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Multilingual Learners’ EFL Acquisition: Perspectives from Swedish Teachers and L2 Students in Middle Primary School

Flerspråkiga elevers inlärning av engelska som främmande språk – perspektiv från svenska lärare och andraspråkselever i mellanstadiet

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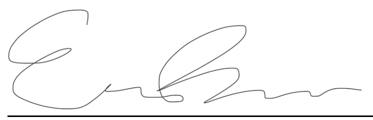
Abstract

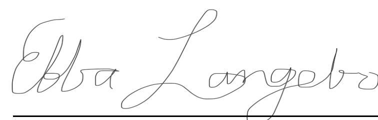
This study explores how being a multilingual learner—interconnected with socioeconomic factors and digitalization—influences the acquisition of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among multilingual L2 students in Swedish primary schools. Using a mixed-methods approach, we conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers and students in grades 4 and 5 and analyzed students' English grades to gain insights into both subjective experiences and measurable language proficiency. The study aims to examine the advantages and challenges multilingual students face in learning English, the role of socioeconomic background in English language acquisition, and the impact of digitalization on English proficiency. The findings reveal a polarization in English proficiency among multilingual learners. Some students demonstrate strong oral English skills, often surpassing their Swedish proficiency, while others struggle with foundational language skills. Teachers emphasized that students with a solid foundation in their first or second language tend to acquire English more easily, whereas those with weaker proficiency in their prior languages experience greater challenges. Socioeconomic background was identified as a key factor affecting English learning, as students from lower-income areas often have limited academic support at home. Digitalization emerged as both an opportunity and an obstacle—while digital exposure enhances listening and speaking skills, students often rely heavily on translation tools, which can hinder independent writing development. These results highlight the complexity of multilingualism in EFL acquisition and suggest that background factors play a more significant role than multilingualism itself.

Key words: *Multilingualism, multilingual learners, EFL, L1, L2, L3, socioeconomic factors, digitalization, Swedish primary education*

Individual Contribution

This study was conducted as a fully collaborative effort, with both authors equally involved in every stage of the research process. Together, we formulated the research questions, designed the methodology, conducted interviews, analyzed the data, and wrote the final report. The division of labor was not based on separate tasks but rather on continuous discussions and shared decision-making to ensure that all aspects of the study reflected our combined perspectives and insights. Every section of this paper was co-written and refined through joint editing sessions, emphasizing our commitment to a shared academic process.





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1 Introduction

As two aspiring teachers with a deep interest in the English language, we are fascinated by the way students acquire new languages. During our teaching practice, we stepped into classrooms where Swedish was not the only, or even the primary, language spoken. Instead, we were met with a symphony of languages, each carrying its own rhythm, history, and challenges. We quickly realized that for many of our students, learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) was not just about mastering a third language—it was about navigating multiple linguistic worlds at once. We worked with students who struggled to express themselves in Swedish but lit up when they recognized an English word. Others, however, seemed weighed down by the challenge of juggling three languages, unsure of which linguistic rules belonged to which language. This was a powerful reminder that being a multilingual learner is both a strength and a struggle—something we, as future educators, need to understand more deeply.

With one of us being a second-generation immigrant and the other a native Swede who experienced English as a Second Language (ESL) while living in the U.S. during early childhood, we believe these differing backgrounds offer us unique perspectives on language acquisition and multilingualism. We have also gained experience teaching in areas characterized by lower socioeconomic status, where many students lack academic support at home. In these environments, we observed how factors such as limited resources, home language use, and varying levels of digital access influence students' learning experiences. At the same time, we noted how digitalization has expanded students' exposure to English, particularly through gaming and social media, creating both opportunities and new challenges in language development.

These experiences led us to question whether multilingualism facilitates or hinders the process of learning EFL—especially when intersecting with socioeconomic disadvantage and rapid digital change. We are aware that discussions about language, inequality, and education can be uncomfortable and even taboo, but this makes the topic all the more important to explore. In examining this complex intersection, the study investigates how being an L2 learner, combined with socioeconomic factors and digitalization, shapes students' ability to acquire EFL in Swedish primary schools.

In recent decades, research on multilingualism and third-language (L3) acquisition has emphasized the influence of previously acquired languages on the learning of additional ones. Hammarberg (2016) challenges the traditional view that only the first language (L1) impacts second-language (L2) acquisition, arguing instead that proficiency in an L2 or L3 also plays a crucial role. Linguistic awareness, cognitive strategies, and metalinguistic skills developed through multilingualism can both facilitate and complicate language learning, depending on individual and contextual factors.

Building on this, Moghtadi et al. (2014) found a strong correlation between L2 proficiency and L3 acquisition, particularly in grammatical development. Their findings suggest that multilingual learners draw on their entire linguistic repertoire to support language learning, reinforcing the importance of cross-linguistic influence, provided there is sufficient exposure and motivation. However, the simultaneous development of multiple languages can create challenges, particularly for students with underdeveloped skills in their L2. Similarly, De Angelis (2015) examined how parental education and L2 exposure impact English (L3) acquisition among Italian students. The study revealed that parental education was a stronger predictor of English proficiency than exposure to German (L2), highlighting the significant role of sociocultural factors in multilingual language development. These studies collectively suggest that both linguistic and environmental influences shape multilingual students' English learning experiences.

In Sweden, a significant number of students are enrolled in Swedish as a second language—a subject designed to support learners who do not have Swedish as their first language (Skolverket, 2022a). These students often face unique challenges in meeting the curriculum's knowledge requirements, especially in the core subjects Swedish, mathematics, and English. According to Eklund (2008), second-language learners frequently struggle to achieve the same results as their peers, with English emerging as a particularly polarized subject—students tend to perform either very well or very poorly (Skolverket, 2022b).

One key factor influencing these outcomes is socioeconomic background. While Sweden has one of the lowest child poverty rates in the world, with high living standards and extensive welfare services (Andersson Bruck, 2020), regional disparities remain. There are areas with low socioeconomic status where living conditions differ significantly from the national average (SCB, 2022). These neighborhoods are often located on the outskirts of major cities

and tend to attract residents with lower incomes due to more affordable housing. Socioeconomic disadvantages in these communities can impact educational achievement and language development, compounding the challenges faced by multilingual learners (Andersson et al., 2019).

In addition to linguistic and socioeconomic factors, digitalization has become increasingly relevant to English language acquisition (Stenberg-Sirén, 2018). Exposure to English through social media, streaming services, and online gaming has increased, giving students more informal opportunities to practice the language outside the classroom (Sundqvist & Olin-Scheller, 2015). While these digital environments can enhance listening and speaking skills, they do not always translate into academic success, as many students continue to struggle with formal reading and writing proficiency (Sundqvist & Olin-Scheller, 2015). The contrast between informal digital English use and academic literacy highlights the need to critically examine how digitalization influences different groups of learners, particularly those acquiring English alongside Swedish as an additional language. For these students, digital spaces offer a valuable opportunity to engage with English in contexts where it is not mediated through Swedish, unlike in the classroom where English is taught through Swedish (Sundqvist & Olin-Scheller, 2013).

The focus of this study aligns with the linguistic theory developed by Michael Halliday within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). According to this theory, language is not something we use in isolation—it is always embedded in a specific context, a social setting (Gibbons, 2016). This connects to the following quote from the National Swedish Curriculum:

> Language is the primary tool human beings use for thinking, communicating and learning. Through language, people develop their identity, express feelings and thoughts, and understand how others feel and think. Rich and varied language is important for understanding and working in a society where cultures, beliefs, generations and languages come together. (Skolverket, 2022a, p. 260)

Halliday's theory includes both cultural and situational context of language (Gibbons, 2016). The cultural context refers to shared norms and expectations within a society, shaping how people communicate in different situations, such as greeting others, ordering food, or

participating in school. While these functions exist across cultures, their execution varies. The situational context depends on three factors: (1) the topic of conversation, (2) the relationship between speakers (or writer and reader), and (3) whether the communication is spoken or written. These factors influence how language is adapted—for instance, how we speak with a friend at a party versus in a job interview or how a computer is explained in conversation versus in a manual. This also connects to the syllabus of English:

> Knowing more than one language can provide new perspectives on the world, greater opportunities for interaction, and a better understanding of different ways of living. The English language surrounds us in our daily lives and is used in areas as diverse as politics, education and economics. English language skills therefore increase an individual's ability to be part of different social and cultural contexts and to participate in international studies and working life. (Skolverket, 2022a, p. 43)

Understanding this perspective is particularly relevant in multilingual classrooms, where students bring different linguistic and cultural backgrounds that influence how they use and interpret language. This theoretical framework provides valuable insights into how language learning is deeply connected to the social and cultural contexts in which it takes place, highlighting the need for language instruction that acknowledges and builds upon students' diverse linguistic resources.

2 Aim & Research Questions

This study aims to investigate how multilingualism—in connection to socioeconomic factors and digitalization—influences the acquisition of EFL among multilingual L2 students in grades 4 and 5. By examining the experiences of students with a native language (L1) other than Swedish (L2), this study explores whether being a multilingual learner facilitates or hinders early-stage English acquisition (L3), based on teacher and student interviews, as well as an analysis of students' grades. Despite the growing number of multilingual students in Swedish schools, research on the specific challenges and opportunities they face in acquiring EFL remains limited. Our goal is to identify both the advantages and challenges multilingual learners face and to provide insights for teachers on how to support these students in EFL classrooms. By addressing this issue, we hope to contribute to more equitable and effective language education in Swedish schools.

For our research, we have these specific research questions in mind:

- How do teachers and students describe challenges and advantages of being a multilingual learner in the context of EFL?
- How does socioeconomic status influence the experiences of multilingual learners in acquiring EFL?
- How does digitalization influence the English language learning experiences of multilingual learners?

3 Background

This chapter provides the theoretical and contextual background necessary to understand the study's focus on multilingualism and EFL acquisition. We begin by defining key terms and concepts related to multilingualism and third-language learning in a Swedish context. To explore the topic holistically, we have chosen to include two central areas that often intersect with multilingualism: socioeconomic factors and digitalization.

