripande arbetssätt

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Abstract

Content and language integrated learning is an approach to learning a language while studying subject matter, as well as the other way round. The intention with this dissertation has been to gather insights into teachers' perceptions regarding this approach and pupils' perceived views regarding working with subject matter through the medium of English. Previous research within this area of study has shown that using this approach to learn content and language is increasing in Sweden primarily at upper secondary schools. This dissertation can be seen as twofold: firstly, a project was conducted in an 8th grade at a compulsory school in the southern part of Sweden that implement interdisciplinary work on a daily basis; secondly, data was gathered from questionnaires and interviews with both teachers and pupils who participated in the project. The results show that this approach is time-consuming and very challenging for pupils in general; it is particularly difficult for weaker pupils in English. Also, it may lead to shortcomings in the Swedish language, with terminology in particular. However, both teachers and pupils think that learning English while studying subject matter is effective, since pupils have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the English language more than otherwise. Working with subject matter in English is very different from doing it in Swedish and there are aspects that must be taken into consideration when planning, designing and implementing this approach at compulsory school level.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary work, cross-curricular work, CLIL, SPRINT, content-based learning, bilingual education, integration of English.

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1 Introduction

The curriculum for compulsory school clearly stipulates that teachers must provide students “with opportunities to work along interdisciplinary lines” (Skolverket 2006:13). In addition it proclaims the importance of providing students with coherence and cohesion at school. From my experience as a student and as a substitute teacher working at different compulsory schools, interdisciplinary work has only been implemented on rare occasions, primarily when working thematically. Subjects have otherwise been clearly separated from each other on the schedule as well as in terms of content. However, when doing my teaching practice while studying at Malmö School of Education, I have familiarized myself with a compulsory school that implements theme-based interdisciplinary work on a daily basis. The main reason why it is possible to work in this manner at this school is that the teachers work collaboratively in teams in order to facilitate cross-curricular work. Although it is a fascinating approach to teaching and learning, I was surprised that the subject English was not included in the interdisciplinary work. Could it be that English is still seen as being very much about grammar and vocabulary or are pupils not able to deal adequately with subject-specific content in another language due to insufficient language skills?

Since it is possible to use the English language in most subjects in school, it is rather paradoxical that English is excluded from the overall interdisciplinary work. Clearly, by integrating English, English learning becomes more effective, primarily because pupils kill two birds with one stone, i.e. they learn another subject such as geography or civics while studying a language, and vice versa. Although the beneficial aspect of the approach seems promising, there are some concerns expressed regarding using English as the primary medium in the classroom. Josephson, the director of The Language council of Sweden, states that working with subject specific content in English, primarily at the Universities, is quite different from having an informal conversation with a peer. He says that the Swedish language community seems to overestimate their skills in the English language and therefore thinks it is unproblematic to use English in class. As a result, the Universities in Sweden offer more and more courses in English (2004:132). Making English the primary medium has a downside and the implications of the approach seem to be ignored by the community.

As a future teacher of English, I can see great potential for working with teachers of other subjects as a means for pupils to gain and acquire the English language while learning subject matter in various areas of study. However, as Josephson states, I do not think that the benefits

concerning implementation of content-based learning through the medium of the English language outweigh the risk completely. In this dissertation, I aim to answer two fundamental questions that are closely connected to this issue:

- What are the perceptions among teachers to the integration of English into an interdisciplinary setting at compulsory school?
- How do pupils view working with subject matter through the medium of English?

In this chapter there is a section describing the purpose and aim of this research as well as definitions concerning recurring terminology. In chapter two, an overview is given about literature and research that is relevant in regard to this dissertation. The methods are described in chapter three along with a detailed account of the experiment that was conducted for this research. Chapter four presents the result of a focus group interview with four teachers, individual interviews with four pupils and a questionnaire that were conducted for this research. In chapter five, the results from chapter four are analyzed and discussed. In the final chapter, conclusions are drawn from the results, the analysis and the discussion.

1.1 Purpose and Aim

The purpose of this investigation is to conduct an experiment concerning content and language integrated learning at a compulsory school, and subsequently interview teachers and pupils in regard to this approach. The aim with this dissertation is to investigate the perceptions among the teachers who participated in the experiment, and the perceived views among pupils in the experimental group regarding studying subject matter through the medium of English.

1.2 Definitions

In order to make the forthcoming text intelligible and comprehensible, the recurrent concepts *interdisciplinary work* and *theme-based learning* need to be explained and clarified.

1.2.1 Interdisciplinary work

There are many different definitions and explanations given in dictionaries and encyclopedias concerning *interdisciplinary work* and interdisciplinarity. The terms are often used interchangeably with *studies across the curriculum* and *cross-curricular studies*. In *Interdisciplinarity – History, Theory and Practice*, Klein argues that interdisciplinarity is a concept of wide appeal and confusion. It seems that there is “a general uncertainty about the meaning of the term”; when the interdisciplinary approach is used in various areas of study today, it still lacks an indication of what it actually is (1990:12). Although it is a concept of complex nature and rarely clarified and explained when used, Page defines it simply as “viewing a phenomenon or topic through an integration of the disciplines concerned”(1977:181). Liebling and Prior further explain the concept as being “more holistic than ... single subjects like physics or French” (2005:76). The definition found in the *Encyclopedia of Education*, gives another dimension to the term. Here it is defined as

the process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a problem that is so broad or complex that it cannot be addressed through a single discipline or field [subject].

In addition it states that interdisciplinary work is conducted “so that topics, problems, and phenomena under study is better understood” (Guthrie 2003:1210).

1.2.2 Theme-based learning

In the *International Dictionary of Education*, the thematic approach is simply defined as a “teaching approach which organizes subject matter around broad themes” (Page 1977:342). A more elaborate explanation is found in *An ABC of English Teaching*. By using the thematic approach to teaching, it is possible “to explore an area of experience in depth” (Jones 1980:132). In addition, it is utilized “so that a much deeper awareness of the subject can emerge and so that what pupils read and write and talk about can have a greater cohesion and relevance” (ibid 133).

2 Background

For several decades, research has been conducted and literature written concerning working with content through the medium of English. The Swedish National Agency for Education in particular, has contributed a lot to this field of study and provided teachers with numerous publications that especially concern SPRINT, an abbreviation of Språk- och innehållsintegrerad inläring och undervisning. This is the Swedish equivalent to the English term CLIL, which is short for Content and Language Integrated Learning. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of some of the literature/research that deals with this matter as well as other interesting areas of study that directly refer to simultaneous content and language learning. Before giving an account of the literature there is a need to draw attention to what the primary focus can be on in a content-based instruction approach. Therefore certain concepts need to be distinguished in order to make the forthcoming text fully comprehensible.

In content-based instruction, there are several approaches that can be utilized in teaching which give emphasis to either content or language. In *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Language learning and Teaching*, it is explained that

these approaches lie on a continuum, ranging from those which emphasize content learning through the medium of a second/foreign language, to those in which content is used as a vehicle for promoting language learning (Met 2000:137).

In content-driven approaches, the learning of content is of paramount importance and “language learning is often viewed as an incidental by-product of content instruction” (ibid 137). When subject matter is taught through the medium of a second/foreign language it is most often content specialists who teach. On the other hand, a language-driven approach gives primary emphasis to language learning. In this approach content is only used as a means to learn a language and it can be drawn from various sources, such as themes, specific topics or “solely from learners’ expressed interests” (ibid 138). In between these far ends of the continuum, there are approaches that give as much emphasis to content as to language. In this setting, “content and language instructors work collaboratively to ensure that students learn content and gain the language skills necessary for successful content learning” (ibid 138).

Depending on which approach is utilized in teaching, the primary objective for the learner can vary. A distinction has for many years been made between ESL (English as a second

language) and EFL (English as a foreign language). The term ESL describes situations where students are “usually living in the target community and need the target language in order to survive” (Harmer 2007:19). In contrast to ESL, EFL describes situations where “students [are] learning English in order to use it with any other English speakers in the world”, for example as tourists (ibid 19). Clearly, making this distinction nowadays is difficult, owing to the fact that people live in a multilingual world, where the Internet in particular opens the doors for EFL learners to a “global target-language community”, in which some form of World English is the medium (ibid 19-20). Harmer states that a new term ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) has become a focus of discussion recently (ibid 20).

2.1 Implementation and implications of CLIL /SPRINT

For many years there has been an increase in teaching content through the English language, primarily at upper secondary schools in Sweden. Apparently this is not as common at compulsory schools. The first upper secondary school that implemented this approach was influenced by the immersion programs in Canada (Viberg 1997:9). Fundamental characteristics of these programs are that school subjects are taught through the medium of the second language and that teaching is very intense (ibid 11). The immersion programs are offered because of the bilingual population in the country and can therefore be seen as ESL. The immersion approach is on the content-driven end of the continuum described above, i.e. while there is a clear emphasis on the content, language learning is seen as an important by-product (Met 2000:138). There are private schools in Sweden, such as British Primary School, Engelska skolan and Tanto School, that implement instruction through the medium of English on a daily basis. At some compulsory schools a similar approach is found, where parents who plan to move abroad are of the opinion that children are in need of the English language in the new country. These schools and other public schools in Sweden are alike in terms of following the curriculum for compulsory school, but the main difference is that the schoolwork is carried out through the medium of English (Viberg 1997:10). The report also shows that many upper secondary schools in Sweden only have a few subjects taught in a foreign language (ibid 9-10).

