



Faculty of Education  
and Society

## **Advanced Level Degree Project in English Studies and Education**

### **Multilingualism in a nutshell**

- *a study of pupil's and teacher's perceptions of multilingualism in Sweden*

### **Flerspråkighet i ett nötskal**

- *En studie om elever och lärares uppfattning om flerspråkighet i Sverige.*

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## **Forward**

This paper is a degree project that was written as a mandatory part of the teacher education program for the years K-3 at Malmö University in Sweden. This study explores multilingualism and the effects of language learning for children in year K-3. This Advanced Level Degree Project was carried out by Julia Ekberg Blackby and Adisa Velibasic and the work was equally distributed by the two. We would like to express our sincere gratitude towards the participants of this study and the supervisor, Chrysogonus Malilang, who helped make this study possible. Thank you!

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## **Abstract**

Due to globalization, diversity in the Swedish classrooms is common. This study sets out to examine the pupil's and teacher's perspectives of multilingualism in Sweden and how it affects English language learning. Although, a majority consider multilingualism to be an asset in language learning, many still believe that children mix the languages together and become confused. There seems to be no unanimous answer to whether or not multilingualism aids in learning an additional language. Therefore, this study aims to examine positive and negative effects of monolingualism and multilingualism in English language learning in Sweden. More specifically, the aim is to explore whether or not multilingualism aids pupil's in speaking English as a Foreign Language. The question "What effects does multilingualism have in Year 1 - 3 EFL students' speaking skill?" was formulated. The research for this qualitative study included interviews of six teachers and four pupil's, combined with observations of different classrooms in the south of Sweden. The results indicate that both pupil's and teachers view multilingualism as an advantage to language learning.

**Key words:** Multilingualism, Plurilingualism, EFL, speaking skills, teacher perspective, pupil perspective

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# 1. Introduction

This study concerns pupil's and teacher's beliefs regarding effects of multilingualism in English language learning when it comes to the skill of speaking English. In the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom there are different opinions and approaches regarding pupil's multilingualism.

During our study at Malmö University, we came to understand the use of different languages in the classroom. On one hand, it can be used as an asset to develop English. On the other hand, this phenomenon also promotes a culturally accepting environment. In our experience from teacher practice, most teachers in Sweden celebrate diversity in the classrooms and encourage pupil's to use their mother tongues. We have however also stumbled upon teachers and other school staff who do not allow other languages than Swedish to be spoken if not everyone around understands. Thus, there seems to be a discrepancy in standpoints. As future teachers in Sweden, we are curious to learn whether or not multilingual pupil's have advantages in acquiring an additional language. These pupil's are inevitable in the classroom and therefore, we are interested to learn about both pupil's and teachers views on how the number of languages pupil's know affect their acquisition of English as a foreign language.

Ganuza and Sayehli (2018) highlight the fact that Sweden is a multilingual society where approximately 150 different languages are spoken. Many children grow up with more than one mother tongue and most people living in Sweden learn a new language during their lifetime. Globally, multilingualism is a result of people, information and product moving more quickly across the world, according to Ganuza and Sayehli (2018). With immigration increasing, multilingualism is becoming more common, according to Cenoz, Hufeisen and Jessner (2001). They continue by giving an example: a pupil who speaks one language at home, speaks a second community language and is learning an additional third language in school, which is often English. Despite of this phenomenon being common, this area has not had a lot of attention in school contexts (Cenoz et al, 2001).

Historically, multilingualism has been seen as a disadvantage. Edwards (2004) states that for many years it was a common thought that pupil's who are bilingual or multilingual had an intellectual disadvantage and performed at a lower level at multiple tasks than monolinguals. The reasoning behind such thoughts could be that two languages took up double the amount

of space in the brain, which could make the space “cluttered” (Edwards, 2004). In the past, Baker (2001) states that it used to be a common thought by teachers, doctors, psychologists and other professionals that children should be raised monolingual, since bilingualism leads to problems such as mental confusion, identity conflict and even schizophrenia. Since 1960, the common belief about bilingualism has changed (Baker, 2001).

Conversely, others felt that multiple languages could be an advantage for pupils as they acquire more knowledge. According to Baker (2001) multilinguals are increasingly favored in many occupations due to their ability to communicate in multiple languages. Furthermore, Baker states that bilingualism does not hinder the acquisition of a third language. Edwards (2004) points to the fact that children who learn different skills within a language, still hold these skills in another language. For example, pupils who learn to read and write in French, do not only have reading and writing skills in French, they also develop skills related to literacy. The pupils are then able to transfer these skills to other language learning. Edwards also states that according to several psychologist’s bilinguals have a greater mental flexibility which helps them approach problems in different ways due to them mastering two symbolic systems (Edwards, 2004).

## **2. Purpose and Research Question**

The broad purpose of this study is to illustrate positive and negative effects of multilingualism in English language learning in Sweden. More specifically, we aim to explore whether or not multilingualism aids pupil's in speaking English as a foreign language.

### **2.1 Research Question:**

- What effects does **multilingualism** have in Year 1 - 3 **EFL** students' speaking **skill**, **according to some learners and teachers?**

### **3. Theoretical background**

This section will define and explain concepts and theories used in this study. Firstly, we define and explain key terms that are relevant for understanding this study, for example *multilingualism* and *EFL*. Furthermore, we explain why the terms are relevant for language learning. Secondly, we discuss current and prior research of multilingualism in schools. Finally, theoretical concepts underpinning our particular study are defined and unpacked.

#### **3.1 Multilingual Education**

Unlike bilingualism - where a person is fluent in two languages, multilingualism deals with more than two languages. In both concepts, however, there is also another factor at play (Baker, 2001). According to Baker, Bilingualism is not simply about two languages. Other factors like whether or not they are more fluent in one language or if they never use one of the languages play an important role. Baker differentiates bilingualism as an individual possession and two or more languages actively being used within a specific community or region. As an individual possession, one must look into the pupil's ability in both languages and in what extension the languages are used. Different abilities in the language in questions are listening, speaking, reading and writing. According to Baker it is very rare for bilinguals to have equally strong competence in two or more languages, since one language is always stronger. Cummins (2001) explains the term "additive bilingualism" as the result of when pupil's learn a new language, while proceeding to develop in their first language. Lundahl (2014) states that while multilingualism refers to multiple languages within a context, plurilingualism concerns the individual's ability to communicate in multiple languages. Lundahl continues by suggesting that plurilingualism allows individuals to draw upon a wide range of knowledge due to different languages supporting one another. Furthermore, Cummins (2001) argues that this has a benefit of providing pupil's with the opportunity to communicate with their family, to have an increased linguistic competence and to use all their languages as a resource. Although the concepts of multilingualism and plurilingualism are similar, both will be used in this study as a means to separate the multilingual context and the plurilingual individuals.

Cummins (2000) highlights the fact that there are approximately 150 studies carried out for the past 30 years that point to a positive relationship between bilingualism and pupil's academic growth. A common discovery in these studies is that plurilingual pupil's tend to



have increased metalinguistic ability (awareness of language) and that they have an advantage in learning an additional language, according to Cummins. Krashen (1982) states three factors related to successful language learning: including instructions, different exposures to new language and the age of the learner. Although these factors are important, Krashen disputes that the amount of comprehensible input the learner receives and understands is more significant.

Cummins (2001) points to the fact that although pupil's are not being punished for speaking their mother tongue in schools, which used to be common, they are often discouraged from speaking a language that is not understood by everyone in the school. Cummins argues that credible teachers know the value in building on the experience and knowledge that pupil's have. According to Cummins, pupil's who speak their mother tongue fluently are more likely to develop stronger abilities in the language spoken in school (Cummins, 2001). According to Okal (2014) multilingualism enables communication in multiple languages. Thus, anchoring and allowing multiple languages in the classroom creates an environment where communications is not restricted by one language. To avoid such a restriction of communication, Okal believes that teacher training should include foreign language learning and allow future teachers to learn how to incorporate other languages in the classroom.

### **3.2 EFL and Speaking Skills**

Language education for those who are learning English may be known as English as a foreign language (EFL). As explained by Krashen (1982), language learning does not necessarily rely on grammatical rules or repetition. Krashen continues by stating that language acquisition tends to be a slow process and speaking skills develop sooner than other skills. Krashen disputes that the best method of teaching language is to provide "comprehensible input", create comfortable environments and teach content that is interesting to the pupil's. Doing so, provides the pupil's with the opportunity to develop in their own pace and not feel pressured, according to Krashen.