The background is divided into three main sections: "Multilingualism in a Swedish Context," which outlines relevant definitions and the role of Swedish as a second language; "Socioeconomic Factors," which discusses how living conditions and social structures affect language learning; and "Digitalization," which highlights how increased exposure to English in and outside the classroom affects students' proficiency and learning experiences. Together, these sections provide the necessary foundation for understanding the conditions under which multilingual L2 students in Sweden acquire English as an L3.

3.1 Multilingualism in a Swedish Context

3.1.1 Definitions

In this section, we will contextualize essential terms used throughout this study. In order to do so, we must first define the terms to ensure consistency and understanding.

L1, L2, L3: In language research, the first language is commonly referred to as L1, the second language as L2, and the third language as L3 (Hammarberg, 2016). The L1, also known as native language or mother tongue, is typically learned implicitly and unconsciously. L3 refers to an additional foreign language acquired after an L1 and an L2. The process of acquiring a third language differs from L1 and L2 acquisition, as each additional language introduces new influencing factors. In the context of this study—for students with Swedish as a second language—L1 is native language, L2 is Swedish, and L3 is English. Consequently, students learning Swedish as a second language learn English by building upon their Swedish proficiency (L2 to L3), whereas native Swedish speakers acquire English directly through their native language (L1 to L2).

EFL: English as a Foreign Language refers to "the teaching of English to students whose first language is not English" (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). This should not be confused with English as a Second Language (ESL), "the teaching of English to speakers of other languages who live in a country where English is an official or important language" (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). To clarify, in the Swedish context, English is taught as a foreign language, not as a second language. In other words, ESL inherently involves English as an L2, but not all instances of learning L2 English qualify as ESL.

EIL: English as an International Language (EIL) refers to the use of English as a global medium for communication among people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (McKay, 2018).

Multilingualism: This term describes the ability of individuals or groups to communicate using more than two languages (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). The students involved in this study are therefore multilingual as they speak at least three languages. Throughout this study, we use the term "multilingual learners" to refer to these students, who fall under the broader concept of multilingualism.

Newcomer students: According to Chapter 3, §12a of the Swedish School Law (Skollag, 2010:800), a newcomer student is defined as someone who previously resided abroad, currently resides in Sweden, and began their education in Sweden after the start of the autumn term of the calendar year in which they turn seven. A student is no longer classified as a newcomer after four years of schooling in Sweden. Newcomer students have the right to enroll in the subject Swedish as a second language to support their language development.

3.1.2 Swedish as a Second Language

Students who have a first language other than Swedish, or who have other reasons for needing it, can study Swedish as a second language in school instead of Swedish (Skollag, 2010:800; Skolverket, 2022a; ISOF, 2024). Swedish as a second language is learned in an environment where the language is used as the primary means of communication. For many newcomers in Sweden, Swedish is therefore a second language. Swedish can also be studied as a foreign language. In that case, it is learned outside the environment where the language is used as the main means of communication, for example, at foreign universities. Students studying Swedish as a second language focus more on the formal aspects of the language

compared to those studying Swedish, such as Swedish grammar and vocabulary acquisition. The teaching also includes raising awareness of one's own multilingualism. The subject, like Swedish, also includes literature, knowledge of different genres, and various types of text analysis. A grade in Swedish as a second language is equivalent to a grade in Swedish when applying to higher education.

The National Swedish Curriculum underscores the importance of language as a tool for learning, identity development, and participation in society (Skolverket, 2022a). It highlights the necessity of tailored instruction for students learning Swedish as a second language, emphasizing how access to their mother tongue facilitates both language and cognitive development. Teachers face the challenge of supporting multilingual students as they simultaneously develop proficiency in Swedish and acquire the academic English needed for school subjects (Skolverket, 2024).

3.2 Socioeconomic Factors

3.2.1 English Language Learning in Unequal Contexts

Socioeconomic status plays a crucial role in language development and academic success. Studies indicate that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face additional challenges in language learning, particularly if they have limited exposure to Swedish at home (Andersson et al., 2019). To gain insight into this issue, we decided to interview schools in areas with lower socioeconomic status. According to Statistics Sweden (SCB, 2022), one of the schools included in this study is located in an area with one of the five lowest economic standards in the country, with a poverty rate of 67%.

If students succeed in school, the education system has succeeded. However, according to PISA 2012 results (Skolverket, 2013), Swedish students' performance in the core subjects—Swedish, mathematics, and English—declined steadily from 2000 to a record low in 2012. Although results have since improved, the debate about education and student achievement persists. PISA offers multiple explanations for the declining results, one of which is the well-established correlation between students' socioeconomic background and academic performance. PISA 2012 (Skolverket, 2013) confirmed this relationship, highlighting that the impact of socioeconomic background on student achievement serves as

an indicator of how equitable a country's education system is—specifically, how effectively it compensates for students' differing socioeconomic conditions.

Low proficiency in Swedish is often linked to poorer school performance, however, Andersson et al. (2019) argue that multilingualism itself is not the primary cause. Instead, the risk increases when it is combined with factors such as parents' low educational levels, the school's student composition, and limited participation in school-based extracurricular activities. Additionally, the decline in student performance can be attributed to broader systemic issues, including the increased use of computers and mobile phones in education, teachers' low expectations of students, and the decentralization of the school system. While these factors play a significant role, the most frequently cited explanation in public discourse remains students' proficiency in Swedish. Andersson et al. (2019) highlight that proficiency in the language of instruction is crucial for academic success. It is not just about navigating the social environment, understanding lessons, or following teachers' instructions—it is primarily about acquiring knowledge and developing cognitive skills through language.

3.2.2 The Debate on Language Proficiency and Multilingualism

But what leads to low language proficiency? The debate often points to multilingualism, perhaps because the proportion of multilingual students increased at the same time that Sweden's PISA results declined (Skolverket, 2013). However, low proficiency in Swedish has multiple causes. Regardless of whether a child is monolingual or multilingual, they primarily need sufficient exposure to the language and opportunities to use it. Otherwise, language cannot fully develop.

Socioeconomic disadvantage makes this more difficult. In socially disadvantaged areas, both teachers and parents—regardless of whether they are monolingual or multilingual—use fewer unique words and less complex sentences on average (Andersson et al., 2019). As a result, children are not exposed to the complex language they need to develop, either at home or in school. As Andersson et al. (2019) describe, these children are "doubly disadvantaged" because schools do not compensate for what is lacking at home. Socioeconomic conditions are therefore a contributing factor to low language proficiency.

Andersson et al. (2019) claim that no single factor alone causes low Swedish proficiency—it is the interplay of factors that does. The more risk factors a student faces, the greater the

impact. For a multilingual student, multilingualism itself is not a problem. It only becomes an issue when combined with unfavorable socioeconomic conditions, which limit exposure to and use of the language. On the other hand, if a child receives sufficient exposure to both of their languages, multilingualism can be an advantage and lead to better academic results, according to the researchers.

3.3 Digitalization

3.3.1 National Swedish Curriculum

The National Swedish Curriculum emphasizes the importance of preparing students for a society characterized by high information flow, increasing digitalization, and rapid change (Skolverket, 2022a). Schools are responsible for equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate this complex reality, ensuring they can "develop an understanding of how digitalisation affects the individual and societal development" (p. 8).

Additionally, all students must be given opportunities to develop their ability to use digital tools while adopting a "critical and responsible approach to digital technology, so that they are able to recognize opportunities, understand risks and evaluate information" (Skolverket, 2022a, p. 8). This highlights the dual role of digitalization in education, both as an opportunity for learning and as a challenge requiring critical engagement. Teachers are further encouraged to consider the norms and values embedded in digitalization, acknowledging both its benefits and potential risks. As digital tools increasingly shape language learning and communication, understanding their influence is crucial for developing students' digital competence and literacy in a rapidly evolving society.

3.3.2 Informal Digital Learning of English

Digitalization has significantly reshaped the linguistic landscape in Sweden, influencing how English is acquired and used in both formal and informal contexts. Many people use English regularly at work and in their studies, as well as in online gaming and social forums, where communication frequently occurs in English. This means that many spend a lot of time in an English-speaking environment, even without leaving Sweden (ISOF, 2024). This widespread exposure aligns with the concept of English as an International Language (EIL), where English serves as a tool for cross-cultural communication in various digital and professional

settings (McKay, 2018). As a result, Swedish students often acquire EFL in school but also as an international language through daily interactions in digital spaces. According to a survey by Magma (Stenberg-Sirén, 2018), Swedish youths extensively use English online, particularly for information searching, watching videos, and gaming, where English dominates as the preferred language. Notably, young males tend to use English more frequently online due to their engagement with international gaming communities.

Exposure to Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) activities has been highlighted as a factor positively impacting language acquisition. Lee and Sylvén (2021) found that Swedish students' willingness to communicate in English improved significantly with frequent IDLE engagement. Their comparative study between Korean and Swedish learners revealed that although digital activities benefit students generally, the impact was more pronounced among Korean students who have fewer opportunities to practice English offline compared to Swedish students.

3.3.3 Digital Tools in the Classroom

Digital tools such as educational apps, online platforms, and interactive multimedia resources have also demonstrated clear benefits in language learning. Gyeltshen and English (2021) found that integrating technology-based teaching methods, such as video clips and interactive presentations, significantly enhanced students' academic performance, motivation, and engagement. Their study indicated that students who received instruction through digital tools achieved higher test scores and reported greater enjoyment compared to traditional teaching methods. Such tools offer students valuable opportunities for individualized learning, allowing them to practice and develop English skills at their own pace.

However, digitalization also introduces challenges and concerns. Social media and online interactions often promote informal language usage characterized by slang, abbreviations, and grammatical inaccuracies. Sundqvist and Olin-Scheller (2015) observe a significant disparity between students' informal proficiency gained digitally and the formal academic skills required in school contexts, thus highlighting an essential area for educators and researchers to further explore and address.

