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# The use of L1 and L32 in the language classroom

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## **Abstract**

The present paper investigates how frequent the teachers and their students tend to use English in the language classroom and how teachers' use of the target language affect the student's use. Three different methods have been used in order to collect the data, interviews, questionnaires and observations and all of these took place at one school among students and teachers in class 9. The result showed that students use their L1 very frequently in the language classroom and that their speech was influenced by the teacher. Components as choice of language and amount of encouragement from the teacher seemed to be the factors that determined the students' choice of language the most.

**Key words:** Code switching, English classroom, L1, Use of English.



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## Abbreviations

**Code switching-** When two people interact using two languages alternately to communicate a certain content.

**L1-** Native language

**L2-** Second language

**Non-NESTs-** Non-Native English Speaking Teachers

**NESTs-** Native English Speaking Teachers

**ELT-** English Language Teaching

**EFL-** English as a Foreign Language

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The choice of topic for this essay is based on my own experiences and reflections regarding the oral lessons in English teaching. When I began studying English at university I immediately noticed that I was not used to speaking freely and my ability to formulate my thoughts into fluent discourse was really difficult. It suddenly became clear to me that my ability to adapt the use of language to different situations, purposes and recipients was not as developed as I thought it was. In my head, I knew rather well, what I was going to say except from some words but when I was going to spell it out I stumbled. This recognition was a bit surprising for me and I felt very uncomfortable with the situation. Rather soon, I started to analyze the reasons for this situation, which was something that I also continued doing during my whole education. I tried to remember how my English lessons were structured when I was in compulsory school, especially high school, and I believe that I found a connection. As far as I recall, most of my English lessons that had a focus on oral presentation, were structured into reading aloud from books and we frequently used our L1 language when we were addressed to speak. My class were offered very few opportunities where we could talk freely about topics of our own in our L2, which is something skolverket informs as important for the students to do. One of the aims in the curriculum for compulsory school is that students should "Being able to formulate one's thinking and interact with others in the spoken and written language, and the ability to adapt use of language to different situations, purposes and recipients". (Skolverket, 2011). Furthermore the curriculum states that "communication skills also cover confidence in using the language and the ability to use different strategies to support communication and solve problems when language skills by themselves are not sufficient". (Ibid). In other words, the school is obliged to present opportunities for the students to practice their speech in order to increase their confidence and communication skills. I strongly believe this issue could be one of the main reasons for my insecurity and ignorance regarding the speech in the English classroom at university. I had not been prepared for spontaneous communication and could not cope with all of its simultaneous demands which Lazaraton mentions in Celce- Murcia's (2001) edition as a common problem. One other component in this dilemma is based on how frequently I have used the target language in my everyday life. At the time, when I started my studies, I had very rarely contact with the spoken language of English and of course, the outcome of my performance was affected by that.

All these thoughts and reflections that come to my mind regarding L1 and L2 use and code switching in the classroom came to be the basis for my topic of this essay, but the idea did not appear to me until I did my school placement in English. I observed that the students tended to speak much more Swedish than English during their English lessons and some of the students never respond to their teacher in English and overall refused to say anything in the target language. It was obvious that those who did speak aloud in the classroom were students with good knowledge and confidence and they only consisted of a small group of pupils. In addition to my beliefs, that more use of spoken English in the classroom results in better knowledge and awareness of how to use the language in other situations I felt it would be interesting to dig deeper in this area. Skolverket (2011) states that one of the aims for the subject of English is that "Teaching in English should

essentially give pupils the opportunities to develop their ability to express themselves and communicate in speech". Based on that, my own experiences and the observations that I made during my school placement, regarding students use of L1 and L2 in the English classroom, the topic for my essay was formed. I wanted to examine students and teachers use of English during English lessons and do studies on how both teachers and students perceive themselves using the target language in the classroom.

## **1.2 Aim and purpose**

The main ambition for this degree paper is to investigate how frequent the teachers and their students tend to use English in the language classroom and how the teachers' use of the target language affect the students' use.

## **1.3 Issues**

- 1) How frequently do the students use the target language of English in the language classroom?
- 2) How frequently do the teachers use the target language of English in the language classroom?
- 3) How does the teachers' use of English in the language classroom affect the students' use?

## **1.1 Background**

In this section previous studies about the L1 and L2 use in the English classrooms will be presented. It will also contain what skolverket emphasize in the curriculum as important goals and aims regarding this issue.