Krashen (1982) also argues that people have two independent courses of action in acquiring a new language. The first, language acquisition, refers to a process where the learner is not usually aware of the language learning but is aware of the language being used for communication purposes. Krashen gives the example of a child learning their first language. The child often learns to communicate using the language, but does not necessarily develop

knowledge of rules within the language. Instead, the child develops a feeling of what sounds right. The second course of action in acquiring a new language is to consciously learn about the language and learning the rules, referred to as “Language learning” by Krashen. Krashen gives the example of learning grammar.

A common assumption is that young learners easily acquire a second language, according to Krashen (1982). Arnberg (2004) claims that other than the age, the number of already mastered languages also affect the result of the acquisition of a new language. According to Arnberg, several researches point to the fact that plurilingual pupil’s often learn a new language more efficiently compared to pupil’s who were raised with one language. Arnberg continues by stating that the first languages often aid in learning a new language, even if the pupil’s are not fluent in the first language.

### **3.3 Scaffolding**

It was Vygotsky (1978) who described a gap between actual knowledge and potential knowledge. This gap, called proximal development, was described as pupil’s ability to solve problems with the right assistance by Vygotsky. These thoughts laid the foundation to the concept of scaffolding. According to Gibbons (2014) the term scaffolding was first used by Wood, Bruner and Ross in 1976 in a study of children in their early years. The term itself borrows the reference to a temporary structure that is constructed in the process of constructing or repairing a building. As the building progresses the scaffold is taken down step by step. Despite scaffold’s temporary nature, it’s importance is inevitable for the construction of the building. Like the purpose of a scaffold on a construction site, Gibbons describes the pupil’s need of the teacher’s assistance which gradually fades as the pupil learns to carry out tasks individually. Hitt and Smith (2017) discovered during a case study that pupil’s often had difficulties learning due to the amount of information given, which led to them having to sift through the information. As the teacher in question began using Scaffolding, the pupil’s found it easier to pinpoint the relevant information, according to Hitt and Smith. The teacher realized for the scaffolding to work the teacher had to give the pupil’s the right kind of assistance, such as reducing the pace of the lesson, including fewer concepts and giving the pupil’s time and opportunities to understand these concepts (Hitt & Smith, 2017).

Gibbons (2014) adds that scaffolding does not simply mean to help a pupil, but to assist learners in moving towards a new skill, concept or levels of understanding. Thus, this theoretical concept is future oriented and formative. One of scaffoldings main concepts is to treat people as what they could become, not the people they currently are. This concept can be translated to EFL learning: treating pupil's according to potential development with the right assistance, not focusing on current knowledge (Gibbons, 2014). Similarly, Björklund, Björklund and Sjöholm (2013) describe the socio-constructivist view of language learning as a process where teachers adjust the kind of support to what the different individuals actually need. Thus, the support is shaped towards the pupil's different paths (Björklund et al, 2013).

### **3.4 Curriculum**

The Swedish *Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre* (2018) states an overall goal and guideline: "Through teaching, pupil's should be given the opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills". The English subject should basically give pupil's the opportunity to develop their ability to express themselves and communicate in speech and writing. When it comes to the skill of speaking, the Swedish syllabus for English points to the importance of spoken language and texts which can be related to the pupil's own experience, living conditions and interests. Although the official curriculum does not have knowledge requirements in the subject of English until grade 6, grade K-3 pupil's teachers still have aims and core content with which they should work with. According to the core content for *speaking, writing and discussing - production and interaction*, pupil's should be given the opportunity to create simple presentations, simple descriptions and messages and songs, rhymes and dramatizations (Skolverket, 2018). The English language seems to be particularly important as it is spoken around the world. Therefore, pupil's who learn the English language might have better opportunities to be part of social and cultural contexts, and it might also increase the chances of being part of international education and work, according to the Curriculum.

## **4. Methods**

The following section explains the methodological process of this qualitative study. Firstly, interview and observation participants are stated. Secondly, the procedures are accounted for. Thirdly, materials used to obtain information are listed. Finally, the ethical considerations taken are covered.

### **4.1 Participants**

In this study, four primary school pupil's (table 1 in appendices) and six teachers (table 2 in appendices) were chosen as participants for interviews, all of whom agreed to take part in this study voluntarily. Henceforth, the pupil's and the teacher have been given inaccurate names for the sake of their anonymity (table 1 & 2 in appendices). The choice of participants was made considering the pupil's background. Since the research question concerns plurilingual pupil's acquisition of EFL, we have chosen to interview children with such backgrounds. The pupil's mother tongue was taken into consideration as it was suspected that different languages affected the acquisition of EFL differently. In order to acquire results as accurate as possible, pupil's with specific and similar first languages were selected. Therefore, a choice was made of conducting interviews with pupil's who have an Arabic background. An additional screening of participants was made due to the amount of English language learning the pupil's had experienced. The Swedish curriculum does not have knowledge requirements until grade 6, but pupil's start working with English in grade 2-3. Therefore, pupil's in grade year 2-3 were selected as they might have a better understanding of learning EFL. The participating teachers were selected due to the fact that they teach EFL in primary school.

The qualitative interviews and observations were conducted in different schools and counties in South Sweden to ensure that one specific district is not targeted unintentionally. In doing so, the obtained information might result in a more clasp picture of the situation in Sweden. These contacts were made through e-mail or physical contact at the schools. Connections were made both through teacher practices and work.

### **4.2 Procedures**

According to Mackey and Gass (2005), qualitative research aims to study individuals in their natural habitat and often focuses on only a few participants. Moreover, qualitative studies tend to initiate by a carefully planned out research question, Mackey and Gass continue. Although, the research questions are planned out carefully, qualitative researchers tend to allow the situation to determine the outcome and the development of new questions. Mackey

and Gass highlight ethnographies, interviews, diaries, case studies and observations as some of the most common qualitative data collection methods. These qualitative methods are typically used in order to acquire better understanding of the participant's perspectives (Mackey and Gass, 2005). Bryman (2011) describes qualitative methods as methods where the researcher engages in the specific social environment that is studied. One can, for example, be a part and study the participant during his or her work-day. A lot of information that is beneficial for the study can be collected during conversations with the informant or other people that are a part of the participant's everyday life (Bryman, 2011).

It appears that there are several advantages and disadvantages with the qualitative method. One advantage, according to Mackey and Gass (2005), is being able to revise and refine the research question as the study progresses and more knowledge is acquired. In contrast, Mackey and Gass state potential difficulties in remaining an observer and not a participant during observations. In order to avoid such difficulties, Mackey and Gass advocate using triangulation. As explained by Mackey and Gass, triangulation involves using different research methods in order to collect information from different perspectives. Although there are several types of triangulation, a common type is the methodological triangulation, which refers to the use of different research methods to study a particular topic. An example is using interviews, observations and theories to conduct a study accordingly, Mackey and Gass states. Using triangulation increases accuracy since one method alone does not provide adequate evidence. Thus, the research becomes more trustworthy (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Mackey and Gass continue by arguing that using this technique aids in credibility, transferability and confirmability. To enhance the credibility, one could collect data over a long period of time in order for the pupil's to act naturally around you, Mackey and Gass state. Furthermore, they explain how a researcher can argument the transferability by providing enough detail to readers, allowing them to compare the research with their own. Mackey and Gass also express the importance for confirmability, which refers to the researchers providing full details of their collected data, allowing the audience to investigate the data and either verify or discard the researcher's interpretations.

#### **4.3 Implementation of the method**

This study was conducted with qualitative methods in form of interviews and observations with teachers and pupil's. Since the pupil's and teacher's perspectives of multilingualism is analyzed and compared in this study, interviews and observations appeared to be suitable

methods as the researchers are taking part in the pupil's everyday life. According to Mackey and Gass (2005), advantages of interviews are that researchers get a chance to obtain information that is not observable, for example perceptions and attitudes. However, there are also disadvantages. Mackey and Gass point to a dilemma in interviewers picking up cues on what the researchers attitude towards the topic is and changing their response. Therefore, an interview checklist was created with the intention of mentioning some key points and not let the talking digress overmuch.

Initially, different schools and teachers were contacted via email or phone calls with a request to conduct interviews and observations in their classrooms. The teachers were also asked to be participants in interviews, and choose pupil's with a suitable background to also take part in the interviews. When the teachers agreed, observations were first conducted in the classrooms in order to get a clearer picture of the situation, and also get some insight into what questions to ask during the interviews. Thus far, the teachers had agreed to being interviewed and chosen pupil's who would participate. Primarily, the chosen pupil's were asked if they wanted to partake in these interviews and if so, they were handed a consent form. The consent form was to be signed both by the pupil's and their guardians and handed in to the researchers before the interviews were conducted. Since the teachers already gave us their consent in person, those interviews were conducted the same day as the observation. On a later day, the consent forms were handed in and the interviews with the pupil's began.