4 Methods

With an increasing number of multilingual students in Swedish schools, understanding how their language backgrounds influence English acquisition is crucial. This study explores the challenges and advantages of being a multilingual EFL learner in connection to socioeconomic status and digitalization.

This study follows a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative data analysis to explore how multilingualism influences English acquisition among students in grades 4 and 5. The qualitative component consists of interviews with teachers and students, allowing for a deeper understanding of their experiences, challenges, and perceptions. A qualitative approach is suitable as it captures the complexity of language learning, considering factors such as prior language knowledge, exposure, and instructional strategies. Interviews provide rich, descriptive data and allow for diverse perspectives, ensuring insights from students with varying socioeconomic backgrounds and levels of Swedish proficiency.

The quantitative aspect involves analyzing grades in English across two different schools to identify performance patterns among students with Swedish as a second language (L2). This could reveal potential trends in multilingual students' academic outcomes. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods strengthens the study by providing both personal insights and measurable data, offering a comprehensive understanding of how L2 proficiency impacts L3 (English) learning and what strategies may best support multilingual learners in Swedish classrooms.

4.1 Participants

Five teachers from two different schools voluntarily participated in this study. To ensure anonymity, the first school is referred to as School A and the second as School B. These were also the schools where we conducted our teaching practice, which gave us valuable insight into their specific teaching environments. Two of the participants, Teacher 1A and Teacher 1B, were our teaching practice supervisors, which facilitated contact and helped build trust in the interview process. The criteria for selecting teachers were that they teach grades 4–6 and have experience teaching English. The teachers (see Table 1) are assigned aliases Teachers 1A–2B. Table 1 also includes their gender, current grade they teach, years of work

experience, and the dates of their interviews. The two schools are located in different cities in southern Sweden. School A is located in one of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas in the country, while School B is in a suburban area with a lower-than-average socioeconomic status. This is a relevant factor as we intend to analyze the socioeconomic aspects of learning English in Sweden.

Table 1

Participating teachers

Teacher	Gender	Grades	Work experience	Date of interview
Teacher 1A	F	5th	20 years	12 February 2025
Teacher 2A	F	5th	8 years	12 February 2025
Teacher 3A	F	5th	7 years	12 February 2025
Teacher 1B	M	4th	3,5 years	14 February 2025
Teacher 2B	M	5th	< 1 year	14 February 2025

We had many students to choose from, and the selected students did not hold any deeper significance than others who also met the criteria. Due to time constraints and to avoid generating more data than we could reasonably analyze, we decided to limit the number of participants. In collaboration with Teacher 1A and Teacher 1B respectively, we selected students who met the criteria relevant to our research focus—namely, multilingual learners living in lower socioeconomic areas and learning English as a third language (L3). For instance, one teacher suggested a student with reading and writing difficulties, which we felt could affect the results and validity, as this was not the intention of our study; therefore, we decided to select another student. The six participating students (see Table 2) were in grades 4 and 5. The 5th graders from School A were both from Teacher 1A's class, consisting of one girl and one boy. The 4th graders from School B were part of Teacher 1B's English class and included two girls and two boys. To maintain anonymity, the students are assigned aliases Students 1A–4B. While gender is noted in both tables, it is not used as an analysis variable.

Table 2

Participating students

Student	Gender	Grades	Age	Native language	Date of interview
Student 1A	F	5th	11 years	Arabic	12 February 2025
Student 2A	M	5th	11 years	Arabic	12 February 2025
Student 1B	F	4th	10 years	Arabic	14 February 2025
Student 2B	M	4th	10 years	Kurdish	14 February 2025
Student 3B	F	4th	10 years	Urdu, Danish	14 February 2025
Student 4B	M	4th	11 years	Romani Chib	14 February 2025

4.2 Materials

Incorporating elements of a mixed-method approach, primarily relies on interviews with both teachers and students. Since the research questions focus on participants' perceptions, thoughts, perspectives, among other factors, the analysis of grades serves as a complementary data set, enhancing the reliability of the interview interpretations. To ensure anonymity, we used a dictaphone to record all interviews.

4.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

To explore teachers' and students' perceptions of how multilingualism influences English learning, we conducted semi-structured interviews as our primary research method. A semi-structured interview allows for flexibility in both question order and formulation while following a general interview guide (Bryman, 2018). This approach enabled us to ask predefined questions while also adapting to participants' responses by posing follow-up questions when necessary. By using this method, we aimed to gain deeper insights into teachers' and students' experiences, ensuring that their perspectives were not restricted by rigid question structures. Kvale (2007) emphasizes that, unlike quantitative interviews that rely on fixed categories, qualitative interviews should be structured around themes. This allows interviewees to provide open-ended responses that reflect their personal experiences.

Kvale (2007) further argues that to foster meaningful interaction and the co-construction of knowledge during interviews, questions should be designed with a focus on two key dimensions: thematic and dynamic. By incorporating these dimensions, we aimed to create a

safe and comfortable environment that emphasized openness and reassured participants that there were no wrong answers. This was especially important for the children, as they might feel more pressure to answer "correctly" during these interviews. The interview questions were categorized into key thematic areas. For the teachers, the themes included (a) perceptions, (b) adaptations and methods, and (c) societal perspectives. The student interviews focused on (a) linguistic background, (b) perceptions, (c) education, and (d) societal perspectives (see Appendices C–D).

4.2.2 Grade Analysis

As an additional component to the interviews, we also gathered data on the students' English grades, specifically grades from 63 students: 23 from Teacher 1A and 40 from Teacher 1B (see Table 3). This grade analysis represents the quantitative aspect of our mixed-methods research. By comparing objective data (grades) with subjective data (interviews), we aimed to enhance the study's validity through methodological triangulation, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of students' language learning experiences (Grettve et al., 2014). For instance, if a student claims that "everything is easy" but has low grades in English, the discrepancy suggests a mismatch between their self-perception and actual performance. In such cases, the grade analysis adds an additional layer of credibility by providing objective evidence to support or challenge the interview responses.

In the Swedish grading system, students in grade 6 receive grades ranging from A–F. However, in grades 4 and 5, the grading scale is more simplified, consisting of three levels: fail (F), pass (E), and more than pass (D and higher). Since our study focused solely on grades 4 and 5, we were only provided with this simplified grading scale. Unfortunately, we did not have access to grade 6 teachers or students, which would have allowed for more detailed grade analysis using the A–F scale. This limitation makes it more difficult to assess nuanced differences in English proficiency but still offers valuable insight into student performance.

4.3 Procedure

To recruit participants for the study, we first contacted our supervisors from our teaching practice schools. With their help, we reached out to additional teachers at each school who might be interested in participating. When we visited the schools to hand out the consent

forms, we explained the purpose of the study to the participants. The interviews were conducted on two separate occasions: February 12th, 2025, for School A and February 14th, 2025, for School B. The procedures for both sessions were largely consistent. Teacher interviews lasted approximately 10–20 minutes, while student interviews ranged from 5–10 minutes. All interviews took place at the respective schools of the participants. To ensure that participants could express themselves freely and comfortably, all interviews were conducted in Swedish, as it is either their first or second language, facilitating more effective communication. Prior to the interviews, consent forms were sent out to both the teachers and the students' parents/legal guardians. Interviews were only conducted once the signed consent forms were returned, ensuring that all participants provided informed consent.

In order to protect participants' anonymity, all interviews were audio-recorded using a dictaphone borrowed from the university. To minimize interruptions and maintain the natural flow of conversation, we divided the tasks during the interviews: one of us conducted the interview while the other took notes in a shared document (Kvale, 2007). After the interviews, we listened carefully to the audio recordings and transcribed the parts relevant to our research focus. Once the transcriptions were complete, the recordings were deleted before the dictaphone was returned to the university. To gather data on the students' grades, we sought assistance from the teachers of the participating students, specifically Teacher 1A and Teacher 1B. The grades were collected from the teachers after the interviews had been completed.

4.4 Analysis

In this study, we primarily relied on detailed notes taken during the interviews. We structured our notes in a separate document, organizing them using the teachers' and students' code names. To ensure clarity, we used tables for structure while taking notes for each theme. While one of us conducted the interview, the other took notes, and we alternated roles equally throughout the process. After each interview, we reviewed and refined our notes together to ensure that key information was accurately captured.

When quoting participants, we listened back to the audio recordings to ensure the accuracy of direct quotes, translating them as closely to English as possible. We made the standard choice to use a broad orthographical transcription and omitted filler words such as "uhm" and "eh,"

as well as pauses or unclear formulations, to enhance readability while preserving the original meaning (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Rather than fully transcribing all interviews, we selectively transcribed the most relevant responses, excluding repetitive or irrelevant information that did not directly contribute to our research aim and questions. This approach allowed us to balance depth and efficiency, ensuring that the most meaningful insights were accurately represented while managing time constraints.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

This study follows the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2024) for conducting research. The council is a government agency in Sweden responsible for funding and promoting high-quality research. It operates under the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research and is the largest public research funding body in the country. The guidelines are as followed (p. 63):

- Participation is voluntary and based on informed consent. All invited participants have the right to decline or, if they initially agree, to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences.
- Participants will remain anonymous in the final report, and all collected data will be handled in accordance with ethical research guidelines.
- The collected material will be used exclusively for this study and will be securely stored until the examination is complete, after which it will be permanently destroyed.

First, we contacted Teachers 1A and 1B via text message, outlining the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and the option to withdraw at any time. They then informed the other teachers invited to participate. To distribute the consent forms (see Appendices A–B), we each visited Schools A and B in person, handing out the forms directly. During these visits, we met with the teachers and provided verbal explanations to the participating students regarding the study and their involvement. The parents/legal guardians were not only informed but also provided with a dedicated consent form. We also reassured participants before, during, and after the interviews that their identities, along with those of the school and municipality, would remain fully anonymous and that their data would not be shared with any external parties. As mentioned before, all recordings were deleted before the dictaphone had been returned to the university. Throughout the process, we strived to ensure that all participants felt respected, informed, and safe in contributing to the study.