From an international perspective, Viberg brings up as mentioned earlier the immersion programs in Canada, but also the so called European Schools, which primarily children to officials working within the EU attend. In these schools, teaching is carried out through the

medium of the students' mother tongue at an early stage and other languages are brought in later in their schooling. In Finland, immersion programs in Swedish for Finnish students have become widely popular; English is however still seen as the predominant foreign language. According to a survey conducted at sixteen Finnish vocational schools that implemented immersion programs, virtually all pupils were of the opinion that they had improved their skills in a foreign language. 40% of the pupils answered that they did not learn the content, in contrast to when it was carried out in Finnish. However their willingness to use the foreign language improved significantly in general. According to the survey the fundamental prerequisite for progression in language learning was that the teacher had to master the target language (Viberg 1997:15-6).

Concerning teaching through the medium of English at Swedish schools, Viberg concludes in his report that pupils' skills in the Swedish language are not affected if the language is well established in regard to speaking and writing (1997:23). He also states that positive results among the pupils can be reached if the teaching is well planned and carried out by a proficient speaker of the target language (ibid 23). Regarding the learning of subject matter, Viberg explains that it is not affected as long as pupils' language skills have reached a certain language level. However where this level is situated on a scale is not clear (ibid 23).

In the report *SPRINT – Hot eller möjlighet?*, SPRINT is seen as an umbrella term encompassing approaches that concern content and language integrated learning, such as *immersion, teaching content through a foreign language, bilingual education* etc. The term SPRINT is utilized owing to the fact that the focus of the concept is on neither language nor content. Therefore, depending on how teachers choose to carry out their teaching, the approach can be more to the content-driven side or to the language driven side of the continuum. However since teaching is carried out in the target language, SPRINT gives pupils more exposure overall to a foreign language than otherwise (Falk 2001:6). In comparison to Canada where immersion programs are offered because of the bilingual population, the primary purpose of having SPRINT in Sweden is not for students to speak like a native, since there is no need to strive for it (ibid 10); the goal of the approach is rather to acquire functional proficiency and skills in the target language. One of the reasons for providing SPRINT in Sweden is that it is one way to modify the so called traditional language teaching and thus make it more effective; the most prominent pedagogical motif is that the approach can make pupils' attitude towards languages positive, and that "pupils achieve better than in ordinary language teaching" (ibid 11).

Nixon provides an overview of CLIL/SPRINT and the positive and negative aspects of this educational approach. In recent years, he says that there has been an attempt to “increase the number of teachers choosing to work in co-operation with one another to bridge the barriers between different school subjects” (2001:226). CLIL/SPRINT was one out of three forms of teaching that evolved out of this attempt. Regarding the advantages of content and language integrated learning in school, Nixon pinpoints four beneficial aspects. Firstly it can create motivation and interest in another language when the language is placed in a context “where its value as a tool for learning and as a medium for communication can be appreciated”(ibid 229). Secondly there is a greater possibility for peer interaction, i.e. pupils use the language to communicate “facts, ideas, thoughts to complete assignments” (ibid 230). Another beneficial aspect that is mentioned in the article is the potential of interdisciplinary studies, which can “be equally stimulating for the teachers as for the learners” (ibid 230). Finally, owing to the fact that school subjects are interlinked, pupils are given the opportunity to work with different subjects in another language, and are consequently exposed to a foreign language for twice as much time.

In contrast to this somewhat positive perspective of CLIL/SPRINT, Nixon also highlights certain problems that may arise in using this approach. The lack of formal qualifications and in-service training among teachers are major issues, as well as the fact that teaching materials are not suited for this kind of educational approach. Since it can be expensive to carry out CLIL/SPRINT, management and economics are other fundamental aspects that must be taken into consideration (Nixon 2001:232).

From 1977 to 2000 there have been some major studies that concern SPRINT in Sweden; the results from the studies mentioned in this paragraph are to be found in *SPRINT – Hot eller möjlighet?* A study conducted by Knight shows that the learning of subject matter is not affected when teaching is carried out in English (1987/1988, cited in Falk 2001:12). As mentioned earlier, also Viberg concludes in his study that students are not affected as long as pupils’ language skills have reached a certain language level (1997:23). Concerning the affect on the Swedish language when SPRINT is implemented is ambiguous. A study conducted by Hägerfelth more than half of the students was of the opinion that their Swedish, primarily terminology, had weakened(1992, cited in Falk 2001:21). Falk’s research shows that students have to use English terminology when speaking Swedish due to shortcomings in the Swedish vocabulary. Another major concern is the language students use when writing in Swedish (2000, cited in Falk 2001:21). In Ekman’s study, students are of the opposite opinion and believe that their ability in the Swedish language has not been affected negatively by SPRINT

(1993/1994, cited in Falk 2001:21). Although these students are of the opinion that their ability in the Swedish language is sufficient and functional, they state that some Swedish terminology was lost when SPRINT was implemented in the classroom (ibid 21). A study conducted by Alvtörn that focused on seven linguistic features among SPRINT students has showed that those students who participated in this approach made more significant mistakes in comparison to those students who did not take part in the approach (2000, cited in Falk 2001:22).

Regarding the students' target language competence in general, surveys, grades and tests have shown that SPRINT students assess their own skills as better than students who were not taught through the medium of English. This does not only concern terminology of subject matter, but also "reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and oral and written productions" (Falk 2001:22). Interestingly enough, some students believed that they would learn more English than they actually did in SPRINT. When it comes to teaching, students say that there are not enough opportunities for them to interact with the teacher and peers during the lessons. They want to take part in discussions and do oral exercises instead of having the teacher lecturing (ibid 22). One major reason why this situation arises is that teachers are not in possession of sufficient language skills in the target language, which as a result restricts the flexibility in the classroom (ibid 22).

In his report, Viberg also discusses an experiment conducted by Washburn (1997, cited in 1997:21). The experiment was carried out at Röllingby upper secondary school in which two classes were taught through the medium of English for approximately 60 percent of the time. This approach is called partial immersion. Another term corresponding to partial immersion is bilingual education, "whereby learners receive part of their education through one language and part through another" (Garcia et al 2007:20). In regard to the experiment, tests were carried out in a control group and an experimental group. The result from these tests showed that the skills and proficiency in the English language in the two groups were very much alike in the beginning as well as at the end of the experiment (1997, cited in Viberg 1997:21). Regarding the learning of subject matter, students believed that they would have learnt more if the work was carried out in Swedish. Similar concerns were expressed by teachers as well (Falk 2001:21). It is crucial to illuminate the fact that the two groups were different and this might have influenced the result. Significant variables that were not taken into account were for example that the tests were too easy for the high achieving students and that the students' grades were of different standards (1997, cited in Viberg 1997:21). Other variables that are

mentioned in *SPRINT – Hot eller möjlighet?* are the appropriateness of teaching material and insufficient language skills among the teachers (Nixon 2001:24).

In *Content-Based Second Language Instruction*, Brinton, Snow and Bingham Wesche give a thorough account of content-based language learning as well as the implications of this pedagogical approach. Initially they proclaim that the aim of content-based instruction is to eliminate “the artificial separation between language instruction and subject matter classes which exists in most educational settings”, but also to get students to “think and learn through the use of the target language” (1989:2). If content-based language learning is to be successful, proponents of the approach argue that certain aspects must be considered, such as how the student will make use of the target language later on. The content must be of relevance, all teaching should build on existing knowledge of the subject matter and of the second language, and finally, the learner has to understand the language that is being used by the teacher (ibid 3). A content-oriented model that is brought up in *Content-Based Second Language Instruction* is theme-based language instruction, which deals with themes or topics of various nature. Since it can be implemented almost anywhere and at all levels in school, it is the most widespread and attractive model that includes both content and language learning (ibid 14-5). The possibility of selecting topics that are directly related to students’ interests is a great benefit. However, when using themes or topics as a content-based approach, it is crucial that teachers feel confident about the chosen topic, and further can “stimulate students’ interests” (ibid 27). Other implications that concern teachers are the importance of in-service training that focuses on curriculum/ syllabus design, and material development.

2.2 CLIL/SPRINT with regard to schoolwork and the role of the teacher

When working with SPRINT/CLIL, there is a need to illuminate the fact that school subjects are different when it comes to cognitive and contextual demands. Pupils are supposed to learn subject matter through the medium of a foreign language, which they at the same time are supposed to master. It is for this reason crucial that there is a balance between cognitive and contextual demands. If the contextual and cognitive demands are set very high, it is virtually impossible for students to learn anything (Falk 2001:33).