Mackey and Gass (2005) suggest a few tips for interviewers to take into account. Firstly, an interviewer should be sensitive to who the interviewee is, for example the age and cultural background. Secondly, an interviewer should encourage open-ended discussion, by for example remaining silent or asking follow-up questions. Thirdly, the interviewee should feel as comfortable as possible. Fourthly, the interviewer can repeat the responses to provide a chance for both interviewer and interviewee to reflect or as a mean to confirm what is being said (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Such measures were taken. The questions were altered for each interviewee. For example, teachers and pupil's received the same questions, but the pupil's questions were adapted to their level of understanding. Other measures were to remain silent as the participants were speaking and asking follow-up questions. Asking the pupil's about their day, interests and school-work helped lighten the atmosphere. Additionally, conducting the interviews in their schools beside their classroom seemed to aid in them feeling comfortable.

#### **4.4 Research Instruments**

According to Mackey and Gass (2005), the data in a qualitative observation is often collected with field notes. However, in highly structured observations, a detailed checklist is often utilized (Mackey and Gass, 2005). Therefore, observations in the classrooms were conducted in schools and classrooms where the observer was a familiar face due to prior interaction. As a result of this decision, pupil's appeared to not be affected by the presence of an observer. Initially, field notes were the only planned course of action, but it quickly became obvious that our field notes were difficult to compare as they were a summary of what the researchers perceived in the classroom. Therefore, observation checklists were decided upon to increase objectivity. According to Mackey and Gass (2005), an initial step to having an observation checklist is to closely consider the goal of the study. Although it is unlikely to capture all possibly relevant categories of a classroom in one checklist, having one aids in the comparisons of different classrooms. A checklist (See table 5 in appendices) that aids in taking note of pupil and teacher behaviors was created.

Mackey and Gass (2005) describe semi-structured interviews as suitable for those who wish to have some sort of guide for questions, yet maintaining a free atmosphere where the researchers have the possibility to probe for more information. Since this study partly relies on the perspectives of pupil's and teachers, semi-structured interviews seemed to be a relevant and less rigid method. Subsequently, research questions were created for this study in the form of an interview checklist (See table 4 in appendices). As a result, the conversation did not digress overmuch. Although, English was the primary language for this study, Swedish was used during the interviews in order for the pupil's to be able to give as nuanced answers as possible.

As explained by Mackey and Gass (2005), it is vital to obtain the consent of all participants. In the case of the participants being children, consent has to be given by the guardians as well. In order to do so, a consent form was created where the researchers were introduced, the study and what it entails was explained, and both pupil's and guardians were asked to sign (See form in appendices, nr. 3). It was conveyed both orally and in writing that the participants could choose to not partake or stop the interview at any time. Doing so, would mean that the interview is stopped and nothing more is required. Mackey and Gass also point to the importance of assuring the participants that the collected material will not be utilized if

the participant expresses that he/she does not want to partake. Since this study is classroom-based, consent has to be obtained from all pupil's, teachers and school administrators (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

#### **4.5 Ethical Considerations:**

As instructed by Swedish Research Council (2002), this study follows the four main demands of conducting research: the information demand, the consent demand, the confidentiality demand and the usage demand. The first demand, the information demand, conveys the importance of giving the participants information regarding the details and aim of the research. The second demand, the consent demand, states that all participants have the right to determine their participation. The participants are also to be informed that participation is voluntarily and that they have the right to disrupt the interview. In accordance with the third demand, the confidentiality demand, all participants remained anonymous and the collected data was documented accordingly so that unauthorized individuals cannot gain access. The fourth and final demand, the usage demand, highlights the fact that data from the participants is only to be used in research purposes (Swedish Research Council, 2002). This demand was also met. These demands were conveyed both before the interviews and in writing in the consent form (See appendices, nr. 3).



## 5. Result and Discussion

This section presents, describes and discusses the collected data from interviews with teachers, pupil's and observations. The data is also put in relation to previous research, steering documents and the theory of scaffolding. Since some of the data comes from interviews conducted in Swedish, transcription and translation to English was made by the researchers. The purpose of this study was to explore whether or not multilingualism aids pupil's in speaking English as a foreign language in Sweden. Teachers and pupils were asked to describe their opinions and views regarding the subject. The collected data was also put in relation to the research question:

- What effects does **multilingualism** have in Year 1 - 3 **EFL** students' speaking **skill**, **according to some learners and teachers?**

The first section illustrates the interviewed pupil's thoughts and opinions regarding multilingualism. The second section presents the perceptions of interviewed teachers in regards to multilingualism. The third and final section demonstrates discussions of the results.

### 5.1 Pupil's perspectives of Multilingualism

When asked about the feeling of learning a new language, all interviewed pupil's seemed to have a positive outlook. Ajdina, Irma and Tahu expressed that although it might be difficult at times, learning a new language feels good and exciting. Tahu shared her love of singing in English. Zeid however conveyed that he does not find learning a new language difficult, but agrees that it feels good and that he enjoys it.

The pupil's were also asked if they use their plurilingualism in different situations with the aim of translating certain words or sentences. Sarah told the interviewee that her Arabic and Swedish helps her learn English, since she is able to ask what something means or how to say it in more than one language. This allows her to ask both her parents and teachers at school how to translate words to English. Ajdina also expressed benefits of being able to translate to multiple languages. However, she felt that her Swedish aided her more than her Arabic due to its dissimilarity to English. In accordance, Zeid explained that Swedish is more similar to English and gives the example of "Apple", which is "Äpple" in Swedish. According to Sarah, her plurilingualism is easily utilized when she does not understand the teacher's instructions

in English. Then the teachers can explain in Swedish as well and Sarah understands and now has learned how to say it in English too.

Although the pupil's were not specifically asked about how they use their plurilingualism in social environments, some of them referred to the social aspects. For example, Sarah expressed that she likes learning new languages, but enjoys being able to utilize the ones she already knows as well. When asked to elaborate, she stated that she is then able to aid other Arabic pupil's who do not understand by translating English information to Arabic. On another note, Zeid expressed that he and his brother learned English by playing games where English was spoken. Zeid's older brother spoke English with his game friends and Zeid learned to do so as well by asking what they were saying. The brother then translated to Arabic, which led to Zeid developing English language skills.

Thus, some pupil's unknowingly explained how their Arabic helped them learn English. But, when asked directly if their Arabic was useful in learning EFL, they seemed hesitant. Zeid expressed that he believed that his Arabic was helpful, but also stated that it was very different from English. As stated previously, Zeid gave the example of "Apple", which is "Äpple" in Swedish, to show similarities between Swedish and English. He then used the same example of "Apple", which is "Tafaha" in Arabic, to show dissimilarities between Arabic and English. Tahu also explained that when she is uncertain of a word in English, she uses her Arabic to ask friends or family for help. In addition, Irma mentioned that it feels easier to add English since she already has two other languages.

## **5.2 Teachers perspectives of Multilingualism**

When asked about their feelings towards multilingualism, all interviewed teachers seemed to have a positive outlook. Daniella expressed that she found it great and that pupil's would benefit from mastering multiple languages in the future. Similarly, Ajla and Anna mentioned that knowing multiple languages from the beginning enables pupil's to learn new languages more easily since these plurilingual pupil's are used to juggling several languages. When asked if there are any negative aspects of knowing multiple languages, Ajla conveyed that there are none and that she believes that it's always an advantage, for example for work or travel opportunities. Research shows that there are several advantages to being multilingual, according to Therese. Selma communicated another advantage of multilingualism, knowing one's mother tongue and being able to connect it to Swedish and English is a safety-net for

pupil's, which is good for the pupil's self-esteem. According to Anna, multilingual pupil's tend to be more fearless in regards to actually trying, since they are constantly trying to translate from their mother tongue to Swedish. They are used to challenging themselves and trying several times. Anna also highlights that many point to a problem in pupil's becoming confused and mixing the languages, but that she does not believe it. In teaching for several years, Anna has noticed that monolinguals tend to be more careful in acquiring a new language as they are not used to using multiple languages. However, Gunilla has another viewpoint. Gunilla expresses that she does not notice a difference between plurilingual and monolingual pupil's in acquiring a new language. She continues by explaining that the underlying reason for their success in learning a new language has little to do with the pupil's background, and a lot to do with their attitude towards school, their motivation and their results in other subjects.