When discussing societal perspectives with students, we were mindful of the sensitive nature of these questions. Since children may find it difficult to answer questions related to socioeconomic issues, we carefully phrased our questions to be respectful and non-stigmatizing, avoiding direct references to students or their families as financially disadvantaged. Importantly, we do not know the students' individual financial situations or their parents' educational backgrounds. Our study is based on the geographical context in which the students live—areas that are statistically categorized as having lower socioeconomic status. However, we recognize that not everyone living in such areas experiences poverty or comes from a background with low educational attainment. We remained conscious of this throughout the study and aimed to approach the topic with care and sensitivity.

5 Results

We investigated how multilingualism influences the process of learning EFL among students in grades 4 and 5. Specifically, we explore how teachers and students describe the challenges and advantages of being a multilingual EFL learner in connection to socioeconomic factors and digitalization.

The results are organized into five main parts: "Challenges and Advantages of being a Multilingual Learner," "Socioeconomic Factors Influencing EFL Acquisition," "Impact of Digitalization on English Language Learning," "Grade Analysis," and "Summary of Interview Responses." To enhance clarity, the first three sections include subsections for teachers and students. We will present the findings based on the responses obtained from the interviews and will also examine the students' grades in English to determine whether they align with the perceptions shared by teachers and students. We aim to compile and interpret the findings in relation to the experiences of both educators and learners. As noted in the methods section, all quotes have been translated from Swedish to English with Swedish grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions adapted for clarity and coherence in English. We also provide all translated interview questions (see Appendices C–D), along with an overview of students' grades and a summary of the interview responses (see Tables 3–5), to offer additional context and enhance understanding.

5.1 Challenges and Advantages of being a Multilingual Learner

5.1.1 Teachers' Perspectives

Teachers highlighted both advantages and challenges associated with multilingualism in English learning. Several teachers observed that multilingual students often develop strong oral skills in English, partly due to exposure outside the classroom, particularly through digital platforms. As Teacher 1A noted, "More students now interact with English outside school, such as through online gaming and social media, which has led to noticeable improvements in their speaking skills."

However, some teachers also pointed out that multilingual students sometimes become more proficient in English than in Swedish. Teacher 1A observed that some "students are better at

English than Swedish." This reflects a shift where students prioritize English as a stronger language due to frequent exposure, potentially at the expense of Swedish development.

Challenges arise when students lack proficiency in their first language (L1) or Swedish (L2). Teacher 2B emphasized that students who have not fully developed their L1 or L2 struggle to establish a foundation in English (L3): "If they don't have a fully developed language, it becomes very difficult to grasp English. But if they have a solid foundation in one or two languages, English learning is easier." Teacher 2A also pointed out difficulties in the learning sequence for multilingual students, explaining:

> A disadvantage or difficulty can be that they don't always understand what I say in Swedish, which I then have to translate into English. When learning English, it's easier to go from Arabic to English. But now, there is a gap. Some students know the words in English instead of in Swedish.

This suggests that multilingual students often learn English through their second language (L2), unlike native Swedish students who acquire it directly through their first language (L1). This additional linguistic step creates gaps in Swedish vocabulary, where students recognize English words but not their Swedish equivalents. Additionally, teachers reported code-switching and language interference among students. Teacher 1B explained that some multilingual students "mix languages and sometimes rely on English more than Swedish, which can be both an advantage and a disadvantage." This is particularly evident among newcomer students, who sometimes find English easier due to its global presence. Teacher 1B noted that "many newcomers are more comfortable with English because it's an international language." Many students also use English "playfully" and "socially at recess," incorporating it into informal interactions, games, and conversations with peers.

Linguistic background also influences English learning. Teacher 1B highlighted that multilingualism "depends on where the student comes from," emphasizing that students who come from linguistic backgrounds with non-Latin scripts (such as Arabic or Cyrillic) face additional challenges in learning both Swedish and English. Since both Swedish and English use the Latin alphabet, students who first need to transition from a different writing system take an extra step to fully grasp the language.

Similarly, Teacher 3A observed that language development does not always follow a predictable pattern. Some students who struggle with Swedish excel in English, while others who are strong in Swedish find English more challenging. Teacher 1A reinforced this by stating: "If they are weak in their mother tongue, and if they are weak in Swedish, English becomes a burden." She further explained that students sometimes mix words across languages, making it harder for them to solidify their English proficiency.

While the teachers acknowledged these challenges, they also shared adaptations in their teaching strategies to better support multilingual students. Visual aids, structured routines, and interactive activities were commonly mentioned. Teacher 1A, for instance, incorporates rhymes and chants to reinforce vocabulary (see Table 4). Other included methods were wordmats and wordlists to aid vocabulary retention, digital tools like Google Translate as scaffolding for understanding, and movies and social interactions as contextual learning opportunities. Teacher 2B also emphasized the importance of peer interaction in language development, stating, "The students are also a tool." This highlights how students support each other's learning through social engagement, collaboration, and informal language practice during recess and class activities.

5.1.2 Students' Perspectives

Students expressed mixed opinions on whether being multilingual facilitated or hindered their English learning. Some students believed that knowing multiple languages made learning English more difficult, as switching between languages required additional cognitive effort. Student 1A described this challenge, stating, "It's harder to focus on one language when you already speak many." Similarly, Student 1B pointed out that linguistic differences can add complexity: "It's different letters and dialects compared to Arabic."

However, others felt that having prior language experience helped them recognize linguistic patterns and similarities between languages. Student 2B noted, "I already knew some English words before I started learning it because my brother taught me." Student 1B further supported this view, saying, "It's easier to learn English if you already know another language."

When discussing language preferences, most students felt most comfortable in their L1, although many enjoyed their L2 (Swedish) more. Interestingly, only one of the students,

Student 4B, expressed a preference for English as their dominant or favorite language. Student 1A explained, “You can speak English with more people, but Swedish is more useful here and in the classroom with friends.” Student 3B added, “I speak Swedish with my sister, but with Urdu, I can talk to more people and explain myself better because I know more words.”

For some students, alphabetic differences played a role in language learning difficulty. Student 2A reflected on this challenge, stating, “English and Swedish have similar letters and alphabets, but Arabic is easier, and English is a little harder.” This observation aligns with Teacher 1B’s comment that students from linguistic backgrounds with non-Latin scripts (such as Arabic or Cyrillic) face additional challenges in transitioning to both Swedish and English.

When discussing strengths and weaknesses in language skills, most students reported that speaking and listening were their strongest abilities, while writing posed the greatest challenge. Student 4B explained, “I recognize words when reading, but writing them is completely different.” These findings align with teachers’ observations that students are developing stronger oral skills due to increased exposure to English through digital platforms but struggle with writing proficiency.

However, not all students found English challenging. Some, like Student 2B, who had previous knowledge of English and speaks Swedish fluently, stated, “I think English is really easy. You write, watch movies, and learn.” This echoes Teacher 1A’s insight that some multilingual students can become more proficient in English than in Swedish, particularly if they engage with the language outside of school.

Despite the challenges, students enjoyed creative and social learning activities in English. They particularly appreciated the activities designed by their teachers, reinforcing the importance of interactive and engaging methods in EFL instruction. Furthermore, all students felt supported by their teachers, suggesting that classroom strategies such as visual aids, peer interaction, and structured routines are effective in creating a positive learning environment.

5.2 Socioeconomic Factors Influencing EFL Acquisition

5.2.1 Teachers' Perspectives

Teachers acknowledged that socioeconomic and cultural factors significantly shape multilingual students' English learning experiences. A recurring theme in the interviews was that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often lack the home support necessary for academic development. Teacher 1A stated, "A low socioeconomic background often means parents can't provide academic support, such as reading books with their children." This was reinforced by Teacher 2A, who explained that many parents never attended school in their home country and are unable to assist their children with homework:

> Not many students get help with English at home. Not many parents went to school in their home country. Some are illiterate and can't help their children. Others have had formal schooling, so there's a big difference in the kind of support students receive.

Beyond literacy support, home environments and external stressors also impact multilingual students' learning. Teacher 2A described how some students face challenges such as crime and instability, which can affect their focus and ability to perform academically:

> We are meeting a different type of child, with different home situations. There is a lot happening around them—crime, instability—many things can disrupt them. They see things that make them anxious, and they can't perform at the same level.

Similarly, Teacher 1B highlighted that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may have limited experiences outside their immediate environment, making it harder to relate to certain topics in school: "There are many socioeconomic factors—financial struggles, divorced parents. Many students who have lived in this municipality their entire lives have never even seen the city center or more popular areas. They don't leave their hometown often."

This can make it more difficult to expand conversations in the classroom, requiring teachers to actively expose students to new knowledge and perspectives. Teachers also noted that multilingual students' Swedish proficiency tends to decline after school breaks, as they

default to speaking their native language at home, further impacting their ability to transition between languages.

Cultural factors also play a role in shaping students' exposure to language and their understanding of certain concepts. Teacher 3A pointed out that students from different cultural backgrounds may lack exposure to everyday experiences that are common in Sweden: "They may not know everyday words like 'beach' or 'dock' because their families don't take traditional Swedish vacations. Some students visit their home country, but they don't go on a 'typical' holiday."

However, teachers also saw positive cultural influences in English learning. Teacher 1B highlighted the role of global pop culture, explaining that some students "learn English through exposure to Hollywood movies and international media, which can give them strong listening and speaking skills but may also lead to gaps in academic vocabulary."

Teacher 2B provided an example of how cultural diversity can enhance English learning, describing a classroom activity with tongue twisters:

> We were doing tongue twisters in English, and I asked if anyone knew some in another language. One student shared three or four in Turkish. She got to shine, and the whole class became more interested. It didn't directly contribute to the lesson, but it added engagement. Their cultural experiences bring something valuable to the classroom.

This highlights the importance of integrating students' cultural knowledge into teaching, not only to support engagement but also to create a more inclusive and motivating learning environment. Even if certain activities don't align directly with the curriculum, they help foster openness and participation, which is crucial for second-language learners.