An illustration by Cummins clearly shows the relationship between contextual and cognitive levels, which is relevant to take into account when working with subject matter through the medium of a foreign language. There are primarily two variables that must be

taken into consideration in this model and one of those is whether the subject matter is context embedded or context reduced (Cummins 1986). The other fundamental variable is the level of cognitive demands. The model can be seen as two intersecting continua; see figure 1.

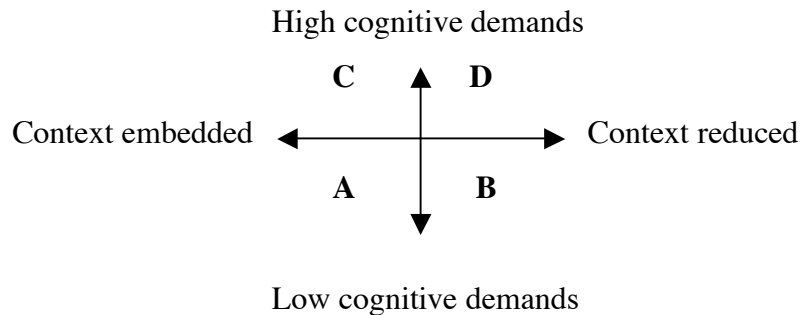


Figure 1: Illustration of two intersecting continua “used as a possible model for raising teacher awareness of the relationship between task level and context”(ibid). The letters A, B, C and D represent different areas in which tasks can be sorted.

To use the language in a context reduced situation is difficult for pupils, because they do not have contextual support (Falk 2001:33). If the situation is cognitively demanding on top of that (area D in figure 1), it makes the situation even more difficult. Writing an essay in a specific area of study or comprehending a complex text are tasks within this area (ibid 33). If the language to be used is context embedded and cognitively easy (area A in figure 1) the language demands are not set very high for the student. A task within this field could be understanding instructions presented orally along with visual support (ibid 33). Tasks that include math and participation in science class are context embedded and require high cognitive demands (area C in figure 1). In this area, it is crucial that tasks, which introduce new terms and new ways to think are balanced against a familiar and easy language (ibid 33-4). Depending on where pupils are in their development of language and cognition, it is important to set tasks that fit their needs in regard to this model (ibid 34).

Finally, an issue of vital importance to highlight is the role of English and the role of the English teacher in a content and language integrated educational setting, in which subject matter is not necessarily within the English teacher’s area of expertise. Approaches that are on the content-driven side of the continuum, such as immersion programs are “commonly taught by content specialists, not language teachers” (Met 2000:138). The language itself in these programs “serves as the medium of instruction” and it is thus seen as a by-product as mentioned above (ibid 138). In language-driven approaches, the content is “the vehicle for

language learning” and therefore “language learning is the course goal, and content is an effective means for attaining it” (ibid 138-9). Regarding the concept of content in language learning it is important to highlight that learning a language without content is impossible, because then the language does not serve a function. Breen and Candling gives an account of the role of content in language learning and say that

the communicative curriculum would place the content within the methodology and provide it with the role of servant to the learning-teaching process. Thus, content would not necessarily be prescribed by purposes but selected and organized within the communicative and differentiated process and learners and teachers as participants in that process. Therefore, the learners would use the content of the curriculum as the ‘carrier’ of this process competence and as the provider of opportunities for communicative experiences through which personal routes may be selected as a means to ultimate target competence (1980,2001:20).

In order for English to function according to the syllabuses for English, English as a school subject consequently needs to have a content dimension. However, the contents have to appear within the confines of a language-driven approach. Language teachers must therefore focus on both function and form. Theme-based instruction, in which “the language teachers ... assume responsibility for teaching the topic”, is to be found on the language-driven side of the continuum (Brinton et al. 1989:27).

In approaches where there is a shared emphasis on content and language, i.e. at the centre of the continuum, teachers “work collaboratively to ensure that students learn content and gain the language skills necessary for successful content learning” (Met 2000:138). While the content is the carrier and a means to learn a language in the language-driven approach, pupils also need to learn the content in an approach where there is a shared emphasis on both language and on content. Although teachers work collaboratively when utilizing this approach, their roles as language teachers and non-language teachers still persist.

2.3 Summary of resource findings

With regard to this investigation this literature review presents some key insights. The advantages of content and language integrated learning are increase of motivation and interest, a greater possibility for peer interaction, the potential of interdisciplinary studies and more exposure to a foreign language. The disadvantages of the approach are the lack of

formal qualifications and lack of teaching material (Nixon 2001). Whether or not SPRINT affects the Swedish language is ambiguous. According to Viberg, if the Swedish is well established in regard to speaking and writing, pupils' skills in the Swedish language is not affected (1997:15-6). Hägerfelth's study shows that many students were of the opinion that they had some loss of terminology when working with SPRINT (1992, cited in Falk 2001:21). Falk's research shows that pupils use English terminology when speaking Swedish (2000, cited in Falk 2001:21). Regarding the learning of subject matter, Knight's study shows that it is not affected when working with SPRINT (1987/1988, cited in Falk 2001:12). Viberg also concludes that subject matter is not affected as long as pupils' language skills have reached a certain level (1997:23).

When it comes to setting tasks for pupils in a SPRINT setting, it is important to take into consideration the variables presented in Cummins model (see figure 1), i.e. whether a task is context embedded or context reduced, but also the cognitive demands of the tasks (Cummins 1986). By using this model, it is possible to set tasks that fit pupils' needs in regard to their language skills and cognitive levels. Finally, in an approach where there is a shared emphasis on language and content, teachers work collaboratively to ensure that pupils learn both content and language.

3 Method

This dissertation can be seen as twofold. Firstly, a project was carried out in which the subject English was integrated into an already existing educational setting. This project can thus be seen as a vehicle for the forthcoming data collection. Secondly, data were gathered from interviews and questionnaires in regard to the project. Owing to the fact that this research could not have been conducted without the project, an extensive description of how it was carried out is included in this chapter.

3.1 Selection and informants

This research was conducted at a compulsory school that works along interdisciplinary lines and in addition wanted to take part in this research. Any other school would have worked just as well, but since I have several contacts at the school and find this teaching approach

interesting, I made the deliberate choice of selecting this school. Convenience sampling is the term Hatch uses when individuals participating in a research study are easy to access (2002:99). The strategy utilized for this research therefore fits well within this term.

In the selection of a grade in which to carry out the experiment, I had a discussion beforehand with a teacher at the target school. The class that we selected was an 8th grade, which consisted of eighteen girls and eighteen boys. The primary rationale for selecting this grade was because all the pupils were to work with a theme that would suit integration of English into the overall interdisciplinary work. The same pupils that participated in the experiment also answered a questionnaire.

In the sampling process of pupils for additional interviews, a teacher who knew the pupils well helped me. In regard to their performance in the English language, we selected four pupils with various skills in English, starting with a high achieving pupil and ending with a weaker pupil, they will henceforth be referred to as student A, B, C and D.

This dissertation is also based upon a focus group interview with four teachers. In this focus group, teachers who were involved in the experiment and represented different school subjects participated. By having all the teachers included in the interview at the same time, there was a greater possibility to get a discussion going which would touch upon relevant issues in regard to this research. Since one of the research questions concerns teachers' perceptions of the integration of English into an interdisciplinary setting, it is crucial to have teachers of various subjects represented.

Four teachers, here given fictitious names, participated in the focus group interview. Since this is not a gender study, they have all been given female names. Kristin, 33, teaches English, Swedish and Swedish as a second language and has been at the school for five years. Sara, 27, has been teaching Spanish, German and English for a total of three years, but only a couple of months at this school. Cecilia, 39, teaches math and science and has been at the school for approximately ten years. Kim, 40, teaches civics and has done that for twelve years at this school.

3.2 The project

Over a period of four weeks starting early September, the 8th graders commenced working on a theme called *Health*. Within this theme several subjects were represented, i.e. science, biology, Swedish and English. In the description concerning this area of study

(*arbetsområdesbeskrivning* in Swedish), the overall goals for the pupils were to “lära [sig] mer om hälsa genom att diskutera utifrån passande livskunskap och egna erfarenheter” and to “förstå hur [man] gör för att berätta hur kroppen är byggd och hur den fungerar”. In the subject English, during the first two weeks, pupils were working with exercises and assignments in regard to the theme, which functioned as pre-assignment activities to the forthcoming project. The aim of those activities was to alleviate potential language problems that might arise during the project, for example shortcomings in vocabulary. Although tasks in the English class were connected to the theme, language learning was still the primary learning objective.