Some teachers gave the indication that the pupil's plurilingualism is especially interesting in regards to their geographical standpoint. Daniella points to the fact that the south of Sweden is very multicultural and in result holds many languages. Thus, pupil's are prone to learn more languages and the knowledge is necessary, according to Daniella. In accordance, Ajla expresses positive thoughts towards plurilingualism and adds that it has become the norm in the school where she teaches as the majority of her pupil's speak one language at home, one language in school and are about to learn English. This fact points to the fact that the demographic in different schools is different. Anna states that all of her pupil's are plurilingual. In contrast, Therese expresses that she only has one pupil that is plurilingual. Daniella, Ajla and Anna work in different school in central Malmö (Sweden). Therese works in a school that is located in the outskirts of Malmö.

When asked about the importance of the first language, Daniella conveyed that she believes that plurilingual pupil's have an advantage when learning an additional language. However, she states that the benefits of the first languages only work if the pupil's are fluent or very strong in them. Daniella explains that many pupil's in her class are not fluent in their mother tongue, nor do they speak Swedish fluently. She draws the conclusion that it is difficult for them to draw connections and translate to English if they do not feel secure in the first languages. Ajla agrees by expressing that having strong knowledge of the mother tongue and Swedish allows pupil's to take in the English easier. She gives the example of newly arrived pupil's who have difficulties learning English in Sweden, when they are not able to use their

Swedish as support. In addition, both teachers express that it is easier to develop speaking skills, than writing skills if the first languages are not fluent. Selma expresses that she has noticed that pupil's who are fluent in their mother tongue, more easily make connections between that language and English. She continues by saying that she finds it logical that pupil's have more use of their first language if they have mastered it. If there is a fundamental language, which the pupil can use as a starting point, they are less likely to mix all of the languages together and not be able to use any of them fully, according to Selma. Gunilla also conveys that in order to learn a new language, one has to have all-out knowledge of the first language to act as a foundation for further language learning. Anna expresses similar thoughts and adds that even though pupil's with tenuous first languages sometimes are able to learn new languages, the knowledge is not nuanced. She gives the example: pupil's are able to express if they are happy or mad, but not if they are embarrassed. In contrast, Therese describes that she has difficulties finding a correlation between the first language and the foreign language being learnt, unless they are from similar families of language.

When asked about if it is a possibility for learners to be too young for multiple languages, Anna conveyed that she believes that it is more difficult for people to learn a new language the older they get since they are more courageous and open to new things when they are young. Daniella agreed by saying that it is beneficial for pupil's to learn many languages at an early age. Ajla expresses that she finds it very positive to learn several languages at a young age and points to the fact that English is very useful in today's society, which has not always been. Now pupil's hear English earlier in for example games, movies and YouTube-videos. Ajla refers to her own education and states that she first met English in fourth grade and that it was like a completely new world for her. She mentions how her English initially was very flawed and vocabulary was minimal, but pupil's come to school with different prerequisites today. Selma also expresses a positive view of learning multiple languages at an early age and reflects about the fact that the more languages pupil's learn, the more used to their brains become to that form of learning. Conversely, Gunilla states that she is skeptical towards learning too many languages at a young age. She expresses that her previous pupil's who learned English in fourth grade, are better at spelling in Swedish today. Thus, she conveys that she believes that pupil's who learn English too soon are at risk to not learn their mother tongue completely. According to Gunilla, the pupil's find it difficult to separate the languages. She also pinpoints that the pupil's spelling today is a lot weaker than for a few generations ago, but that the English is better today.

Continuing on the motion that the first language aids in learning multiple languages, the researchers asked if it matters which the first language is. Daniella expresses that she does not believe that different languages affect the outcome differently. However, she also expresses that there are not many different languages in her classroom which might influence her opinion. Selma agrees that pupil's whose first languages are different are not affected differently when acquiring a new language. She does, however, express that if the first language is very similar to English, the pupil's are prone to pick up the English language quicker and more effectively. Anna also expresses a belief that different first languages do not affect pupil's differently and that what matters is that pupil's have courage to try and explore the new language. She does however address that some languages have a different alphabet than the English language, which can slow down pupil's who are not used to it. On a different note, Gunilla conveys that pupil's are more so affected by what they bring from home, their attitudes towards learning and school in general than the primary language. If you want to, you can do it. It's only a matter of mindset, Gunilla argues.

When asked about if there is a difference in EFL learning for pupil's whose first languages are different, one teacher stated that the backgrounds of the pupil's sometimes affect the way they pronounce. Ajla mentioned that the melody or other characteristics of the first language affect how the language being learnt are going to be pronounced. This, however, she related more to newly arrived pupil's. She continues by explaining that if pupil's are fluent in their mother tongue and speak Swedish fluently, one is less likely to hear a difference in pronunciation due to them having a less strong accent.

One out of the interviewed teachers conveyed that plurilingual pupil's had some social benefits due to their languages. Anna expressed that there is a great benefit in the classroom to have pupil's who speak the same language as newly arrived pupil's. Not only do the newly arrived pupil's have a chance to make themselves understood, but the pupil's helping have an opportunity to practice their mother tongue and to practice translating to both Swedish and English. Another advantage is that the newly arrived pupil's make friends more quickly and the pupil's who are helping get to be social and practice their speaking skills. Anna expresses that English education in primary school is often based on what the teacher feels is appropriate. What Anna finds appropriate is not focusing on glossary, and more so focusing

on developing pupil's courage to use the language, which also leads to better speaking skills, according to Anna.

### 5.3 Observations

During Wednesday, 6/2-2019, the first observation was conducted in a school in the outskirt of Malmo, Sweden. The observers followed a previously mentioned teacher, Gunilla, and her English lesson in school year 2. Gunilla initiates her English lesson by speaking English and asking the pupil's how their living rooms look and what furniture is there. Gunilla uses English to give instructions, but switches to Swedish occasionally. The pupil's were given handouts where they had to find words such as *carpet* and *coffee table*. The pupil's were seemingly enjoying the assignment. They had different strategies in finishing the handout. Some pupil's were able to finish it quickly and others took their time. One pupil translated every word in the handout to Swedish first. There was also a Swedish translation to key words at the end of the handout. There was no definite end to the lesson.

*The following checklist was completed during the observation:*

Teacher speaks in another language than English (Swedish)	
Pupil uses other language than English	
Pupil ask how to say something in English in another language	
Pupil's are given the chance to speak in English (Teacher asks them something in English)	
Pupil does not understand English instructions	Instructions are in both in English and in Swedish.

As portrayed by the checklist, Swedish was used at several occasions by the teacher. The pupil's only spoke English in the beginning of the lesson when Gunilla asked about their living rooms. For the rest of the lesson they spoke Swedish amongst each other. One newly arrived pupil hade difficulties finishing the handout since much of the lesson was conducted in Swedish.

During Tuesday, 5/3-2019, the second observation was conducted in a school in central Malmo, Sweden. The observers followed a previously mentioned teacher, Selma, and her

English lesson in school year 3. Selma starts the English lesson by switching to the English language. She describes what they are going to work with. One pupil turns to another pupil and whispers “Oh, we are supposed to speak English now”. Selma gives instructions in English and continues by giving the pupil’s some handouts. The pupil’s are not given the chance to speak English. The hand-out is a collection of tasks, for example “draw a pink flower” or “draw a line between word and picture”. Whilst the pupil’s work with the handout, the teacher goes around helping pupil’s who do not understand. Selma continues to speak English when helping as well. If the pupil’s still do not understand, Swedish is used. Some of the pupil’s chit chat in English. Others start speaking in Swedish and are reminded by their classmates to speak English. One Arabic pupil is uncertain of what a “skirt” is and asks the teacher. Selma asks another Arabic pupil what it is called in Arabic and then informs the first pupil, who then understands what a “skirt” is. Another pupil asks his classmate what a dress is, and the classmate responds in their mother tongue. Although difficult to see as an observer, a majority of the pupil’s in the classroom seem to be plurilingual due to the fact that they are using multiple languages. When pupil’s ask Selma questions in Swedish, Selma pretends to not understand and asks them to try to say it in English.

*The following checklist was completed during the observation:*

Teacher speaks in another language than English (Swedish)	
Pupil uses other language than English	
Pupil ask how to say something in English in another language	
Pupil’s are given the chance to speak in English (Teacher asks them something in English)	
Pupil does not understand English instructions	

As shown in the checklist, Swedish was used a few times by the teacher. The pupil’s were not given opportunities to speak English aloud in front of the class, but did so anyway while chit chatting amongst each other. They did also use both Swedish and other languages, such as Arabic, to explain and translate different words and tasks in the handout. All instructions were in English, but Selma was quick to help those who did not understand the instructions written in the handout.