Teachers emphasized that parental attitudes toward education were generally positive, with many parents expressing strong aspirations for their children's success. Teacher 3A noted that parents often want their children to become doctors or pursue other prestigious careers but may not fully understand the academic challenges involved: "They want their children to succeed, to become doctors, but they don't realize how much work it takes to get there."

However, many parents struggle to support their children academically due to language barriers and unfamiliarity with the Swedish school system. Teacher 1B observed that while parents want to help, they struggle to understand the information sent by schools: “Often, when parents don’t know the language, it’s hard for them to understand the information teachers send out. They want to help, but they struggle to support their child in school.”

This aligns with Teacher 2B’s experience, where some parents are actively engaged in their child’s education, while others see school as something separate from home life “You can often tell which students have parents who are involved in school and which ones see it as just something they have to do.”

Overall, teachers recognized that socioeconomic and cultural factors influence multilingual students’ English learning in complex ways. While some challenges create barriers to language development, cultural diversity also brings opportunities for engagement and enrichment. Teachers emphasized the importance of adapting their teaching methods to meet these diverse needs, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have access to meaningful and motivating English education.

5.2.2 Students’ Perspectives

Students confirmed that their home environments influenced their English learning experience. While some students had family members who could help them with English, others did not. Student 3B mentioned, “My parents don’t speak English, so I don’t get much help at home.” Conversely, Student 1B stated, “My parents know English and help me with my homework.”

Additionally, students who had more exposure to English through home media and entertainment reported feeling more comfortable with the language. Student 2B explained, “I watch English videos all the time, and that helps me learn new words.” However, this self-directed learning also posed risks, as students might be exposed to informal or inappropriate language rather than structured learning content, a concern raised by Teacher 1B.

5.3 Impact of Digitalization on English Language Learning

5.3.1 Teachers' Perspectives

Even before being asked directly about digitalization, many teachers brought up its influence on English learning, highlighting both its benefits and challenges. Teachers widely agreed that digitalization has significantly influenced English learning, particularly by increasing students' exposure to the language. Many students engage with English outside of school through social media, gaming, and online interactions, which has contributed to improved listening and speaking skills. As mentioned before, Teacher 1A emphasized that English is now a constant presence in students' everyday lives, making it more accessible than ever before. Similarly, Teacher 1B pointed out that students are frequently engaging in group chats and using microphones to communicate while gaming, allowing them to practice English in authentic social contexts.

However, teachers also expressed concerns about overreliance on digital tools and the potential for negative influences. While digitalization provides easier access to English, it also means students can be exposed to inappropriate language, negative online interactions, slang, and informal grammar structures. Teacher 1B, who generally viewed digitalization as mostly beneficial for English development, acknowledged that "students are using English more than ever through social media and gaming," but also noted that "they may encounter swearing and negative behaviors." Similarly, Teacher 2A pointed out that while students engage with English more frequently than before, their online choices can shape whether this exposure is beneficial or distracting: "They can also choose the 'wrong' things to do online."

Another challenge teachers highlighted was the increasing dependence on tools like Google Translate. Teacher 2B noted that while translation tools can help students understand instructions or unfamiliar words, they can also hinder their ability to develop independent writing skills: "Students use digital tools to translate words but struggle when they need to produce original content." Additionally, he raised concerns about students' patience for writing longer texts by hand. Teacher 3A also pointed out that handwriting skills are deteriorating, explaining that while digital tools can support weaker language learners, students still need to practice reading and writing without screens.

Several teachers observed that increased digitalization is changing the balance between English and Swedish development. Teacher 1B described a student who speaks English with an older sibling, Arabic with their parents, and only uses Swedish at school—resulting in a weaker overall grasp of Swedish. He emphasized that while learning English is valuable, it should not come at the expense of Swedish proficiency: "It's never a bad thing to know another language, but it shouldn't replace Swedish." This connects to earlier teacher observations that language development does not always follow a predictable pattern—some students become stronger in English than Swedish, while others struggle with both languages due to limited exposure at home.

While some teachers viewed digitalization as mostly positive, others were more cautious, emphasizing that its impact depends on how it is used. Teacher 1A felt that digitalization in English learning was "almost entirely positive," acknowledging concerns about screen time but emphasizing its role in enhancing English proficiency. Similarly, Teacher 1B argued that for language learning to develop, students need exposure through speaking, writing, reading, and listening—all of which digital tools provide.

However, Teacher 2B expressed a more conflicted view, explaining that digitalization is both "a major distraction for some students and a valuable tool for others." He also noted that emerging AI technologies could pose new challenges in the future, particularly as students become increasingly reliant on technology for language production rather than independent learning.

5.3.2 Students' Perspectives

Students overwhelmingly acknowledged the positive role of digital media in their English learning. Many reported that they watch English-language videos, use social media, and play games where they communicate in English. Student 4B, for example, shared, "I watch English videos all the time, and I understand more English the more I watch." Similarly, Student 1B credited social media for their language development: "Yes, I use it a lot, it's basically where I learned English. I see new words and hear how they are pronounced."

However, not all students engage with English content to the same extent. Some reported using social media only occasionally or not actively seeking out English content. Student 1A watches English videos "not that often", while Student 3B stated that they mostly watch

videos in Danish and Urdu, as those languages are spoken at home. Despite this, Student 3B shared an interesting strategy for reinforcing English: "When [Teacher 1B] speaks English, I mumble what he says in my head to remember how to say it." She also mentioned using the same technique when watching English videos at home.

Many students recognized the connection between social media and English development, particularly in spoken language and vocabulary acquisition. Student 2B, for instance, humorously noted, "Yes, I use all social media except Facebook," and later admitted that TikTok has helped him learn a lot of English. Student 2A also observed that English videos sometimes help with word recognition, explaining, "I sometimes watch English videos where they say words I already know, but slowly." This aligns with teachers' perspectives that students develop strong listening skills through digital exposure but may still struggle with academic vocabulary and writing.

Despite the advantages of digital learning, some students expressed frustration when transitioning from digital tools to independent writing. Student 4B explained, "I can recognize words when reading, but when I try to write, I don't know how to spell them." This relates to Teacher 2B's observation that students often rely on digital tools for writing but struggle when they need to produce original content.

Additionally, the dominance of English in digital spaces raised concerns about the balance between Swedish and English proficiency. Student 4B acknowledged this, saying, "I know Swedish, but it's much more fun to listen to things in English." This supports Teacher 1B's concern that while learning English is valuable, it should not come at the expense of Swedish development—especially when multilingual students primarily use English online, Swedish at school, and another language at home.

5.4 Grade Analysis

This section examines whether the subjective experiences of teachers and students align with objective data—students' grades. Based on the grading information provided by Teachers 1A and 1B, there was no significant difference in English performance between students from different linguistic backgrounds. However, it is important to note that these students are in 4th and 5th grade, where the A–F grading scale has not yet been implemented. This makes it

difficult to draw definitive conclusions about achievement gaps. Nevertheless, the available data still provides valuable insight into early trends in language proficiency among multilingual learners.

Table 3

Summary of Students' English Grades for L1 and L2 Swedish Learner

Teacher's class	Fail	Pass	More than pass
Teacher 1A (5th grade)	3 students	10 students	10 students
Teacher 1B (4th grade)	4 students	36 students	0 students

The results indicate that all two L1 Swedish students in Teacher 1A's class achieved more than a pass, while the remaining students in the class are L2 learners. Among those who failed, all three were L2 learners, but since L2 learners make up the vast majority of this class, their representation among the failing students reflects the overall class composition. In Teacher 1B's class, where the student population is evenly split between L1 and L2 learners, four students failed—two L1 and two L2 students.

5.5 Summary of Interview Responses

The following tables present a summarized overview of the responses collected from teacher and student interviews. Table 4 highlights key themes from the teacher interviews, including their perceptions of students' strengths and challenges, support strategies they employ, and the impact of digitalization. Table 5 offers insight into student perspectives, detailing which aspects of English they find easiest and most difficult, whether they feel understood in class, and how often they engage with social media—an informal channel through which many practice English. These tables aim to provide a clear, comparative snapshot of the data to support the themes discussed in the analysis.

Table 4

Summary of teachers' interview responses

Teacher	Observed strengths	Observed challenges	Support strategies	Impact of digitalization
Teacher 1A	Speaking	Writing	Rhymes, Chants	Improved English skills
Teacher 2A	Speaking	Writing	Rhymes, Chants, Repetition, Interactive	Accessibility to encounter English
Teacher 3A	Listening	Speaking, Writing, Reading	Repetition, Listening to texts	Both positive and negative
Teacher 1B	Reading	Speaking	Digital tools, Study guidance, Familiar topics	Mostly positive for English acquisition
Student 2B	Speaking	Writing	Wordmats, Wordlists, Digital tools, Students as tools	Both positive and negative

Table 5

Summary of students' interview responses

Student	Easiest to learn	Most difficult	Feels understood	Uses social media
Student 1A	Speaking	Writing	Yes	Sometimes
Student 2A	Speaking	Writing	Yes	Sometimes
Student 1B	Listening	Speaking, Writing	Yes	Often
Student 2B	Speaking	Listening	Yes	Often
Student 3B	Reading	Writing	Yes	Often
Student 4B	Listening	Writing	Yes	Often

6 Discussion

This study examined how being a multilingual learner—in connection to socioeconomic factors and digitalization—influences students' acquisition of EFL. By analyzing teacher and student perspectives, as well as English grades, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and advantages associated with learning English as an L3 for students who speak Swedish as an L2. The results reveal variation in students' English proficiency, with some excelling while others face significant difficulties. These findings support earlier research suggesting that multilingualism does not inherently facilitate or hinder language acquisition; rather, its impact depends on contextual factors such as linguistic background, socioeconomic conditions, and the level of instructional support (Hammarberg, 2016; Andersson et al., 2019).