For the remaining two weeks of this four-week period, pupils worked with subject matter through the medium of English. From then on, there was a shared emphasis on content and language. The predominant difference from the weeks before was that the subject English was removed from the schedule and henceforth used as the primary medium to convey and negotiate meaning, as well as to complete tasks. When pupils were working with tasks in regard to the theme, which claimed nearly 50 % of the time in school, it was carried out in English. In addition, instructions and teacher-pupil interaction was overall in English. Three tasks, which were directly related to the theme and the description of the area of study, were given to the students for this period:

1. For the first task, pupils were paired up and assigned a human organ, which they were to work with for a week by using PBL (Problem based learning) techniques. In brief, on a sheet of paper they wrote down what they knew about the topic, as well as interesting facts that they wanted to search for. Then they had to compile all the data and create a collage consisting of illustrations as well as facts. On the last of the same week, presentations of their findings were carried out. (see appendix 1)
2. The following week, the pupils had to redo and adapt their collage so that a fifth grade could understand the research they had carried out the week before. At the end of the week, all pupils presented their new collages to younger pupils at the school. Assessment concerned the pupils’ ability to adapt the English language so a younger pupil would be able to understand it.

3. The last task, which was carried out in parallel to task number two, was about performing a talk show consisting of an interviewer and an interviewee who had to represent a human body part. With the help of clues given throughout the show, the non-performing pupils had to guess which body part was being represented.

These tasks were designed by the four teachers who participated in the project and myself one week prior to the beginning of the project. The rationale for setting theme-based tasks was that the pupils always work with various themes, which function as a base for the interdisciplinary work. Since the overall theme during this project was *health*, the tasks were designed and set in regard to this theme.

Regarding my involvement, I took part in the planning process of the project, i.e. coming up with the idea of integrating English into the interdisciplinary work and designing tasks with regard to the theme. During the project, I followed the schedule of one of the teachers, Kristin, and consequently participated in the project to the same extent as the other teachers.

When the project finished, it was possible to start gathering the data, which this dissertation is based upon.

3.3 Data collection

For this research, I selected two methods for data collection: questionnaire and interviews. The pupils who participated in the project answered the questionnaire the last day of the experiment. The questionnaire touched upon pupils' views concerning the subject English, interdisciplinary work and integration of the subject English into the interdisciplinary work (see appendix 2). Johansson & Svedner state that a questionnaire is a very difficult method to use when doing research, because it has many weaknesses if it is not done correctly. Such weaknesses could be that questions are not expressed well or that a research question that is not posed well limit the use of the questionnaire (2006:30). Since the result from the questionnaire being used for this research did not provide enough data, the research had to be supplemented with interviews with four pupils as well (see appendix 3).

Apart from interviewing pupils in the experimental group, a formal focus group interview was conducted with the teachers that participated in the project. When using a focus group for a qualitative interview, "sets of individuals with similar characteristics or having shared

experiences” discuss a topic with the interviewer (Hatch 2002:24). This interviewing strategy “provides a different kind of information than can be generated from individual interviews”. Since the teachers involved in the project always work collaboratively and discuss matters together in regard to the interdisciplinary work, I wanted to take part in this group interaction, which I believe can “produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group” (ibid: 24).

The interviews with the teachers and the pupils were semistructured, i.e. I came to the interviews with guiding questions, and the willingness to digress from those if it would add aspects of interest in regard to the research (see appendix 4). The questions were designed according to Hatch’s recommendations. They contained neutral and familiar language and were open-ended (2002:106-7). The questions were designed in a way that would get informants to talk “about their experiences and understandings”, but also leave room for “moving along pathways that open during the interview” (ibid 102). For the interview with the teachers, there were five categories or typologies I focused on: positive and negative aspects, pupils’ language learning, suitable areas of study for integration of English and the role of the teacher. For the interview with the pupils, I focused on positive and negative aspects, and pupils’ language learning.

3.4 Procedure

Regarding the questionnaire for the pupils, it was not predominantly administered by myself. Three teachers that participated in the project helped me handing out the questionnaire as well as collecting them once they had been answered by the pupils. The pupils were informed beforehand that it was not compulsory to answer the questionnaire and that they had a choice to be anonymous.

A notification was sent home to all parents of the pupils who participated in the project and it had to be returned and signed by a parent or guardian before their child could be allowed to be interviewed (see appendix 5). From the signed agreements, I along with an English teacher who also administered the notifications selected four pupils to interview. The individual interviews took place in a separate area where we would not be interrupted by anyone. Beforehand, all pupils were informed about what I was going to ask them about and that I

with their permission would record the interview on a dictating machine. In addition to recording the interview, I wrote down their answers on a notepad.

The interview with the four teachers was carried out after school hours in a classroom. Before I started the interview with the focus group, I asked them to write down which subjects that they represented and for how long they had been working at the school. In addition, the teachers selected the names that are being used in the dissertation. As with the pupils, I recorded the interview and wrote down as much information as possible on a notepad.

3.5 Ethics

When conducting the interviews as well as the questionnaire, I made sure that the work was done according to the ethical aspects brought up by Johanson and Svedner. Accordingly, the informants were told what the research would be about and the purpose of it. They could ask any questions they wanted in regard to the research and choose whether or not they wanted to participate. The names of all informants have been changed in this text, and this was clearly stated in the questionnaire as well as when carrying out the interviews. Parents and guardians were told about the interviews beforehand and had to give their consent to their child's participation (Johanson and Svedner 2006:29-30).

3.6 Trustworthiness

Concerning the trustworthiness of this investigation, it is crucial to take a number of aspects into consideration, such as the educational setting and the project. Since the investigation is based upon a project in which the subject English was integrated into the interdisciplinary work at a school, this is what pupils and teachers relate their answers to. Consequently, the design of the tasks as well as the theme might have had an impact on teachers' perceptions and pupils' perceived views regarding the integration. If the pupils did not think that the theme or the tasks were interesting and relevant to them, there is a possibility that their answers regarding the integration of English reflect this opinion.

Although there are aspects that might have influenced the teachers' and students' answers, I still believe that this investigation is trustworthy within the confines of this educational setting, but not necessarily at other schools that do not implement interdisciplinary work on a

daily basis. Even though this investigation concerns a specific educational setting, it may however contribute to the overall research regarding content and integrated language learning.

4 Results

The aim of this research has been to gather data concerning teachers' perceptions regarding integration of English into an interdisciplinary setting and pupils' perceived views concerning working with subject matter through the medium of English. In this chapter, the results from the interviews and the questionnaire are presented.

4.1 Focus group interview with four teachers

Since the constellation of the teachers for this interview was diverse in terms of what subjects that were being represented, there is a need to shortly illuminate the differences between them. Two of the teachers, Kristin and Sara, represented language subjects, i.e. English, Swedish, Swedish as a second language, Spanish and German. The remaining two teachers, Kim and Cecilia, represented non-language subjects, i.e. civics, math and science. The results are here presented according to the typologies presented in the method section, i.e. positive and negative aspects, pupils' language learning, suitable areas of study for integration of English and the role of the teachers.

4.1.1 Positive aspects

According to the teachers, a major advantage of integrating English into an interdisciplinary setting is that it makes a good contribution to the existing educational setting as such and it is also a new approach to teach English. It is important to vary the teaching and pupils are in need of variation in the classroom.

Another positive aspect of this approach is that it gives the pupils the opportunity to interact with peers and teachers and discuss subject matter in English throughout the day and thus they do not have to restrict their English learning to just three classes a week. All the teachers were of the opinion that when the pupils are given the opportunity to use the English

language more than what they are used to, “it is quite logical”(Cecilia) that the pupils also improve their skills and proficiency in the English language.

4.1.2 Negative aspects

Although the teachers were very positive about integrating English, they also expressed some concerns and brought up some possible negative affects in regard to this approach. Firstly, the teachers stated that a significant disadvantage of this approach is that it is very time consuming to use the English language as the primary medium in the classroom. Since the pupils have not been studying English for many years, it consequently takes a considerable amount of time to work with subject matter in this less familiar language, in contrast to when the work is carried out in Swedish. In addition, since the pupils have to work with tasks in English, they may be less successful in regard to learning subject matter. Consequently, they do not have the ability to deal with the same content through the medium of English as they do in Swedish.

Secondly, depending on how much English that is integrated into the interdisciplinary work, the skills in Swedish may be affected negatively. According to the teachers, too much integration of English might result in shortcomings in Swedish, primarily when it comes to terminology. Thirdly, for weaker pupils of English in particular, it is very difficult to learn the content if they do not have the ability to understand what is being said. These pupils will therefore have problems with both language and subject matter, which would not happen to the same extent if the work is carried out in Swedish.

Finally, a major issue that arises when English is the medium to be used is the process of designing suitable tasks within the themes. It takes time to come up with tasks that would fit this approach to teaching and lots of ideas must be tried out before it is possible to get it to function well in the classroom. Cecilia, the math and science teacher, said that there seemed to be more focus on the language itself when English was integrated for the project, which is not the intention of this approach.