During Friday, 8/3-2019, the third observation was conducted in another school in central Malmo, Sweden. The observers followed a previously mentioned teacher, Ajla, and her English lesson in school year 2. Ajla starts the English lesson by initially using both Swedish and English since it is the pupil's first lesson and she greets them in Swedish. This lesson is about different foods. Ajla asks the pupil's about what foods they like. Some of the pupil's are able to answer in English and mention foods, such as hot dogs or hamburgers. Other pupil's state their favorite food in Swedish, and are helped by their classmates to translate to English. Ajla continuously reminds the pupil's about the importance of showing each other support and not laughing at one another. One pupil asks "How do you say korv (hot dogs) in English?" and the teacher responds in English. Subsequently, the pupil's are given another task. Ajla handouts different cards with words and pictures that lead to one another, for example "I have an apple, but I want a banana. Who has a banana?". The pupil's who has a card with a picture of a banana responds and it continues until everyone has had the chance to speak. A big part of the lesson is the teacher asking questions in English, which gives the pupil's a chance to respond in English. The third part of the lesson is a handout with a table containing words in Swedish and matching pictures. The pupil's are then asked to translate these words too Swedish and to an optional language. The pupil's translate it to their mother tongue or use Google Translate to translate to another language.

*The following checklist was completed during the observation:*

Teacher speaks in another language than English (Swedish)	
Pupil uses other language than English	
Pupil ask how to say something in English in another language	1
Pupil's are given the chance to speak in English (Teacher asks them something in English)	
Pupil does not understand English instructions	Instructions are in English and Swedish.

As evident in the checklist, Swedish was used several times by the teacher. The pupil's were given unlimited opportunities to speak English, both aloud and in front of the class. They chose to chit chat using a mixture of English and Swedish whilst working on the handout.



Some pupil's also used their mother tongue to help each other translate. Their mother tongue was also used in the handout when the pupil's were asked to translate to an optional language. Ajla first used English to give instructions and then clarified by using Swedish.

During Friday, 11/3-2019, the fourth observation was conducted in a school in south Skåne in Sweden. The observers followed a previously mentioned teacher, Therese, and her English lesson in school year 3. Therese starts the English lesson by using both English and Swedish to convey the instructions for the lesson. The teacher explains in Swedish and in English that the pupil's are to find 3 pictures on Google, using their chrome books, then add them to a document in groups of three. When this task is done, the pupil's were asked to write a short story in English with a beginning, storyline and ending. The pupil's are not given the chance to speak English. The pupil's retrieved their chrome books spread out, both in the classroom and outside. Much of the English lesson was conducted in Swedish. The pupil's spoke Swedish while looking for pictures and discussing how to go about the task. When pupil's ask Therese questions in Swedish, Therese sometimes uses English and sometimes Swedish to respond.

*The following checklist was completed during the observation:*

Teacher speaks in another language than English (Swedish)	
Pupil uses other language than English	
Pupil ask how to say something in English in another language	
Pupil's are given the chance to speak in English (Teacher asks them something in English)	
Pupil does not understand English instructions	Instructions are in both English and Swedish.

As manifested in the checklist, Swedish was used almost exclusively throughout the lesson by the teacher. The pupil's were not given any opportunities to speak English. They did however do so sometimes whilst discussing what to write for the story. No other languages than English or Swedish were overheard. The instructions were given by Therese both in English and Swedish.

## **5.4. Discussion**

The following section aims to triangulate the semi-structured interviews, the observations and the content of the theoretical review. Although all of the participants did not specifically express their positivity towards multilingualism, it appears as though they all view knowledge of multiple languages beneficial.

### **5.4.1 Feelings towards Multilingualism**

According to Lundahl (2014) Sweden is a small country with a small population, which makes it dependent on other countries. Due to this fact many swedes speak English fluently. Thus, English becomes a key to “global interconnectedness” and the disadvantages of not learning English are many, according to Lundahl. In the past, Edwards (2004) explains that it was a common belief that plurilingual pupil’s had an intellectual disadvantage due to the fact that two languages take up double the amount of space in the brain than one (p.79-86). This is in contrast to the Swedish curriculum (2018), which states that the English language is particularly important since it is spoken around the world. Therefore, English-speaking pupil’s often have better opportunities in social and cultural contexts, as well as being part of international education and work. Four out of the six interviewed pupil’s expressed that although it might be difficult to learn a new language, it feels good and exciting. In accordance, all of the teachers seemed to have a positive attitude towards multilingualism. Daniella, Ajla and Anna expressed a belief in that plurilingual pupil’s would learn languages more easily than monolingual pupil’s. Work and travel opportunities, a possibility to connect the new language to the mother tongue and a more fearless attitude are some of the benefits that the teachers also mentioned. In addition, the observations show that Swedish pupil’s are more than willing to learn and speak English. In an interview, Ajla also explained that pupil’s hear English earlier nowadays in games, movies, YouTube-videos, etc. Lundahl (2014) explains that plurilingual pupil’s have the possibility to draw information from a more extended source since the different languages can support one another. One teacher stated that monolingual pupil’s often are more careful in acquiring a new language since they are not used to it. However, Gunilla expressed that she did not notice a difference between plurilingual and monolingual pupil’s in acquiring a new language as it had more to do with their motivation and attitude. Lundahl (2014) pointed to the fact that those of an immigrant background symbolize tremendous linguistic diversity. Approximately 200 languages are spoken in Sweden, which is reason enough for teachers to learn more about different

languages and how to incorporate them into their teaching, according to Lundahl. Likewise, Jaatinen and Saarivirta (2014) advocate the importance of English in regards to globalization. Although many fear that the English language will replace many mother tongues, Jaatinen and Saarivirta point to the fact that changes in the Finnish society affect which languages survive there. The importance of the English language will continue to increase in Finland and the rest of the world (Jaatinen & Saarivirta, 2014).

#### **5.4.2 Multilingual Education**

Okal (2014) disputes that although learning a new language can be difficult, the process is always reinforced by the first language. Five out of the six interviewed teachers found a correlation between pupil's who are fluent in their mother tongue and pupil's who learn EFL more easily, compared with pupil's who are not fluent in their mother tongue. Daniella explained this by stating that it is difficult for pupil's to draw connections and translate to English if they do not feel secure in their mother tongue. Two of the teachers also conveyed that they believe this especially matters with speaking skills since plurilingual pupil's are used to switching between speaking different languages. As stated in the theoretical review, Baker (2001) highlighted the importance of other factors, such as whether or not they are more fluent in one language or if they never use one of the languages. Baker continued by explaining the view of language as an individual possession, when one looks into the pupil's ability in both languages and in what extension the languages are used. Baker highlights the importance of pupil's learning their mother tongue in order for those languages to survive. Therefore, the language that the pupil's bring from home should be utilized in education across the curriculum in all subjects, according to Baker. As shown by some of the observations, some teachers in Swedish schools make a point out of including pupil's mother tongues in their teaching. One of the teachers, Selma, expressed that a negative part of not being fluent in the mother tongue often leads to pupil's mixing their mother tongue and the language they are learning. Lundahl (2014) argued that plurilingualism allows individuals to draw upon a wide range of knowledge due to different languages supporting one another. In accordance, Baker (2001) points to the fact that ownership of two languages does not interfere with efficient thinking. Instead, pupil's who have multiple well developed languages often share certain cognitive benefits, such as their thinking style or their communicative sensitivity (Baker, 2001).

Although many believe that learning an additional language may cause pupil's to mix the languages together, Cummins (2001) introduced the term "additive bilingualism" which refers to pupil's who learn a new language, while continuing to develop the first one. Historically, pupil's were discouraged from using languages that the majority do not understand in school. Cummins stated that even though work within diversity has developed immensely, pupil's mother tongues are not being utilized as a useful tool in many classrooms to this day. When interviewing pupil's, Sarah expressed that she enjoys helping other pupil's by translating information they do not understand to Arabic. In that way, she practices her Arabic while still developing new language skills. As demonstrated by the observations, pupil's tend to use their mother tongue amongst each other while chit chatting or if given the opportunity in front of the class. Building on the experiences that the pupil's bring to school is what makes a good teacher, according to Cummins (2001).