6.1 Multilingualism: A Double-Edged Sword?

One of the central themes that emerged from this study was the dual impact of multilingualism on EFL acquisition. While multilingualism can provide students with cognitive and linguistic advantages (Hammarberg, 2016), it also presents challenges, particularly in literacy development and academic writing. The teacher and student interviews, as well as the analysis of students' English grades, revealed a polarization in English proficiency: some students demonstrated strong oral and listening skills, whereas others struggled with grammar, vocabulary, and written production.

6.1.1 Teachers' Perspectives on Multilingualism

Teachers in this study emphasized that multilingualism is not inherently an obstacle to learning English; however, it becomes challenging when students lack proficiency in their L1 or L2. Teacher 2B stated that students with a solid foundation in their first or second language tend to acquire English more easily, whereas those with weaker skills in their L1 or L2 struggle significantly. This observation supports Hammarberg's (2016) claim that a well-developed L1 and L2 provide cognitive and linguistic advantages when acquiring an L3. However, this raises important questions about equity in language education. If multilingualism only becomes an advantage under the condition of strong prior language proficiency, then what happens to students whose linguistic development has been disrupted by factors such as migration, interrupted schooling, or limited support at home? Rather than viewing multilingualism as a uniform benefit, it must be understood as deeply shaped by

context. Some students may find their linguistic resources empowering, while others may experience them as a source of confusion or academic difficulty—particularly when schools are not equipped to support additive multilingualism. These findings challenge the assumption that multilingual students are always at an advantage and suggest a need for more differentiated and inclusive language instruction that takes into account the varying levels of L1 and L2 proficiency among learners.

At the same time, some teachers observed that certain multilingual students develop stronger skills in English than in Swedish, particularly those who engage heavily in digital spaces. Teacher 1A noted that some students are "better at English than Swedish," highlighting a shift where English proficiency becomes dominant, especially in oral communication. While this may be considered an advantage in an increasingly globalized world, with English as an international language (McKay, 2018), it also raises concerns about linguistic displacement—where students' proficiency in Swedish as a second language (L2), particularly in academic contexts, may lag behind. This observation aligns with Hammarberg's (2016) findings, which stress the importance of well-developed L1 and L2 proficiency when acquiring a third language.

From a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective, Halliday (Gibbons, 2016) emphasizes that academic language is learned through exposure to subject-specific contexts and classroom interaction. Students who primarily use Swedish in school but not at home may struggle to develop the academic register needed for success. This suggests that English, particularly in a digitalized and internationalized society, can compete with Swedish for linguistic dominance, potentially shaping multilingual students' linguistic identities—a concern raised by Teacher 1B. However, it remains unclear whether this shift is temporary or if it carries long-term consequences for students' academic achievement and identity development. Further research is needed to examine whether these learners eventually achieve a balanced multilingual identity or continue to face challenges due to underdeveloped L2 proficiency in Swedish.

Furthermore, several teachers noted that code-switching among multilingual students can be both a strength and a challenge. Some students demonstrated the ability to switch languages strategically, using their multilingual repertoire to aid comprehension and participation in class. In contrast, others showed signs of language interference—where grammatical rules

from one language affect the use of another—particularly in writing. This led to difficulties with syntax, vocabulary, and formal register, especially in academic contexts. These observations align with De Angelis (2015), who emphasizes that factors such as L2 exposure and parental education significantly influence students' ability to manage multiple languages. This suggests that while code-switching can reflect high linguistic awareness, it also reveals the complexities of navigating multiple linguistic systems without consistent support or scaffolding in all of them.

From Halliday's SFL perspective (Gibbons, 2016), this struggle can be understood as an issue of register and context. Halliday's theory suggests that language is not merely acquired cognitively, but is deeply embedded in social and cultural environments. Students who lack exposure to Swedish in academic and home environments may struggle to grasp formal academic English, as their learning is shaped by a linguistic system that does not always align with the structures of Swedish or their L1. This raises an important question: Are multilingual students struggling with English per se, or is the challenge rooted in the gap between the informal and formal registers of both Swedish and English? If so, it suggests that language instruction should not just focus on English proficiency but also on supporting students in navigating academic registers across all their languages.

6.1.2 Students' Perspectives on Multilingualism

Students' responses further illustrate the complex relationship between multilingualism and English acquisition. Some students felt that knowing multiple languages made learning English easier, as they could identify similarities between languages. For instance, Student 2A stated, "English and Swedish have similar letters and alphabets, but Arabic is easier, and English is a little harder," demonstrating an awareness of cross-linguistic similarities and differences. Meanwhile, Student 2B stated, "I think English is really easy. I write, watch movies, and learn," suggesting that prior language knowledge helped them engage with English through various modes. These responses support Moghtadi et al.'s (2014) findings that L2 proficiency can facilitate L3 acquisition by providing learners with transferable linguistic structures and metacognitive strategies. However, it is important to question whether this advantage applies equally to all multilingual learners, or if factors such as literacy skills, exposure to academic language, and home language use play a greater role in English acquisition than multilingualism itself.

At the same time, some students reported that navigating multiple languages could be mentally taxing rather than helpful. Student 1A noted, “It’s harder to focus on one language when you already speak many,” indicating that juggling several linguistic systems can lead to cognitive overload or confusion—particularly when the languages differ significantly in structure or usage. This observation reflects Hammarberg’s (2016) view that while multilingualism can offer cognitive and linguistic benefits, it can also result in cross-linguistic interference when learners lack strong proficiency in one or more of their languages. De Angelis (2015) similarly notes that students may struggle to separate linguistic systems when formal support is inconsistent across languages. These findings raise important questions about whether such difficulties stem from multilingualism itself, or from the way languages are taught and supported in educational contexts. If students are not given structured opportunities to transfer skills between languages, multilingualism may feel more like a challenge than a resource, which may lead to frustration, uneven academic development, or gaps in literacy across languages.

Additionally, students expressed varying levels of confidence across language skills. While many reported stronger listening and speaking skills, writing was often described as the most difficult, a challenge also highlighted by teachers. This difficulty in developing formal literacy skills suggests that while multilingualism provides advantages in oral language development, it may also require additional support in written language proficiency. This aligns with Sundqvist and Olin-Scheller (2015), who found that students develop strong informal oral proficiency through digital media but lack academic writing competence. The National Swedish Curriculum acknowledges that students need opportunities for “discussion, reading and writing” to build their linguistic confidence (Skolverket, 2022a, p. 43).

6.1.3 English Grades and Multilingualism

To further examine whether teachers’ and students’ perceptions aligned with objective academic performance, this study analyzed students’ English grades. Overall, the results showed no consistent or clear performance gap between L1 and L2 learners, suggesting that multilingualism in itself does not determine English proficiency. However, the data revealed polarized outcomes, indicating a more complex relationship between multilingualism, digital exposure, and academic success.

In Teacher 1A's class, the only two L1 Swedish students both achieved more than a pass, while three L2 students failed. However, it is important to note that L2 learners made up the majority of the class, which makes it difficult to draw general conclusions about the impact of linguistic background alone. In contrast, Teacher 1B's class had an even split between L1 and L2 learners, and among the four students who failed, two were L1 and two were L2. These mixed results highlight that poor performance is not exclusive to L2 learners and that other contextual factors likely play a significant role. These findings challenge the assumption that multilingual students are inherently disadvantaged in English learning. Instead, the variation in performance suggests that multilingualism alone is not a determining factor; rather, academic outcomes are shaped by a combination of linguistic, educational, and socioeconomic influences. This aligns with Andersson et al. (2019), who argue that lower academic performance among some multilingual students is not caused by multilingualism per se, but rather by how multilingualism interacts with broader structural factors, such as access to academic resources and language support.

Rather than signaling a contradiction, the differences in grade outcomes across classrooms underscore the importance of avoiding generalizations about multilingual learners. Some L2 students performed well, and some L1 students struggled. This indicates that English proficiency cannot be predicted by linguistic background alone and must be understood in relation to broader educational and social contexts.

6.2 Socioeconomic Factors: English Language Learning in Unequal Contexts

Socioeconomic status emerged as another significant factor influencing students' English proficiency—often in ways that intersect with, rather than simply add to, the challenges of multilingualism (Andersson et al., 2019; De Angelis, 2015). Teachers in this study frequently described how students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face limitations in academic support at home. This was not solely attributed to financial hardship but also to parents' lack of formal education or limited proficiency in Swedish, which made it difficult for them to assist with homework or engage in school communication. These challenges illustrate that educational support is not just a matter of motivation or willingness, but of access and ability. As Andersson et al. (2019) argue, it is the combination of socioeconomic disadvantage and

multilingualism—not either one in isolation—that creates additional barriers to academic success.

Importantly, the National Swedish Curriculum underscores the importance of equity and inclusion in education (Skolverket, 2022a). Yet these ideals can be difficult to uphold in practice when structural inequalities—such as lack of home support or exposure to academic language—go unaddressed. This is particularly relevant for students who are expected to learn English through Swedish, even though Swedish itself is not their first language. The compounded challenge of learning an L3 (English) through an underdeveloped L2 (Swedish) adds an additional layer of complexity to their language acquisition journey.

Because of the sensitive nature of socioeconomic status—especially when interviewing children—we deliberately chose not to ask students direct questions about their families' financial circumstances. Instead, we approached the topic more generally, using age-appropriate language (see Appendix D). Therefore, this analysis does not draw conclusions about individual students' economic status. Rather, our discussion is based on the broader socioeconomic contexts of the schools and neighborhoods in which the participants live—areas that are statistically categorized as having lower socioeconomic status (SCB, 2022). While we acknowledge that not every student in such areas experiences financial hardship, this geographical lens allows us to explore how structural disadvantages may shape students' educational experiences—particularly in relation to language development, resource access, and academic confidence.

The PISA results analyzed in Skolverket (2013) confirm that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds struggle more in core subjects, including English. This trend was echoed by teachers in our study, who emphasized that students from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas often enter school with weaker foundational literacy in Swedish—skills that are essential for developing academic English. One contributing factor is the limited exposure to Swedish in the home environment, particularly in families where the student's L1 is predominantly spoken.