4.1.3 Pupils’ language learning

Regarding pupils’ language learning, the perceptions among the teachers were very much alike. They all agreed that when English is the medium used in the classroom, pupils get to

use the English language more than what they normally do, which consequently improve their skills and proficiency in the language. They interact with each other and with teachers in order to convey and negotiate meaning; they listen to, write and read more English. When pupils have the opportunity to work intensively with the language for a longer period of time, the teachers believe that the general belief that it is difficult to learn or acquire a language disappears as well.

According to the teachers, the pupils also learn English more easily when they do not perceive English as a separate subject. Instead they use the language as though it is one medium out of many that can be used in class. Evidently, when the pupils are forced to express themselves in English as well as to listen, they seem to know and understand a great deal of language, in comparison to what they are making use of in ordinary English classes. According to the teachers, the pupils seem to have a latent base of language skills, which presented itself when English was used as the primary medium in the interdisciplinary work. Therefore, when English is integrated, the pupils seem to use the language in a more natural way in order to convey meaning, which according to the teachers also enhances the pupils' skills in the language.

When the language is used in a context of interest, it also strengthens the pupils' English learning. It is crucial that the pupils are given the opportunity to work with subject matter that is relevant and absorbing to them. They develop and progress more if the work is carried out this way.

4.1.4 Suitable areas of study for integration of English

When it comes to the areas of study, in which it is suitable to integrate English into the interdisciplinary work, all the teachers were of the opinion that it is not suitable to integrate English when a great number of new terms are to be introduced. Cecilia, the math and science teacher, clearly stated that chemistry and physics should not be taught through the medium of English, primarily because it is important that the pupils understand the terms and concepts that are used in these fields. Kim, the civics teacher, suggested that it is suitable to integrate English when dealing with subject matter that is concrete, such as geography and home economics. The language teachers however were of the opinion that it is fairly easy to integrate English into the overall interdisciplinary work whenever, owing to the fact that any content can be used when teaching English.

4.1.5 The role of the teacher

Regarding the role of the teacher, the English teachers stated that they restrict themselves to focus on form, such as grammar and spelling, in order to make the pupils' texts clearer, while the teachers of the subject matter focus on content. Regarding speaking English with the pupils, it was illuminated during the interview that it is of vital importance that teachers should speak Swedish if they do not feel secure in using the English language; Cecilia was one of the teachers who clearly stated that she only interacts with the pupils in Swedish. The teachers clarified that since teamwork is utilized at the school, a language teacher is virtually always around and can help the pupils with language problems that arise.

4.2 Interviews with four pupils with varying English skills

The four pupils that were interviewed are in this section referred to as Student A, B, C and D, where Student A is a high achieving pupil in English and Student D is a weak pupil in English. Student B and C are average performing pupils. The results from the four interviews with the pupils are structured and presented according to the typologies mentioned in the previous chapter, i.e. positive and negative aspects, and pupils' language learning.

4.2.1 Positive aspects

According to Student A, a great advantage of integrating English is that the approach suits her language learning very well, in contrast to ordinary English classes. She said that when working with subject matter through the medium of English, the overall work is not as controlled as in the ordinary language classes and therefore she can choose what she believes is of importance to learn. Student B and C were also of the opinion that this approach was a great way to learn both English and content, but did not clearly explain why.

Another advantage of this approach was according to Student B that she was given more time to learn English, which as a result enabled her to improve the grade in the English subject. Student C and D also recognized this aspect. Student C said that when the English language was used as the primary medium in class, she could speak, read and listen to more English than otherwise and consequently improve the grade in the subject. Student D just

stated that integration of English had improved her English skills overall, primarily because she uses the language much more.

Both Student A and Student D highlighted that this approach to learn English is more fun than ordinary English classes. In addition, working with subject matter through the medium of English is according to Student A a great way to make the interdisciplinary work more interesting. Evidently, she finds it more enjoyable to speak and write in English than in Swedish.

4.2.2 Negative aspects

Student A illuminated several disadvantages of this approach to learn English. Firstly, a major problem is that she learnt the terminology in English during the project, but not in Swedish. This might be a problem in her future schooling, when she might be in need of the terms in Swedish. Secondly, she stated that it is difficult to learn grammar correctly, when there are no English classes that focus primarily on the language and the form of the language.

Both Student A and Student B expressed concerns regarding the weaker pupils' ability to deal with subject matter through the medium of English. Student A said that it is clearly more challenging for pupils who think that it is difficult to use the English language in general; since they have to work with the English language more than other pupils, it consequently takes longer time for them to learn the content. Student B stated that this is a significant disadvantage of the approach, since pupils who have insufficient language skills in English have problems to understand what is being said. Student D, who is weak in English, was of the opinion that this approach to learning English and subject matter is not good, primarily because it affected her overall performance negatively. She explained that since she has only been studying English for approximately one year, it is much easier for her to learn subject matter in Swedish. Also, owing to the fact that she sometimes has problems understanding words in Swedish, it made it even more difficult to deal with the same content in English.

Student C was negative to the amount of time English was integrated into the interdisciplinary work. She stated that although it is a great way to learn English and content, it is not a good idea to integrate English continuously. If there is no variety when learning English, it may eventually become boring and difficult to learn the language.

4.2.3 Pupils' language learning

When it comes to learning English, all the pupils agreed on that integration of English is a great approach to utilize in school. As mentioned earlier, Student A explained that it is not as controlled as the ordinary English classes, which makes it easier to learn English. According to Student B, she has the opportunity to speak more English than in ordinary English classes, which improves her skills in the language. In addition, when she listened to peers and teachers who spoke English during the experiment, she acquired the pronunciation of words unknown to her. Student C also stated that she improved her vocabulary and pronunciation during the experiment. In addition, when she was given the opportunity to write a great deal, she gradually improved her ability to write correctly in English.

According to Student D, working with subject matter in English does improve her skills in the language. However, she truly believes that she did not learn as much English, as she could have done in ordinary English classes, primarily because there were too many new unknown words introduced.

Student C also acknowledged the importance of contextualizing the language instead of having classes where the focus is primarily on the language. She believes that it is much easier to learn the language when the subject matter is relevant and interesting for the pupils and integration of English fulfill this need. Student A stated, as mentioned above, that it is difficult to learn grammar in particular, and therefore it is important to have classes where the focus is strictly on the language itself. It seems that there is not enough time to focus on grammar when English is integrated.

4.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was conducted the final day of the project and was answered by 34 pupils. The results are here also converted and presented in percent. For a complete overview of the questionnaire and the results, see appendices 2 and 6.

The views among the pupils regarding working with the theme *health* through the medium of English was in general very positive (see table 1).

Table 1: Presentation of the pupils answer to the question ”Hur har det varit att arbeta med en uppgift inom arbetsområdet ”hälsa” på enbart engelska?”.

Alternative:	Number of pupils:	Answers in percentage:
Mycket bra	24	71%
Bra	9	26%
Mindre bra	1	3%
Dåligt		
Mycket dåligt		
	Total: 34	Total: 100%

A majority of the pupils, 71% (24 pupils), were of the opinion that it was very good to work with a task in English within the theme *health*. Some pupils supplemented their answers with a comment; two pupils said that “you learn two things simultaneously” and that “it was fun to write a text in English, but it was a little bit trickier”; another pupil stated that working with English this way was more challenging. One pupil, i.e. 3 %, was of the opinion that it was not good and explained that it was difficult doing presentations in English, because of insufficient skills in the language.

Although 71% of the pupils were very positive about working with the theme health in English, the attitude towards having all English classes as part of the interdisciplinary work was not as positive (see table 2).

Table 2: Presentation of the pupils answer to the question ” Vad tycker du om att alla engelsklektioner blev en del av det egna arbetet?”.

Alternative:	Number of pupils:	Answers in percentage:
Mycket bra	15	48%
Bra	14	45%
Mindre bra	2	7%
Dåligt		
Mycket dåligt		
	Total: 31	Total: 100%

3 pupils did not answer this question.

Just two thirds of the pupils who utterly enjoyed working with tasks in English, thought that it was a great idea to include all English classes into the overall interdisciplinary work. 14

pupils, 45%, were of the opinion that it was good and 2 pupils, 7%, did not enjoy it. Some pupils expressed an opinion regarding the amount of time that English was integrated. A negative aspect was that “working with English all the time is way too challenging” and a positive one was that when they are given more time for the interdisciplinary work, it is not as stressful. Some pupils also expressed concerns that their skills in Swedish would deteriorate if the subject English was integrated all the time; a verbatim account of a comment from one pupil was that “[hon] skulle bli mycket bättre på engelska men [hon] skulle bli lite dåligare i svenska”.

Regarding the question if the pupils wanted to integrate English into the interdisciplinary work in the future, the results are comparable: 21 pupils, 60%, wanted to use English as the primary medium when working with subject matter and 14 pupils, 40%, did not want to do it again (the higher total number of pupils who answered this question is due to the fact that some pupils filled in both alternatives). Some of those who were not in favor of this approach explained that it is better to have specific English classes where the focus is on the English language. In regular classes, there is also more focus on grammar.