Okal (2014) argued that teacher training should include foreign language learning in order for future teachers to learn how to incorporate multiple languages in the classroom. Doing so, enables communication that is not restricted to one language, according to Okal. Continuing, Okal states that multilingual education is the solution to dying languages. If more of the pupil's mother tongues are used in a daily matter and celebrated, perhaps the pupil's would be more encouraged to proceed developing their first language as well (Okal, 2014).

Complementary to this, Jaatinen and Saarivirta (2014) identify a need to change language teaching to better match the multicultural society. They point out that everyone, not only those who are academically talented or in a high position in society need language skills, especially English (Jaatinen & Saarivirta, 2014). According to Cummins (2000), the effects of a well-constructed bilingual program are foreseeable. Firstly, if the programs aid in pupil's developing multiple languages at once, no cognitive confusion will occur. Instead, pupil's may benefit from multiple linguistic systems. Secondly, it is foreseeable that multilingual pupil's develop communicative skills before they develop literacy skills. Thirdly, teachers can rest assured that plurilingual pupil's using their first language does not take away from the majority language. In fact, knowledge developed in the first language helps make information in a new language comprehensible (Cummins, 2000, p. 39-40). In addition, Edwards (2004) points to the fact that children who learn different skills within a language, still hold these skills in another language (p. 79-86).

### **5.4.3 Scaffolding**

Vygotsky (1978) advocated the idea that learning occurs in social environments, when the learner is given the right assistance by someone who is more developed within the subject in question. Similar to the purpose of a scaffold on a construction site, Gibbons (2014) describes the pupil's need for assistance that gradually fades as the learner develops. Although many consider the teacher to be the one who should assist the pupil's towards new knowledge, pupil's learn in many different social settings (Gibbons, 2014). According to the Swedish curriculum (2018), English teaching should include developing pupil's communicative skills, such as understanding spoken and written English, being able to formulate oneself and interact with others and adjust one's language to different situations, purposes and receivers. Even though the interviewed pupil's were not asked specifically how their social environment helps them to learn EFL, they unknowingly expressed multiple situations where their plurilingualism aids in developing new knowledge. For example, the pupil Sarah conveyed that she enjoys helping other Arabic pupil who do not understand English by translating for them. Thus, she is able to help the Arabic pupil's learn English, whilst also practicing both her Arabic and English. This also occurred several times in every observed classroom. Zeid mentioned that he learned to speak a lot of English by playing games with his older brother who spoke English to his game friends. Subsequently, both Sarah and Zeid benefited in the form of learning from the social environment around them. It was Lundahl (2014) who explained that from a social constructivist view, language learning stems from the desire to be part of social groups. Thus, social interaction tends to be the starting shot for learning a new language, where the learner works together with somebody who knows more (Lundahl, 2014, p.15-24).

As Gibbons (2014) explained, scaffolding does not simply mean for teachers to help their pupil's, but for someone who is able to assist a learner into moving towards a new skill, concept or level of understanding. Some of the teachers expressed a belief in that plurilingual pupil's had some advantages in learning a new language in social environments. For example, Anna found a benefit in the newly arrived pupil's being able to make friends more quickly and the pupil's get an opportunity to be social and practice their speaking skills. Vygotsky, the Sociocultural theory and Scaffolding undoubtedly advocate a social environment as a means for learning. In addition, Rokita-Jaśkow (2015) claimed that pupil's high aspirations often lead to educational success, which often leads to higher occupational positions, which in turn often leads to good earning and possibly better well-being. As a consequence, such individuals often climb a social ladder. Of course the outcome is affected

by the possible societal holdbacks, such as the teacher, the school and the location (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2015).

The English subject in primary school in Sweden is most often maneuvered by what the teacher feels is appropriate. What Anna finds appropriate is to focus on developing pupil's courage to use the language, which also leads to better speaking skills, according to Anna. Focusing on giving the pupil's an opportunity to learn from each other in social environments is one form of scaffolding. Of course, the teacher is also responsible to scaffold the pupil's by giving them the right kind of assistance. As seen in the observation, Selma encouraged her pupil's to speak English. If they were uncertain of a word, she gave them clues or showed the object to them. This gave the pupil's an opportunity to get there themselves instead of her giving them the answer. Hitt and Smith (2017) found that the right assistance often has to do with reducing the pace of the lesson, including fewer concepts and giving the pupil's time and opportunities to understand these concepts. Complementary to this, Björklund et al. (2013) describes a necessity for teachers who scaffold to have well-developed professionalism and to be sensitive towards the needs of the learner, instead of focusing on previously decided methods.

#### **5.4.4 Translating**

Krashen (1982) emphasized that allowing pupil's first language in the classrooms allows said pupil's to communicate more, which could lead to comprehensible language learning. When the teachers were asked about advantages and disadvantages, Anna conveyed that she was thankful to have plurilingual pupil's in her classroom for translating purposes. Not only do the newly arrived pupil's have a chance to make themselves understood, but the pupil's helping have an opportunity to practice their mother tongue and to practice translating to both Swedish and English, according to Anna. Almost all of the interviewed teachers expressed a belief that the Arabic mother tongue is helpful in learning other languages for the pupil's. The pupil's seemed more hesitant towards the thought that the Arabic language is helpful in learning English. They did, however, unknowingly express different ways of how the language helps them. Sarah and Ajdina told the interviewee that their Arabic and Swedish aids in learning English, since they can ask what something means in different languages and gain clarity. However, Ajdina and Zeid expressed that their Swedish helps them more than their Arabic, due to the fact that Swedish is more similar to English. Zeid gave the example of "Apple", which is "Äpple" in Swedish. In contrast, apple is called "Tafaha" in Arabic.

Tahu explained that she uses Arabic to ask her friends and family to translate to English when she is uncertain of a word. Irma mentioned that it feels easier to add English since she already has two other languages. Cummins (2001) confirms that pupil's mother tongue can be an advantage by pointing out that pupil's who speak their mother tongue fluently are more likely to develop stronger abilities in the language spoken in school. In addition, Cummins (2000) disputes that within a bilingual program, if done right, teachers can help pupil's develop literacy skills in their primary language without it affecting the new language negatively. Continuing, Cummins shows evidence that literacy skills within the first language can help lay a foundation for literacy skills for a new language. Whether or not a cross-linguistic transfer occurs depends on the teachers and what kind of instruction is given (Cummins, 2000, p. 39-40).

Although, five out of the six interviewed teachers find a positive relationship between a plurilingual pupil's languages, they point to the fact that the benefits are restricted to the pupil's who are fluent in their first languages. Daniella explained that many pupil's in her class are not fluent in their mother tongue, nor do they speak Swedish fluently. Daniella and Ajla draw the conclusion that it is difficult for them to draw connections and translate to English if they do not feel secure in the first languages. Selma and Gunilla expressed that they find it logical that pupil's have more use of their first language if they have mastered it. If there is a fundamental language, which the pupil can use as a starting point, they are less likely to mix all of the languages together and not be able to use any of them fully, according to Selma and Gunilla. Anna expressed similar thoughts and added that even though pupil's with tenuous first languages sometimes are able to learn new languages, the knowledge is not nuanced. She gives the example: pupil's are able to express if they are happy or mad, but not if they are embarrassed. In contrast, Therese describes that she has difficulties finding a correlation between the first language and the foreign language being learnt, unless they are from similar families of language. Furthermore, Baker (2001) explains that there are often negative attitudes towards codeswitching due to the fact that multiple languages might mix. Codeswitchers themselves often connect their codeswitching to being lazy with their language, according to Baker. Conversely, Baker states that codeswitching is an important linguistic tool since codeswitchers are able to use a different language to stress particular words or phrases, but also to substitute a word in another language. Multilingualism does not restrict new language learning, but instead language learning tends to be easier for plurilinguals (Baker, 2001, p. 100-107).

### 5.4.5 Age

As explained by Rokita-Jaśkow (2015), it is a common belief that early learning of a foreign language in monolingual places is considered to be a great asset to occupational success. Since English is a global language, English is often the language associated with prosperity. Rokita-Jaśkow argues that this is especially notable in monolingual countries. Thus, learning a foreign language young often is considered as a healthy step towards education and employment (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2015). As shown by Krashen (1982), many assume that young pupil's are better at language learning than older pupil's. However, Krashen argues that age is not necessarily a predictor of second language learning, instead he points to the comprehensible input as the cause of successful language learning. When asked about if it is a possibility for learners to be too young for multiple languages, Anna, Ajla and Daniella conveyed that they believe that it is more difficult for people to learn a new language the older they get since they are more courageous and open to new things when they are young. Ajla explained that many pupil's learn English early on due to the fact that they encounter it in games, movies and videos. Selma expressed a belief that young plurilingual pupil's often learn new languages more easily since their brain is used to doing so. She also expressed that if the first language is very similar to English, the pupil's usually learn the English language more quickly and effectively. Similarly, Rokita-Jaśkow (2015) explains that the earlier pupil's start learning a foreign language, the higher the chances are that the pupil becomes plurilingual. Plurilingualism is an asset to every European citizen, according to Rokita-Jaśkow. Other advantages of learning a foreign language young are that pupil's develop a kind of tolerance, curiosity and a positive attitude towards other cultures. Thus, quality education that advocates learning foreign languages can lay the foundation for future plurilingualism. In addition, the observations show us that it has become more common that young pupil's know a lot of English due to their hobbies, such as gaming or watching English movies and videos.