Several teachers noted that students who lacked a solid grasp of Swedish vocabulary and grammar also struggled with more complex English tasks, especially those requiring academic reading and writing—supporting the view that weak L2 proficiency can hinder the

acquisition of a third language (Hammarberg, 2016; Moghtadi et al., 2014). However, this relationship is not entirely straightforward. The challenges these students face cannot be attributed solely to linguistic factors or socioeconomic status in isolation. Rather, it is the interplay between structural inequality, language environment, and institutional support that creates compounded barriers to learning.

While multilingual students may develop strong oral English skills informally through digital platforms or peer interaction, the lack of academic scaffolding in both Swedish and English may leave them underprepared for the demands of formal education. Some students expressed frustration during the interviews, explaining that learning English became even more difficult when Swedish itself still posed a challenge. This underscores how navigating multiple languages can be especially demanding when foundational language skills are underdeveloped.

These findings reinforce the importance of understanding how multiple, intersecting factors—such as parental education, access to academic language at home, and school resources—converge to shape English language development (Andersson et al., 2019; De Angelis, 2015). While these challenges are often linked to socioeconomic conditions and limited access to language-rich environments, it is crucial to recognize that such factors do not affect all students in the same way. Some multilingual learners may demonstrate resilience and strong language development despite these obstacles, depending on variables such as personal motivation, prior educational experiences, or support systems outside of school. These findings highlight that the primary challenge for multilingual learners may not be their multilingualism itself, but rather the structural inequalities surrounding their access to linguistic, educational, and social resources. They also raise critical questions about the extent to which schools are equipped to recognize and address these disparities in order to create equitable conditions for language learning.

From an SFL perspective, these findings reinforce the notion that language development is socially situated. According to Halliday's theory (Gibbons, 2016), acquiring academic language requires access to formal registers—something that students from linguistically and economically marginalized environments may lack. In this light, language learning becomes not just a cognitive challenge but a social and structural one.

Further, Andersson et al. (2019) note that academic performance is shaped by a broader network of factors, including school demographics, teacher expectations, and the influence of digital media—dimensions that were also reflected in our findings. Teachers expressed concern that students with limited access to academic Swedish at home enter the classroom already at a disadvantage. Yet, our student interviews also revealed that some learners actively use digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and gaming communities to engage with English, partially compensating for the lack of formal language exposure. This aligns with Lee and Sylvén (2021), who found that informal digital input can serve as a valuable supplement to school-based instruction, particularly for students with fewer academic resources at home.

6.3 Digitalization: Opportunity or Obstacle?

Digitalization is a key factor in the learning experiences of multilingual students, offering both opportunities and obstacles. Teachers and students agreed that digital tools enhance listening and speaking skills, as students frequently engage with English through social media, video content, and gaming environments—forms of incidental learning that offer authentic exposure to language in use. These observations align with Stenberg-Sirén (2018), as well as Lee and Sylvén's (2021) research on Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE), which found that frequent digital engagement enhances students' willingness to communicate and increases input in meaningful, low-pressure contexts.

However, while digital engagement may support oral fluency, it does not guarantee balanced language development. Several teachers raised concerns about the overreliance on digital tools—particularly translation apps like Google Translate—which may undermine students' ability to produce original and coherent writing. Teacher 1B observed that students often translate word by word without understanding grammar or context, making it difficult for them to write independently. Likewise, Teacher 3A pointed out a decline in handwriting skills as students increasingly depend on computers for written tasks. These observations align with Sundqvist and Olin-Scheller's (2015) findings that digitalization often strengthens informal oral skills but does not necessarily foster academic writing proficiency. Similarly, Gyeltshen and English (2021) caution that although digital tools can increase motivation and engagement, their overuse may hinder deeper language processing and critical thinking.

This issue stands in contrast to the goals set by the National Swedish Curriculum, which emphasizes the development of digital competence alongside the ability to critically evaluate digital information (Skolverket, 2022a). When students use digital resources uncritically or as a shortcut, they may miss out on meaningful opportunities to develop foundational literacy and independent language skills. These concerns emphasize the need for structured guidance in the classroom to ensure that digital tools are used as supplements to—not substitutes for—academic language development.

Despite these concerns, students overwhelmingly perceived digitalization as beneficial to their English learning. Many shared that they learned English passively through exposure, rather than actively studying. Student 4B shared, "I watch English videos all the time, and I understand more English the more I watch," while Student 3B described mimicking her teacher's speech and English videos in her head to remember pronunciation. These self-initiated strategies illustrate a high degree of linguistic engagement and support previous findings that digital platforms can increase students' willingness to communicate in English (Lee & Sylvén, 2021).

However, these informal learning experiences also revealed a mismatch between students' perceptions of proficiency and academic expectations. While students felt confident in their listening and speaking abilities, several acknowledged ongoing difficulties with writing and spelling—areas that require explicit instruction and practice. This highlights the importance of scaffolding in the classroom to help students transfer their informal digital fluency into formal academic skills. The key issue, then, is not whether digital tools are helpful, but whether students are supported in using them as a bridge toward broader language development and academic success.

Interestingly, students from School A—which is located in an area with a lower socioeconomic status than School B—reported using digital tools and social media less frequently than students from School B. This observation supports Andersson et al.'s (2019) argument that digitalization is not always equitable. While digital tools can offer additional learning opportunities, students from lower-income backgrounds may have limited access to these resources, further widening the gap in academic achievement.

However, access alone is not the full story. Even among multilingual students who do use digital tools frequently, the quality of engagement—what they do, how critically they engage, and how it connects to formal education—varies widely. Some multilingual students are now exposed to English outside the classroom through platforms like YouTube and online gaming, giving them access to English in more immersive and engaging ways than through the traditional school model, where English is primarily taught through Swedish. While this can create new learning opportunities, it also raises questions about equity—since not all students have the same access, support, or digital literacy to benefit equally.

This nuance points to a significant challenge for schools in ensuring educational equity, as emphasized in the National Swedish Curriculum, which states that schools should compensate for students' different conditions and create opportunities for all to develop their knowledge (Skolverket, 2022a). As Andersson et al. (2019) argue, digital resources can reinforce existing socioeconomic gaps when students from lower-income families have fewer opportunities for engagement outside school. While studies such as Lee and Sylvén (2021) emphasize the benefits of informal digital learning and suggest that digital engagement can enhance motivation and language development, our findings challenge the assumption that all students benefit equally from digital tools. Instead, this study highlights the responsibility of schools to ensure access, inclusion, and meaningful integration of digital resources in the language learning process (Skolverket, 2022a).

Another concern raised by teachers was that some students acquire English at the expense of their Swedish development. Teacher 1B noted that certain students primarily use English online and at home with siblings, leading to a situation where Swedish is spoken almost exclusively in the classroom. This echoes De Angelis's (2015) findings that limited L2 exposure—in this case, Swedish—can negatively affect both academic performance and L3 acquisition, particularly in writing. In this context, digitalization not only reshapes how students engage with English, but also disrupts the balance in their multilingual repertoire. It raises further questions about language hierarchy and identity: when students invest more in English than Swedish, how does that impact their relationship with school, the curriculum, and their own linguistic development? Are schools doing enough to value and strengthen Swedish in multilingual students' everyday lives?

7 Conclusion

This study explores how being a multilingual learner—interconnected with socioeconomic factors and digitalization—influences the acquisition of EFL among multilingual L2 students in Swedish primary schools grades 4 and 5. By analyzing teacher and student perspectives, as well as English grades, this study provides insights into the challenges and advantages faced by multilingual learners.

The first research question asked: How do teachers and students describe challenges and advantages of being a multilingual learner in the context of EFL? The findings suggest that multilingualism is neither inherently an advantage nor a disadvantage. While some students benefit from cross-linguistic transfer and develop strong oral English skills, others struggle, particularly with writing and grammar. Teachers noted that students with a strong foundation in their first or second language tend to acquire English more easily, whereas those with weaker proficiency in their L1 or L2 face greater difficulties. Some multilingual students even demonstrated stronger English proficiency than Swedish, particularly those who engage heavily in digital environments. This aligns with previous research on the role of prior language knowledge in L3 acquisition. However, multilingualism can also lead to language interference, especially in academic writing.

The second research question asked: How does socioeconomic status influence the experiences of multilingual learners in acquiring EFL? This study found that students from areas with lower-income backgrounds may have limited academic support at home, which may contribute to lower achievement in English. Teachers reported that parents with limited formal education or Swedish proficiency may struggle to assist with homework, making it more difficult for students to develop academic literacy in both Swedish and English. This supports previous research highlighting the role of parental education and home literacy in language development. At the same time, teachers in this study expressed concerns that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may not always receive the additional support needed to bridge these gaps—raising questions about equity in language education.

The third research question asked: How does digitalization influence the English language learning experiences of multilingual learners? We found that digitalization has both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, students who engage with English through gaming,

social media, and online content tend to develop stronger listening and speaking skills, as they are frequently exposed to the language in informal digital environments. On the other hand, many students rely heavily on digital translation tools, which may hinder their ability to develop independent writing skills. Furthermore, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds reported using digital tools less frequently, raising concerns about disparities in access to digital resources and their impact on language learning opportunities.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings, and the reliance on qualitative interviews means that results are based on self-reported perceptions rather than standardized assessments. The absence of A–F grading in the analyzed student data may have affected the precision of the results, as it limited the ability to draw definitive conclusions about achievement gaps. Future research could expand on these findings by incorporating a larger sample and longitudinal studies to track multilingual students’ English proficiency over time. Additionally, further research could also examine the role of instructional strategies in bridging the gap between informal and academic English proficiency.