When it comes to language learning, the majority of the pupils stated that their English skills had improved (see table 3). 28 pupils, 88%, said that they had learnt a great deal, while 4 pupils, 12%, stated that they did not learn very much.

Table 3: Presentation of the pupils answer to the question ”Har du lärt dig någon engelska under dessa två veckor?”.

Alternative:	Number of pupils:	Answers in percentage:
Väldigt mycket	15	47%
Mycket	13	41%
Lite	3	9%
Väldigt lite	1	3%
Inget alls		
	Total: 32	Total: 100%

2 pupils did not answer this question.

One pupil commented saying that since she worked with English in a different way than what she normally did, it was more interesting and easier to learn. Several pupils also stated that they had learnt a great deal of new terms and concepts in English. In addition, one pupil

pointed out that if English is to be integrated in the future, there should still be a few English classes where the focus is strictly on the English language.

In regard to speaking, writing, reading and listening, 30 pupils, 94 %, the pupils had used the English language more during the experiment than in ordinary English classes.

5 Analysis and discussion

Clearly, integrating English into an educational setting that utilizes interdisciplinary work on a daily basis is an immense change for pupils and teachers, since it uses nearly 50% of the time in school. Instead of reading, listening, speaking and writing in Swedish as they normally would do, the work is carried out in English. In this chapter, the intention is to analyze the gathered data and discuss it with regard to previous research in this area of study. Some of the typologies are in this chapter merged together, primarily because the data can be sorted into more than one typology.

5.1 Positive aspects, negative aspects and pupils' language learning

The teachers were of the opinion that one positive aspect of integrating English is that pupils improve their skills and proficiency in English, since they are given the opportunity to use it a great deal. Owing to the fact that the pupils do not have to restrict their language learning to three classes a week, they can interact more in English with peers and teachers. Also the pupils acknowledge this aspect as very positive and gave similar reasons for their improvement in the language. They could speak, read and listen to more English than what they normally do. Some pupils emphasized that they have the opportunity to improve the grade in the subject English as well. The results from the questionnaire clearly state that the use of English is greater when integration of English is implemented. 30 pupils, 94%, were of the opinion that they had used English more in contrast to ordinary English classes.

Accordingly, when it comes to the prospects of improving the skills in the English language, both the teachers and the pupils are of the same opinion. This belief among teachers and pupils very much reinforces the results from previous research regarding pupils' enhancement in the language. For example, from a survey conducted at sixteen Finnish

vocational schools, the majority of the pupils believed that they had improved their skills in English (Viberg 1997:15-6). Although English is used as the primary language in school, there are many aspects that must be taken into account for effective language learning to take place. The pupils learned English when it was integrated but how much they learned in contrast to how much they would have learnt in an ordinary English class is not as apparent. For example, Student D proclaimed that she did learn English but she did not learn as much as she could have done. The results from the questionnaire also show that if English is to be integrated in the future, the pupils want to be given the opportunity to have ordinary English classes where the focus is strictly on language learning. It seems that the pupils' view of English concerns the formal aspects of the language and not that the language itself serves a function, in which content takes on the role as a "servant to the learning-teaching process ... and as the carrier ... and as the provider of opportunities for communicative experiences" (Breen & Candlin 1980, 2001:20). It is important to acknowledge that the form of the language and the function are two components that are very much interlinked.

Although there is a common belief that pupils improve their English skills since they have more time to use the language, the concept of time can be self-defeating as well. A negative aspect, illuminated by the teachers, is that it takes longer time in general to work through the medium of a less familiar language. For this reason, the pupils may also be less successful in regard to subject matter. In previous research, Viberg explains that the learning of subject matter is not affected as long as pupils' language skills have reached a certain language level (1997:23). Since this research has been conducted at a compulsory school level and most of the pupils have been studying English for approximately five years, one might wonder whether or not this level has been reached. Do pupils have the ability to work with the same content in English as in Swedish at this compulsory school? Clearly, as mentioned earlier, for some pupils the time aspect is a major issue. Although they have more time in contrast to what they normally would have, it is still too difficult to deal with subject matter in English.

Another positive aspect that primarily Student B and C pointed out is the opportunity this approach gives for simultaneous content and language learning. Nixon also pinpoints this as one of the beneficial aspects of this approach. As mentioned earlier, by integrating English into non-language subjects, pupils are exposed to the language more and given more time to learn subject matter (2001:230). Furthermore, student A and D clearly stated that learning English while working with subject matter is more fun than ordinary English classes. Furthermore, according to the questionnaire 24 pupils, 71%, utterly enjoyed working with the theme in English for the experiment. Although the pupils really liked working with subject

matter through the medium of English and felt that they learned a great deal, it is possible to argue whether or not the integration is beneficial for the overall progression in English as well as in subject matter. Is this approach to learn English and subject matter counterproductive when looking at the situation from a greater perspective?

The primary negative aspect of this approach is, according to the teachers as well as Student A and B, i.e. the two higher achieving pupils, the weaker pupils' ability to work with subject matter in English. The reasons the teachers and pupils give regarding this issue is comparable indeed. They state that it is too challenging, difficult and it takes longer time to learn the content in English. Student D, the weaker pupil in English, confirms that it is very challenging to use English as the primary medium in class. She clearly stated that this approach to learning the language affected her overall performance negatively during the project and that she rather would have preferred to do all the work in Swedish. The teachers also proclaimed that weaker pupils in English would not face these language problems to the same extent if the interdisciplinary work was carried out in Swedish.

The weaker pupils' ability to work with English as the primary medium is clearly one of the main aspects teachers have to take into account when designing tasks and selecting themes in which it is suitable to integrate English. There is a need among the teachers to question themselves whether or not the weaker pupils can deal with subject matter in English, but also if these pupils will learn and improve their skills in the other subjects besides English when it is implemented as the primary medium.

Another downside with this approach, which was highlighted among the teachers and pupils, is the impact on the Swedish language. According to the teachers, too much integration of English might result in shortcomings in the Swedish language, in particular concerning the understanding of concepts. This view is reinforced by the simple fact that Student A faced this problem after a mere two weeks. In the questionnaire a pupil supplemented her answer with similar concerns. She stated that "[hon] skulle bli mycket bättre på engelska men [hon] skulle bli lite dåligare i svenska". Interestingly enough, on one hand this comment expresses a possible negative effect of this approach, on the other it clearly exemplifies that this pupil as well as the teachers concerns are legitimate. For example, in this sentence the wrong comparative form of the adjective *dålig* [bad] is used, as well as the wrong preposition. In fact research has previously shown that the Swedish language is affected to some degree when English is integrated. Falk mentions Hägerfelth's study, which shows that half of the students from the research were of the opinion that the terminology in Swedish weakened (1992, cited in Falk 2001:21). Falk's research shows that

students use English terminology when speaking Swedish (2000, cited in Falk 2001:21). However, there have been studies conducted where the results show that there is no effect on the Swedish language. For example, Viberg states that the Swedish language is not affected if it is well established in regard to speaking and writing (1997:23).

When dealing with pupils that do not know how to write correctly in Swedish and taking into account that previous studies have shown that integration of English is best introduced once the pupils' own language is established, one might argue whether or not it is suitable to integrate English. In addition, when pupils acknowledge that their Swedish is affected and teachers express concerns regarding this issue, the whole idea of integrating English into an interdisciplinary setting is put in a not-so-promising light. Although the intention of this discussion and analysis is not to decide whether or not it is suitable to integrate English at this compulsory school, there is a need to illuminate some of the side effects that this approach brings along.

When it comes to the learning of English, the reasons given by the teachers regarding improvement in the English language tally very much with the pupils'. According to Student B, since she had the opportunity to speak more in class, her skills in English improved a great deal. The teachers stated that since the pupils interact with peers and teachers in order to negotiate and convey meaning, they consequently enhance the skills and proficiency in the language. Nixon also highlights this greater communication as one of the main beneficial aspect of this approach (2001:230). Clearly, when using English as the primary medium, pupils and teachers use the language in a different way than in ordinary classes. The pupils have to use the language to complete tasks within the interdisciplinary work and there is a shared emphasis on language and content. The general belief, as the teachers pointed out, that it is difficult to learn a language may disappear, primarily since the pupils do not perceive English as a subject, but instead as one medium out of many that can be used to carry out schoolwork. Consequently, the pupils are not aware that they learn English and they use the language in a more natural way.

5.2 Suitable areas of study for integration of English and the role of the teacher

Regarding areas of study in which it is suitable to integrate English, the views among the teachers are different indeed. Since the language teachers do not face any language problems

in class, they are of the opinion that English can be integrated at any time. The non-language teachers however believe that some subjects should be taught in Swedish. The language teachers can also use the language as a medium while working with subject matter in order to make the learning relevant and interesting. However, since this is an interdisciplinary setting, where the focus is on both subject matter and language, it is of vital importance to take into account that the pupils may not have the skills to deal with all themes in English.