On the other hand, Rokita-Jaśkow also points to the fact that although young learners have a better chance to become plurilingual if they start young, it also means that they only learn the languages partially. Even though they are considered plurilingual and competent in multiple languages, the amount of how much is learned in each language decreases (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2015). Similarly, Krashen (1982) points to the fact that older language learners are more able to encourage speech, speaking fluently and obtain a more nuanced language. For example,



they are able to ask for help and change the topic. Although, young learners are subject to simpler input, older learners get more comprehended input, according to Krashen (1982). One of the interviewed teachers, Gunilla, expressed a concern that too many languages at a young age can cause confusion and worsened spelling. The pupil's might have difficulties in separating the languages, according to Gunilla. Similarly, Rokita-Jaśkow (2015) explains that early starters might be plurilingual, but do not necessarily reach the same level of acquisition as the late learners. Rokita-Jaśkow continues by pointing to advantages of late learners, such as better memory, developed learning strategies and better focus towards learning goals. However, what matters most is how the social environment where the child learns is conducted, such as at home or in school (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2015). In addition, Baker (2001) suggests that bilinguals are ready for another language earlier than monolinguals due to the fact that they are used to doing so (p. 160). Conclusively, Krashen (1982) explains that young learners have an advantage in the long run when they learn the multiple languages completely, whilst older learners often have an easier time in the short run.

#### **5.4.6 Speaking skills**

In many cases multilingualism tends to be the catalyst to developing cross-cultural communication skills, according to Okal (2014). Okal also points to the skill of speaking as one of the most common developed skills when it comes to multilingual education. In the same way, Lundahl (2014) describes the skill of speaking as one of the most important skills. Writing, reading and listening are also important but Lundahl points out that it is more significant to be able to ask for help, tell a story, express a feeling or discuss something. Due to the fact that spoken language occurs in cooperation with others, teachers need to create an environment full of social interaction (Lundahl, 2014, p.147-149). Krashen (1982) states that language in education should be utilized for its purpose, namely communication (p.1). Some of the interviewed teachers expressed thoughts regarding how multilingualism affects speaking skills. There is for example often a difference in how plurilingual and monolingual pupil's pronounce the English language. Ajla mentioned that the melody or other characteristics of the first language affect how the new language is pronounced. She adds that the accent is often less strong if the first languages are fluent. Both Daniella and Ajla express that it is easier to develop speaking skills, than writing skills if the first languages are not fluent. Selma expresses that she has noticed that pupil's who are fluent in their mother tongue, more easily make connections between that language and English. As previously states, the Swedish Curriculum (2018) states a goal that "Through teaching, pupil's should be given the

opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills". Evidently, the curriculum points to the importance of giving the pupil's opportunities to develop English speaking skills. In addition, Okal (2014) points out that learning another language makes someone plurilingual, but also enables multi-communication. Allowing multilingualism to be part of education means avoiding restrictions in communication, which leads to evolved communication opportunities (Okal, 2014). According to Lundahl (2014) a majority of teachers express that they give their pupil's many opportunities to speak, for example through debates or role plays. In addition, Lundahl points to the fact that very little thought is given to pronunciation. Although the Swedish curriculum states that "pupil's should be able to express themselves understandably, clearly and with ease", the native speaker ideal is an unrealistic goal and more attention should be paid to what the pupil's are saying as opposed to how (Lundahl, 2014, p .227-232). Similarly, Krashen (1982) disputes that speaking fluency cannot be taught directly as it develops over time. What a teacher can do is to provide comprehensible input and give the pupil opportunities to develop (Krashen, 1982, p. 43-45). As shown by the observations, all of the teachers encouraged their pupil's to speak English and the pupil's were reminded not to laugh at each other since everyone pronounces differently.

## 6. Conclusion

In this section, a summary of the key findings of this degree project will be presented. Following, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research is given. The purpose of this study was to study pupil's and teacher's views and opinions of and multilingualism in English language learning in Sweden. More specifically, the aim was to explore whether or not multilingualism aids pupil's in speaking English as a foreign language. The research question was:

- What effects does **multilingualism** have in Year 1 - 3 **EFL** students' speaking **skill**, **according to some learners and teachers?**

### 6.1 Key Findings

The overall result of our findings is seemingly a clasp positive view of multilingualism by both pupil's and teachers. A majority seems to believe that pupil's plurilingualism aids in them learning new languages due to the fact that they have already been through the process of doing so. English is often the language that pupil's learn in school. English is a significant language that holds the key to global interconnectedness. Learning English has many benefits, such as employment opportunities, travel and multi-communication. Thus, there seems to be a majority of positive attitudes towards learning English. Although, English is important, pupil's should be encouraged to continue learning their mother tongue simultaneously as they learn English. Learning multiple languages at once or being plurilingual does not clutter the brain. In fact, plurilingual pupil's often share cognitive advantages as oppose to monolingual pupil's. The mother tongue can also be a useful tool in the classroom. Incorporating multiple languages in the classroom enables non-restricted communication. This study shows that pupil's mother tongue, Arabic for example, does in fact help pupil's in language learning. Codeswitchers are able to emphasize certain words or phrases in multiple languages, and they are able to express themselves using more than one symbolic system. Many believe that exposing multiple languages to young learners early on increases the chances of them being plurilingual. Although, they might be young plurilinguals, they often only learn the languages partially. Older learners are able to learn languages almost completely as the comprehensible input can be more nuanced than with young pupil's. However, young plurilinguals often develop their languages as they get older.

Scaffolding and the importance of allowing pupil's to learn in social environments is undeniably significant in all classrooms. To scaffold pupil's means to meet them where they are and to help them develop from there. One of scaffoldings main concepts is to treat people as what they could become, not the people they currently are. A scaffolding teacher is sensitive, supportive and advocates pupil's communicating and learning from each other. Allowing and utilizing different languages in the classroom enables pupil's to be comfortable speaking and using the language. As previously stated, language learning should lead to what language is actually for, namely communication. Social environments often help pupil's to learn languages as they get an opportunity to actually use the language. As shown by the observations, the pupil's were seemingly very interested in learning and speaking English. One of the teachers, Ajla, gave her pupil's unlimited opportunities to speak English and they were all over it. Due to the fact that a majority of the observed pupil's are plurilingual, the teachers used a mixture of Swedish and English to give instructions. The pupil's also used their mother tongue to chit chat whilst working or to translate a word they are uncertain of. The teachers encouraged their pupil's to try to speak English as they believe that it increases the chances to learn the language.

Despite the relevance of these findings, the most important finding is that there is no perfect way as one size does not fit all. There are different ways of getting to the same destination. Since pupil's are different, have different needs and experiences, education also has to differ. Teachers should always strive to get to know their pupil's, continue to educate themselves and devote time to celebrate diversity in the classroom. Thus, results indicate that multilingualism has positive effects in Year 1 - 3 EFL students' speaking skill.

## **6.2 Limitations**

There were some limitations of this study. Firstly, due to the timeline of this degree project we were unable to interview a wide range of pupil's and teachers. We had to narrow down our question and the participants. Secondly, since qualitative studies require few participants, we chose to interview few participants but to go in-depth of how they percept things. Thus, we are unable to generalize our findings and give a complete picture of multilingual education in Sweden. Thirdly, we chose to narrow it down to only Arabic pupil's to give a more, complete picture of how Arabic effects new language learning.

## **6.3 Future Research**

As for future research, it would be of great interest to investigate how multilingualism is utilized in classrooms internationally. In order to get a more complete apprehension, the choice of participants could be wider and we could investigate a wider geographical mapping. For example, we could interview multilingual pupil's that have different mother tongues and compare the languages different effect on learning English. Also, these results would be generalizable if we were not restricted to the south of Sweden.