Ultimately, this study highlights the complexity of language learning in multilingual settings. While multilingualism can offer cognitive and linguistic advantages, its benefits are not evenly distributed. Teachers play a crucial role in supporting students by ensuring that digital tools are used effectively while also fostering strong foundational literacy skills. By considering the diverse backgrounds and experiences of multilingual learners, educators can create inclusive learning environments that maximize students’ linguistic potential while addressing barriers to academic success. Thus, our final point is that while multilingualism influences EFL acquisition, background factors such as socioeconomic status, digital exposure, and instructional support play an even greater role in shaping students’ English proficiency and academic success.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Consent forms for teachers

LÄRANDE OCH SAMHÄLLE INSTITUTION

På lärarutbildningen vid Malmö universitet skriver studenterna ett examensarbete på avancerad nivå. I detta arbete ingår att göra en egen vetenskaplig studie, utifrån en fråga som kommit att engagera studenterna under utbildningens gång. Till studien samlas ofta material in vid skolor, i form av t.ex. intervjuer och observationer. Examensarbetet motsvarar 15 högskolepoäng, och utförs under totalt 10 veckor. När examensarbetet blivit godkänt publiceras det i DiVA, Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet. Det är Malmö universitets plattform för registrering och visning av publikationer som produceras av universitetets forskare, lärare och studenter.

Samtycke till medverkan i studentprojekt

Hej!

Vi heter Ebba Langebro och Elvira Bajramaj och är två studenter på Malmö universitets grundskollärarprogram årskurs 4–6. Nu är vi på termin 8, vår sista termin, och skriver därför vårt examensarbete inför examen sommaren 2025. Vi har fått Malmö universitets godkännande att utföra vår studie som handlar om elever och lärares erfarenheter, åsikter och funderingar kring hur SVA-elever lär sig engelska om de redan har svårigheter med svenska, och möjligtvis sitt hemspråk. Detta kommer att utföras genom intervjuer med elever och lärare på skolan samt en mindre analys av elevers betyg i engelska. Vi kommer behöva få information om deltagande lärarens ämnesbehörigheter och antal arbetade år som lärare.

Vi kommer att spela in med en diktafon, analysera svaren och sedan inkludera resultaten i vår studie helt anonymt. Inga privata mobiltelefoner eller andra privata medel kommer att användas. Vi följer Vetenskapsrådets forskningsetiska principer (2024) vilket innebär att:

- Medverkan baseras på samtycke och detta samtycke kan när som helst återkallas. Alla som tillfrågas har alltså rätt att tacka nej till att delta, eller (om de först tackar ja) rätt att avbryta sin medverkan när som helst, utan några negativa konsekvenser.
- Deltagarna kommer att avidentifieras i det färdiga arbetet.
- Materialet kommer enbart att användas för aktuell studie och kommer att förstöras när denna är examinerad.

Materialet som samlas in kommer enbart vi som genomför studien ha tillgång till samt att allt insamlat material och personuppgifter lagras på Malmö universitets server under arbetet med examensarbetet, samt att samtyckesblanketterna förvaras oåtkomligt på Malmö universitet.

Underskrifter

Underskrift, student 1

Namnförtydligande, student 1

Underskrift, student 2

Namnförtydligande, student 2

Kontaktuppgifter, student 1 (tfn nr, e-post)

Kontaktuppgifter, student 2 (tfn nr, e-post)

Ansvarig handledare på Malmö universitet:

Djuddah A.J. Leijen

Kursansvarig på Malmö universitet:

Malin Reljanovic Glimäng

Kontaktuppgifter Malmö universitet:

www.mau.se

040-665 70 00

Information om Malmö universitet av personuppgifter

Personuppgiftsansvarig	Malmö universitet
Dataskyddsombud	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 skolmiljö för studenter vid Malmö universitets lärarutbildning.
Rättslig grund för behandling	Ditt samtycke.
Mottagare	Personuppgifterna kommer endast användas i utbildningssyfte inom ramen för lärarutbildningen 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 samtycker jag till att medverka i ovan beskrivna studentprojekt, samt bekräftar att jag har tagit del av informationen om Malmö universitets behandling av personuppgifter, och Vetenskapsrådets forskningsetiska principer, som säger att

- Medverkan baseras på samtycke och detta samtycke kan när som helst återkallas. Alla som tillfrågas har alltså rätt att tacka nej till att delta, eller (om de först tackar ja) rätt att avbryta sin medverkan när som helst, utan några negativa konsekvenser.
- Deltagarna kommer att avidentifieras i det färdiga arbetet.
- Materialet kommer enbart att användas för aktuell studie och kommer att förstöras när denna är examinerad.

____

Namn

____

Namnförtydligande

____

Dagens datum

Appendix B

Consent forms for students

LÄRANDE OCH SAMHÄLLE INSTITUTION

På lärarutbildningen vid Malmö universitet skriver studenterna ett examensarbete på avancerad nivå. I detta arbete ingår att göra en egen vetenskaplig studie, utifrån en fråga som kommit att engagera studenterna under utbildningens gång. Till studien samlas ofta material in vid skolor, i form av t.ex. intervjuer och observationer. Examensarbetet motsvarar 15 högskolepoäng, och utförs under totalt 10 veckor. När examensarbetet blivit godkänt publiceras det i DiVA, Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet. Det är Malmö universitets plattform för registrering och visning av publikationer som produceras av universitetets forskare, lärare och studenter.

Samtycke till elevers medverkan i studentprojekt

Hej!

Vi heter Ebba Langebro och Elvira Bajramaj och är två studenter på Malmö universitets grundskollärarprogram årskurs 4–6. Nu är vi på termin 8, vår sista termin, och skriver därför vårt examensarbete inför examen sommaren 2025. Vi har fått Malmö universitets godkännande att utföra vår studie som handlar om elever och lärares erfarenheter, åsikter och funderingar kring hur SVA-elever lär sig engelska om de redan har svårigheter med svenska, och möjligtvis sitt hemspråk. Detta kommer att utföras genom intervjuer med elever och lärare på skolan samt en mindre analys av elevers betyg i engelska. Vi kommer behöva få information om elevers ålder och hemspråk.

Vi kommer att spela in med en diktafon, analysera svaren och sedan inkludera resultaten i vår studie helt anonymt. Inga privata mobiltelefoner eller andra privata medel kommer att användas. Vi följer Vetenskapsrådets forskningsetiska principer (2024) vilket innebär att:

- Medverkan baseras på samtycke och detta samtycke kan när som helst återkallas. Alla som tillfrågas har alltså rätt att tacka nej till att delta, eller (om de först tackar ja) rätt att avbryta sin medverkan när som helst, utan några negativa konsekvenser.
- Deltagarna kommer att avidentifieras i det färdiga arbetet.
- Materialet kommer enbart att användas för aktuell studie och kommer att förstöras när denna är examinerad.

Materialet som samlas in kommer enbart vi som genomför studien ha tillgång till samt att allt insamlat material och personuppgifter lagras på Malmö universitets server under arbetet med examensarbetet, samt att samtyckesblanketterna förvaras oåtkomligt på Malmö universitet.

Underskrifter

Underskrift, student 1	Namnförtydligande, student 1
Underskrift, student 2	Namnförtydligande, student 2

Kontaktuppgifter, student 1 (tfn nr, e-post)

Kontaktuppgifter, student 2 (tfn nr, e-post)

Ansvarig handledare på Malmö universitet:

Djuddah A.J. Leijen

Kursansvarig på Malmö universitet:

Malin Reljanovic Glimäng

Kontaktuppgifter Malmö universitet:

www.mau.se

040-665 70 00

Information om Malmö universitet av personuppgifter

Personuppgiftsansvarig	Malmö universitet
Dataskyddsombud	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 skolmiljö för studenter vid Malmö universitets lärarutbildning.
Rättslig grund för behandling	Ditt samtycke.
Mottagare	Personuppgifterna kommer endast användas i utbildningssyfte inom ramen för lärarutbildningen 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 bekräftas att vi som vårdnadshavare har tagit del av informationen om Malmö universitets behandling av personuppgifter, och Vetenskapsrådets forskningsetiska principer, som säger att:

- Medverkan baseras på samtycke och detta samtycke kan när som helst återkallas. Alla som tillfrågas har alltså rätt att tacka nej till att delta, eller (om de först tackar ja) rätt att avbryta sin medverkan när som helst, utan några negativa konsekvenser.
- Deltagarna kommer att avidentifieras i det färdiga arbetet.
- Materialet kommer enbart att användas för aktuell studie och kommer att förstöras när denna är examinerad.

____

Elevens namn

____

Skola

____

Dagens datum

____

Namn, vårdnadshavare 1

____

Namn, vårdnadshavare 2

Vid gemensam vårdnad måste båda vårdnadshavare underteckna blanketten.

Appendix C

Interview questions for teachers translated to English

Themes	Questions
Perceptions	What are your experiences working with multilingual students with Swedish as a second language who are learning English as an additional language? In your opinion, how does multilingualism affect a student's ability to learn English? Have you observed any specific advantages or challenges? What aspects of language learning do you find students struggle with the most, and in which do they perform best? Speaking? Writing? Reading? Listening?
Adaptations and methods	How do you adapt your teaching strategies to support multilingual students in English lessons? Can you share some methods or tools that you find effective when teaching English to students from different linguistic backgrounds?
Societal perspectives	In your opinion, how do socioeconomic factors influence students' learning? How, in your experience, do students' cultural backgrounds affect their learning? Do you believe digitalization in modern society affects learning? Positively? Negatively?

Appendix D

Interview questions for students translated to English

Themes	Questions
Linguistic background	What languages do you speak at home and at school? Which language do you feel most comfortable with and which language do you like the most? What's the difference between learning English, your native language, and Swedish?
Perceptions	Do you think it's easier or harder for you to learn English compared to a classmate who only speaks Swedish? Do you think it's easier or harder to learn English if you already speak more than one language? What parts of learning English do you think are easiest and hardest? Speaking? Writing? Reading? Listening?
Education	What do you think about learning English at school? Do you feel that your teachers understand you and help you enough? Are there any activities you enjoy when learning English?
Societal perspectives	Do you use social media, like TikTok and YouTube? Do you usually watch videos in English? Do you feel like social media makes it easier for you to learn English? If so, how? [Depending on whom the student lives with] Can your mom and dad (or guardians) speak English? Can they help you with your homework?