Cecilia, the math and science teacher, acknowledged that there are subjects that should not be taught in English, such as chemistry and physics. The rationale for this comment was that it is important that pupils understand the terms and concepts utilized within these fields, which is challenging since a great number of new terms are introduced continuously. However, these subjects are very suitable to work with in English for two reasons. Firstly, tasks within the fields of chemistry and physics are context-embedded, i.e. they are concrete. Secondly, the terms and concepts utilized within these fields are internationally known, in contrast to the terminology used in civics, which is very much anchored in a culture. For example, English-speaking people would in general understand the terms atomic number and oxygen, but the meaning of the term social insurance office may not be that easy to talk about, since it requires that the interlocutor is familiar with the Swedish system.

Since a great number of new terms are introduced in these subjects, it is crucial that the language used by the teacher is familiar and easy for the pupils to comprehend. If a teacher does not feel secure in speaking English with the pupils, it may be immensely difficult to adapt the language in order to convey and negotiate meaning. Falk also clearly states that tasks within the science field that introduce new terms and new ways to think must be balanced against a familiar and easy language (2001:33).

Cecilia who stated that chemistry and physics are to be taught in Swedish is interestingly enough the teacher of these subjects. Also, during the interview, she said that she would not speak English to the pupils, since she did not feel secure in doing so. Is it possible to suggest that there is a connection between Cecilia's aversion to speaking English to the pupils and her view of which subjects that are and are not suitable to teach in English? When analyzing the weaker pupils in English, they are also of the opinion it is preferable to work Swedish. However, the language teachers state that English can be integrated into the interdisciplinary work at any time and the high achieving pupils in English are also very positive to this approach. Thus, is it reasonable to suspect that weaker pupils in English and non-language teachers tend to be somewhat negative towards working with subject matter through the

medium of English, while high achieving pupils in English and language teachers are of the opposite opinion.

The role of the English teachers is somewhat altered when English is integrated, since they have to work with subject matter that is not necessarily their area of expertise. According to the language teachers, although English is used as the primary medium in class, they still focus on the form, such as grammar, spelling and other linguistic features, while the content teachers focus on subject matter. Since all the teachers work collaboratively, the pupils have the opportunity to get help from either a language teacher or a content teacher at any time. For this reason, it is possible for the English teachers and the content teachers to focus on separate aspects of the pupils' work. If they do not utilize interdisciplinary work, this may not be the case.

Teachers also have a role as a pedagogue, meaning that even though the subject matter is not the language teachers' area of expertise, they can still help the pupils as a pedagogue with matters that arise in regard to the content. However, regarding the content teachers ability to help pupils with language problems, they can probably give them help, but not necessarily explain why the language is structured the way it is.

6 Conclusions

In this research, the intention has been to gain insights into teachers' perceptions regarding integration of English into an interdisciplinary setting and pupils' perceived views in regard to working with subject matter in English.

Regarding the teachers' perceptions to integration of English into an interdisciplinary setting, I can conclude that:

- The teachers think that integration of English is a great contribution to the overall interdisciplinary setting and that it gives the pupils an opportunity to immerse themselves in the English language for a longer period of time than otherwise, which consequently improves their skills in the language.
- Teachers also state that although integration of English enhances the pupils' skills in the language, it is also time-consuming and very challenging. In addition, weaker pupils in English may have problems to deal with subject matter in English. The impact on the Swedish language, primarily loss of terminology, is another concern when implementing this approach.
- Regarding areas of study in which it is suitable to integrate English, the teachers are of different opinions. While the language teachers believe that it can be integrated whenever, the non-language teachers think that English can only be used as the primary medium when working with subject matter that is concrete, except for physics and chemistry. According to the teachers themselves, the role of the teacher is not different from when interdisciplinary work is carried out in Swedish.

Concerning the pupils' perceived views in regard to working with subject matter in English, my conclusions are that:

- The pupils are of the opinion that this approach to learn English improves their skills in the language a great deal. However, some pupils mentioned that it might be difficult for weaker pupils to work through the medium of English and this was confirmed by a

weaker pupil in English, who thought it was difficult to carry out schoolwork in a foreign language.

- Some pupils thought that the integration of English affects the Swedish language negatively. The high achieving pupil confirmed this during the interview. She had only learnt terms in English, during the experiment, which might affect her future schooling when she might be in need of the words in Swedish.

Finally, when comparing the results from this research with studies conducted previously, there are similarities to be found; since there are similar findings, the results in this research very much reinforce the result from other studies regarding content and language integrated learning. However, the results show some discrepancies as well, primarily in regard to the areas of study in which it is suitable to integrate English.

Further research

This investigation has given some interesting results, but there are still questions to be answered regarding this approach to learn English. It would be interesting to explore how tasks can be designed in which the pupils' language skills and cognitive levels are taken into account. Is it possible to set one single task to all pupils when working with content and language integrated learning or is there a need to have different tasks for pupils with different competence in English? The role of the teacher is another interesting aspect that can be investigated further. How do teachers of subject matter perceive their role when working through the medium of English and to what extent can one expect that they speak with the pupils' in this less familiar language if they do not master it themselves? A third aspect concerns the integration of English as such. If pupils do not want to carry out schoolwork in English since it affects their overall performance with regard to learning of subject matter, is it then suitable to make the English language the primary medium in class? How do teachers find a balance between on one hand language learning and on the other learning of subject matter?

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Appendix 1

Anatomists in grade 8

Over the following two weeks, you and a friend of yours are going on a voyage of exploration into the human body.

Your task

You are going to create a collage, the size of an A3, about a human organ. An illustration of the organ as well as interesting facts ought to be on the collage. However, when it comes to designing the collage, you decide.

Each group will be given a hand-out about a human organ. Your task is to find interesting facts about this organ, such as:

- What is the shape, size and colour?
- What is its function?
- What parts does it consist of?
- Which diseases are specific for this organ?
- What happens to the organ and the rest of the body if it gets damaged?

Search on the Internet or in books, in order to find more facts.

When you have completed the collage, start practicing on your presentation. Remember, you may only use key words as support.

1. Search for interesting facts
2. Compile the facts
3. Think about how you want to design the collage
4. Illustrate (paint) the organ on a collage
5. Write down the facts
6. When you are done, start practicing on your presentation



Malmö Högskola
Läraryrket

Kön: Man / Kvinna (ringa in för könstillhörighet)

Besvara frågorna nedan genom att ringa in en siffra/svarsalternativ.

1. Hur viktigt är det för dig att kunna engelska vad gäller att:

	Mycket viktigt	Viktigt	Inte så viktigt	Oviktigt
Tala?	1	2	3	4
Skriva?	1	2	3	4
Läsa?	1	2	3	4
Lyssna?	1	2	3	4

2. Hur ofta talar, skriver, läser eller lyssnar du på engelska under din fritid?

Varje dag	1
Några gånger i veckan	2
1 gång i veckan	3
Mindre än 1 gång i veckan	4

3. Vad tycker du om engelska som ett ämne i skolan?

Mycket viktigt	1
Viktigt	2
Inte så viktigt	3
Oviktigt	4

Varför: _____

4. Hur mycket engelska skulle du vilja ha i skolan varje vecka?

3 lektioner är lagom	1
Mindre än 3 lektioner	2
Fler än 3 lektioner	3
All undervisning på engelska	4

5. Hur är det att arbeta ämnesintegrerat med olika arbetsområden/teman?

Mycket bra	1
Bra	2
Mindre bra	3
Dåligt	4
Mycket dåligt	5

Varför: _____

6. Har du arbetat på något annat sätt än ämnesintegrerat tidigare under din skoltid?

JA

NEJ

7. Om du svarat NEJ på fråga 6, fortsätt till fråga 8. Om du svarat JA på fråga 6, vilket sätt tycker du bäst om att arbeta på?

Ämnesintegrerat skolsätt	1
Annat skolsätt	2
Båda skolsätten	3

Vilka fördelar/nackdelar har det alternativ du valt: _____

8. Hur har det varit att arbeta med en uppgift inom arbetsområdet "Hälsa" på enbart engelska?

Mycket bra	1
Bra	2
Mindre bra	3
Dåligt	4
Mycket dåligt	5

Varför: _____

9. Vad tycker du om att alla engelsklektioner blev en del av det egna arbetet?

Mycket bra	1
Bra	2
Mindre bra	3
Dåligt	4
Mycket dåligt	5

Varför: _____

10. Har du lärt dig någon engelska under dessa två veckor?

Väldigt mycket	1
Mycket	2
Lite	3
Väldigt lite	4
Inget alls	5

Varför: _____

11. Har du talat, skrivit, läst eller lyssnat mer eller mindre engelska dessa två veckor än vid vanlig engelskundervisning?