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## Appendices

### Appendices 1 – Pupil’s who participated

Table 1: Pupil’s who participated

<b>Pupil’s:</b>	<b>Grade:</b>	<b>Background:</b>	<b>Spoken languages:</b>
Sarah	Primary school, grade 3	Arabic	Arabic, Swedish and a little English
Ajdina	Primary school, grade 3	Arabic	Arabic, Swedish and a little English
Zeid	Primary school, grade 2	Arabic	Arabic, Swedish and a little English
Tahu	Primary school, grade 2	Arabic	Arabic, Swedish and a little English
Irma	Primary school, grade 2	Arabic	Arabic, Swedish and a little English

### Appendices 2 - Teachers who participated

Table 2: Teachers who participated

<b>Teachers:</b>	<b>Profession:</b>	<b>Grade they currently teach:</b>	<b>Amount of English lessons in week:</b>	<b>Experience with multilingual pupil’s:</b>
Teacher 1: Anna	Primary School Teacher, year K-6	Grade 3	Is no longer teaching English, but has experience doing so.	Yes
Teacher 2: Ajla	Primary School Teacher, year K-6	Grade 3	Twice a week	Yes
Teacher 3: Daniella	Primary School Teacher, year K-3	Grade 2	Once a week	Yes
Teacher 4: Selma	Primary School Teacher, year K-6	Grade 2	Once a week	Yes
Teacher 5: Gunilla	Primary School Teacher, year K-6	Grade 2	Once a week	Yes
Teacher 6: Therese	Primary School Teacher, year K-6	Grade 2	Once a week	Yes



## Appendices 3 - Consent form:

The following 4 pages contain a signed copy of one of the consent forms that was signed by a participants guardians. It was scanned and uploaded. In order for them to remain anonymous, their names and information have been crossed out. Also, contact information to one of the researchers has been crossed out.



LÄRANDE OCH SAMHÄLLE  
INSTITUTION

Datum: 1/3-19

### Samtycke till elevers medverkan i studentprojekt

Hej!

Våra namn är Julia Ekberg Blackby och Adisa Velibasic. Vi går den sista kursen på grundlärarutbildningen, årskurs F-3, på Malmö Universitet. Detta innebär att vi tar examen och är färdiga lärare den 5 juni 2019.

Vi ska genomföra studier som del av vårt examensarbete. Själva arbetet fokuserar på flerspråkighet och hur elevers tidigare språkkunskaper (exempelvis modersmål och svenska) påverkar inlärning av nya språk, nämligen engelska. Vi kommer att genomföra intervjuer och observationer på olika skolor i Malmö vid flera tillfällen. Syftet med både intervjuerna och observationerna är att kartlägga elevers och lärares tankar kring hur tidigare språkkunskaper påverkar ny språkinlärning. Det vill säga att vi kommer vara med i klassrummet samt i exempelvis ett grupprum eller liknande för intervjun.

Observationerna kommer att samlas in via fältanteckningar och intervjuerna kommer att tas upp via ljudupptagning. Vi vill dock understryka att privata telefoner inte kommer att användas och det är endast vi som kommer att ha tillgång till detta material. I vårt arbete kommer eleverna anonymiseras och inga namn kommer att användas. Allt insamlat material och personuppgifter kommer att lagras på Malmö Universitets server under arbetet med examensarbetet, samt att samtyckesblanketterna förvaras oåtkomligt på Malmö Universitet.

Vi hänvisar till vetenskapsrådets forskningsetiska principer, <http://www.codex.vr.se/texts/HSFR.pdf>, och utgår från dessa principer att:

- Medverkan i studien baseras på samtycket och kan återkallas när som helst. Varje elev har alltså rätt till att avbryta sin medverkan när som helst, utan negativa konsekvenser.
- De deltagande eleverna kommer att tillfrågas inför materialinsamlingen och har möjlighet att avböja sin medverkan i studien.
- Deltagarna kommer att avidentifieras i det färdiga arbetet.
- Materialet kommer att användas för aktuell studie och kommer att förstöras när denna är examinerad.

Malmö Universitet är personuppgiftsansvarig för behandlingen. Samtycket som lämnas i samband med denna blankett kan när som helst återkallas och uppgifterna kommer då inte längre att behandlas utan annan rättslig grund. Du kan ta del av det som har samlats in genom att kontakta [kontaktuppgift till den som är ansvarig för behandlingen] och har du frågor eller synpunkter som rör behandlingen av personuppgifter kan dessa ställas till universitetets dataskyddsombud (dataskyddsombud@mau.se). Klagomål som inte kan lösas tillsammans med universitetet kan lämnas till Datainspektionen.

..... Adisa Velibasic  
Studentens underskrift och namnförtydligande

Kontaktuppgifter till student (tfn nr, e-mail):

.....

Ansvarig handledare på Malmö Universitet:

..... Chrysogonus Malilang

Kursansvarig på Malmö Universitet:

..... Shannon Savro

Kontaktuppgifter Malmö Universitet:

[www.mah.se](http://www.mah.se)

040-665 70 00

## *Information om Malmö universitets behandling av personuppgifter*

### **Personuppgiftsansvarig**

Malmö Universitet

### **Dataskyddsombud**

[dataskyddsombud@mau.se](mailto:dataskyddsombud@mau.se)

### **Typ av personuppgifter**

Namn, anteckning av lärandesituation, bild och/eller filmklipp samt ditt samtycke till att Malmö universitet behandlar dessa personuppgifter.

### **Ändamål med behandlingen**

För att möjliggöra undervisnings- och examinationssituationer i förskolemiljö för studenter vid Malmö universitets förskollärautbildning.

### **Rättslig grund för behandling**

Ditt samtycke.

### **Mottagare**

Personuppgifterna kommer endast användas i utbildningssyfte inom ramen för Förskollärautbildningsprogrammet vid Malmö universitet och kommer inte att spridas vidare till någon annan mottagare.

### **Lagringstid**

Malmö universitet kommer spara dina personuppgifter så länge de behövs för ovan angivet ändamål eller till dess att du återkallar ditt samtycke. Efter genomförd kurs/program kommer personuppgifterna att raderas. Malmö universitet kan dock i vissa fall bli skyldiga att arkivera och spara personuppgifter enligt Arkivlagen och Riksarkivets föreskrifter.

### **Dina rättigheter**

Du har rätt att kontakta Malmö universitet för att 1) få information om vilka uppgifter Malmö universitet har om dig och 2) begära rättelse av dina uppgifter. Vidare, och under de förutsättningar som närmare anges i dataskyddslagstiftningen, har du rätt att 3) begära radering av dina uppgifter, 4) begära en överföring av dina uppgifter (dataportabilitet), eller 5) begära att Malmö universitet begränsar behandlingen av dina uppgifter. När Malmö universitet behandlar personuppgifter med stöd av ditt samtycke, har du rätt att när som helst återkalla ditt samtycke genom skriftligt meddelande till Malmö universitet. Du har rätt att inge klagomål om Malmö universitets behandling av dina personuppgifter genom att kontakta Datainspektionen, Box 8114, 104 20 Stockholm.

## Samtycke


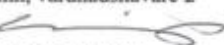
Härmed samtyckes till att nedanstående elev får medverka i ovan beskrivna studentprojekt, samt att vi som vårdnadshavare har tagit del av informationen om Malmö universitets behandling av personuppgifter.

Elevens namn:  .....

Skola:  skolan .....

Dagens datum: 5/03-19 .....

  
Namn, vårdnadshavare 1 

  
Namn, vårdnadshavare 2 

Vid gemensam vårdnad måste båda vårdnadshavare underteckna blanketten.

#### **Appendices 4 - Interview checklist**

The following questions were used as a guide during the interviews:

##### *Questions for pupil's:*

- How many languages do you speak and which are they?
- How have you learned these languages?
- How does it feel to learn a new language?
- Have you learned English?
- Do you think that your first languages have made it easier for you to learn English? In what way?
- Can you use your first languages in order to learn English?

##### *Questions for teachers:*

- Have you had or do you currently teach english to Multilingual pupil's?
- Have you noticed a difference in how monolingual and multilingual pupil's learn English?
- Do you consider that the pupil's first language affects them positively or negatively?
- Are there any advantages or disadvantages in knowing multiple languages at a young age?
- Do you consider that pupil's learn English differently due to what their first language is? What is the difference?

#### **Appendices 5 - Observation checklist**

*The following checklist was used during observations*

Teacher speaks in Swedish	
Pupil uses other language than English	
Pupil uses their mother tongue to find information	
Pupil's are given the chance to speak in English	
Pupil does not understand English instructions	