MER

MINDRE

Varför: _____

12. Har du lärt dig något om det organ du arbetat med under dessa två veckor?

Väldigt mycket	1
Mycket	2
Lite	3
Väldigt lite	4
Inget alls	5

Varför: _____

**13. Kan du tänka dig att ha engelska som en del av det egna arbetet även i framtiden?
(d.v.s. att det inte finns några utsatta engelsklektioner på schemat, utan bara EA)**

JA

NEJ

Varför: _____

14. Vad gjorde du när du inte förstod språket i den engelska texten om ditt organ?

Jag frågade en lärare	1
Jag frågade en kompis	2
Jag använde en ordbok	3
Jag läste bara svenska texter	4
Annat: _____	5

Tack för din medverkan!

Dina svar kommer hjälpa mig mycket i mitt projekt. När jag läser igenom dina svar kanske jag hittar något intressant som jag vill fråga dig mer om. Därför skulle det vara snällt av dig om du vill skriva ditt namn på raden nedanför, så att jag vet vem du är. Givetvis kommer ingen annan än jag (Rickard) få reda på vad du svarat.

Namn

Appendix 3



Malmö Högskola
Lärarytbildningen

Intervjuguide för elever

Elevens namn:

1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____

Fingerat namn:

1) Student A 2) Student B 3) Student C 4) Student D

Frågor:

Categories/Typologies: pupils' language learning, pupils' learning of content, pros and cons

1. Hur skiljer det sig åt att lära sig engelska på detta sätt än vid "vanliga" engelsklektioner?
2. Var det svårare eller lättare att lära sig engelska genom att arbeta med ett innehåll som du annars skulle arbeta med på svenska?
3. Vad tycker du om att det är lika mycket fokus på engelska som innehåll när du lär dig?
4. Vad tycker du om att lära dig ett innehåll på engelska?
5. Hur ser du på din prestation gällande innehåll när du arbetade på engelska?
6. Vilka är för- resp. nackdelarna med detta arbetssätt?



Malmö Högskola
Läraryrket

Intervjuguide för lärare

Lärarens namn:

1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____

Fingerat namn:

1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____

Ålder:

1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____

Antal år på skolan/Arbetade år totalt:

1) _____/_____ 2) _____/_____ 3) _____/_____ 4) _____/_____

Ämnen

1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____

Frågor:

1. Vad hade ni för tankar om integration av engelskan innan det tillämpades i praktiken?
2. Vilka är de största skillnaderna mellan att arbetet utförs på engelska istället för på svenska enligt er?
3. Hur ser ni på att svenskan till stor del fränses i de arbetsområden som görs på engelska?
4. Vilka anser ni vara för- respektive nackdelarna med att integrera engelskan?
5. Hur verkar eleverna klara av engelskan när den integreras i det ämnesövergripande arbetet?

6. Hur ser ni på elevers utveckling av att tala, skriva, lyssna och läsa på engelska när engelska integreras i undervisningen?
7. Hur ser ni på elevers utveckling av förmågor inom andra ämnen när arbetet utförs på engelska?
8. Vilka anser ni vara för- respektive nackdelarna med att integrera engelskan ur ett lärarperspektiv?
9. Hur ser ni på engelsklärarens roll då innehållet i arbetsområdet inte nödvändigtvis är denne lärares expertis?
10. Hur ser ni som är engelsklärare på att innehållet i arbetsområdet styrs av andra skolämnen förutom engelskan?
11. Hur ser ni som inte är engelsklärare på att arbetet utförs på engelska som inte är ert huvudämne eller sidoämne?
12. Finns det enligt er några ämnesövergripande arbetsområden som lämpar sig för integration av engelska?

Appendix 5



Malmö Högskola Lärarytbildningen

Hej

Mitt namn är Rickard Hellstrand och jag går på lärarhögskolan i Malmö. För några veckor sedan arbetade jag tillsammans med årskurs 8, där er son/dotter går, med ett experiment inom ämnet engelska. Experimentet gick ut på att integrera engelskan i arbetsområdet "Hälsa". Detta experiment var en del av det examensarbete som jag nu skriver, vilket behandlar integration av engelskan i andra ämnen. Min tanke är att skriva om vad eleverna tycker om detta sätt att arbeta. Vad är deras tankar och funderingar kring att arbeta med skolämnen, såsom naturkunskap, samhällskunskap, idrott etc. på engelska?

Jag skulle uppskatta om ni tillät er son/dotter att medverka i detta arbete. Alla etiska åtgärder kommer självklart att vidtas om så görs; inga namn kommer att publiceras; materialet som jag använt vid dokumentationen kommer att förstöras när arbetet slutförts; enbart jag, Rickard, kommer att ta del av materialet.

Om ni har några frågor angående detta arbete får ni gärna kontakta mig:

Rickard Hellstrand
Tel: 040-788 59
Mob:070-671 31 90

Med vänliga hälsningar

Rickard Hellstrand

Klipps ut och lämnas till lärarna i arbetslaget för årskurs 8 **senast den 9/11-07**

Jag godkänner att _____ (namn på eleven) får medverka i denna undersökning.

Signatur (målsman)

Namnförtydligande (målsman)

Appendix 6

Resultat av enkätundersökning (34 elever svarade på enkäten)

1) Hur viktigt är det för dig att kunna engelska vad gäller:

	Mycket viktigt	Viktigt	Inte så viktigt	Oviktigt
Tala	29 elever (85%)	4 elever (12%)		1 elev (3%)
Skriva	13 elever (39%)	19 elever (58%)		1 elev (3%)
Läsa	20 elever (60%)	12 elever (36%)		1 elev (3%)
Lyssna	25 elever (76%)	7 elever (21%)	1 elev (3%)	

På alternativen "Skriva", "Läsa" och "Lyssna" svarade 33 elever.

2) Hur ofta talar, skriver, läser eller lyssnar du på engelska under din fritid?

Varje dag	Några ggr / vecka	1 gång / vecka	Mindre än 1 ggr/v
20 elever (59%)	8 elever (23%)	3 elever (9%)	3 elever (9%)

3) Vad tycker du om engelska som ett ämne i skolan?

Mycket viktigt	Viktigt	Inte så viktigt	Oviktigt
29 elever (85%)	5 elever (15%)		

4) Hur mycket engelska skulle du vilja ha i skolan varje vecka?

3 lektioner är lagom	Mindre än 3 lektioner	Fler än 3 lektioner	All undervisning på engelska
24 elever (71%)	2 elever (6%)	6 elever (18%)	2 elever (6%)

5) Hur är det att arbeta ämnesintegrerat med olika arbetsområden/teman?

Mkt bra	Bra	Mindre bra	Dåligt	Mkt dåligt
24 elever (71%)	9 elever (26%)		1 elev (3%)	

6) Har du arbetat på något annat sätt än ämnesintegrerat tidigare under din skoltid?

JA

NEJ

13 elever (41%)	19 elever (59%)
--------------------	--------------------

2 elever svarade inte på frågan.

7) Om du svarat JA på fråga 6, vilket sätt tycker du bäst om att arbeta på?

Ämnesintegrerat

Annat

Båda

11 elever (85%)		2 elever (15%)
-----------------	--	----------------

De 13 elever som svarade JA på fråga 6 svarade på denna fråga.

8) Hur har det varit att arbeta med en uppgift inom arbetsområdet "hälsa" på enbart engelska?

Mkt bra

Bra

Mindre bra

Dåligt

Mkt dåligt

24 elever (71%)	9 elever (26%)	1 elev (3%)		
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9) Vad tycker du om att alla engelsklektioner blev en del av det egna arbetet?

Mkt bra

Bra

Mindre bra

Dåligt

Mkt dåligt

15 elever (48%)	14 elever (45%)	2 elever (7%)		
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3 elever svarade inte på frågan.

10) Har du lärt dig någon engelska under dessa två veckor?

Väldigt mkt

Mycket

Lite

Väldigt lite

Inget alls

15 elever (47%)	13 elever (41%)	3 elever (9%)	1 elev (3%)	
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2 elever svarade inte på frågan.

11) Har du talat, skrivit, läst eller lyssnat mer eller mindre engelska dessa två veckor än vid vanlig engelskundervisning?

Mer

Mindre

30 elever (94%)	2 elever (6%)
--------------------	---------------

2 elever svarade inte på frågan.

12) Har du lärt dig något om det organ du arbetat med under dessa två veckor?

Väldigt mkt Mycket Lite Väldigt lite Inget alls

16 elever (50%)	14 elever (44%)	2 elever (6%)		
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2 elever svarade inte på frågan

**13) Kan du tänka dig att ha engelska som en del av det egna arbetat även i framtiden?
(d.v.s. att det inte finns några utsatta engelsklektioner på schemat, utan bara EA)**

JA NEJ

21 elever (60%)	14 elever (40%)
--------------------	--------------------

På denna fråga gavs 35 svar (1 elev fyllde i båda alternativen).

14) Vad gjorde du när du inte förstod språket i den engelska texten om ditt organ?

Frågade en lärare Frågade en kompis Använde en ordbok Läste bara svenska texter Annat

18 elever (29%)	11 elever (17%)	27 elever (43%)	3 elever (5%)	4 elever (6%)
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På denna fråga gavs 63 svar (ett flertal elever fyllde i flera alternativ).