### **1.1.1 Attitudes to mother tongue use in the classroom**

Code switching is a widely observed phenomenon and in ELT classrooms, code switching is seen either in the teachers' or the students' discourse. (Sert, 2005). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the idea of using the mother tongue in the language classroom was avoided. The teachers rather talked and taught the language themselves than being talked about in the students' L1. (Harmer, 2001). More recently, however, the attitudes to the use of students' mother tongue have undergone a significant change. David Atkinson argues in Harmer (2001) addition that there are several general advantages of cautious use the mother tongue. He suggests that activities as grammar explanations, checking comprehension, giving instructions, discussing classroom methodology and checking for sense could be used in L1. He states, if teachers can use the students' language these tasks will be expedited more efficiently. John Eldridge (Harmer, 2001) agrees with Atkinson and says that there is no evidence that use of L1 would degrade the learning of English. He further claims that most of his own observations regarding code switching are highly important and related to purposeful goals. In both Sert (2005) and Stoltz (Thornberg, Malmqvist, Valfridsson, red. 2009) texts the authors argue that code switching is

not favored by many educators. Stoltz (ibid) furthermore writes that L1 should be avoided when communicating in the L2 classroom. Peter Harbour, (Harmer, 2001) however, disagrees with Atkinson and Eldridge. He believes that the giving of instructions and many other teacher-student interactions are an ideal source of language for student acquisition. In a doctoral thesis by Lin Falk (2008) there are additionally many statements, which demonstrate that use of L1 in the ELT classroom, is beneficial and she claims that code switching to L1 in the language classroom can be considered as strategy of communication. Stoltz (Thornberg, Malmqvist, Valfridsson, red. 2009) additionally highlights in his text that code switching mirrors a natural process happening in a naturalistic discourse and by using the L1 students learn and comprehend the new language more quickly. Regardless of one's beliefs if code switching is beneficial or not, Stoltz (ibid) stresses that the student's mother tongue is going to be present in the classroom despite its consequences.

### 1.1.2 Why teachers use L1 in class

The curriculum says that,

*“Through teaching, pupils should be given the opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills. These skills involve understanding spoken and written English, being able to formulate one's thinking and interact with others in the spoken and written language, and the ability to adapt use of language to different situations, purposes and recipients. Communication skills also cover confidence in using the language and the ability to use different strategies to support communication and solve problems when language skills by themselves are not sufficient.”* (Skolverket, 2011).

In order for the students to learn all these skills they need a teacher who is a primary source of comprehensible input; teacher talking time has an important part to play in language acquisition. It therefore makes sense for the teacher to speak English as much as possible in the class, because if they choose not to, students will not see the need to speak to much English either. These are the thoughts of Harmer (2001), and Sert (2005) is willing to agree with him regarding the risks of using L1 in the classroom. He considers that students who are sure that the instruction in foreign language will be followed by a translation in their native language may lose interest in listening to the former instruction. This behavior will have negative academic consequences; as the student is exposed to foreign language speech limitedly. Stoltz (Thornberg, Malmqvist, Valfridsson, red. 2009) further confirms this statement in his empirical study among high school students. The research showed that when the teacher immediately translated his or her L2 presentations or questions into L1 all students responded back in their native language. If the teacher instead presented the question in the L2 there was a larger number of students that tend to respond in L2. But why does teachers intend to code switch if it has such negative consequences for the students? Stoltz (Thornberg, Malmqvist, Valfridsson, red. 2009) states that this is a common action by the teachers and they use this phenomenon to avoid misunderstanding and in order to save time in the classroom. Sert (2005) on the other hand believes one of the reasons may be that teachers tend to use code switching unconsciously and therefore is not always aware of the functions and outcomes of the code switching process. He further believes that in some cases code switching may be considered as an

automatic and unconscious behavior. Nevertheless, conscious or not, Sert (2005) argues that code switching necessarily serves some basic functions which may be beneficial in language learning environments.

Sometimes the teacher varies his or her language according to the topic that is under discussion. The teachers' behavior of shifting his or her language to the mother tongue is mostly observed in grammar instruction when the students in dealing with particular grammar points, which are taught at that moment. (Sert, 2005). Sert additionally states that "in these cases, the students' attention is directed to the new knowledge by making use of code switching and accordingly making use of native tongue. "At this point it may be suggested that a bridge from known (native language) to unknown (new foreign language content) is constructed in order to transfer the new content and meaning is made clear." (Ibid). Another explanation for teachers' use of code switching in classroom settings is in order to convey the necessary knowledge for the students' clarity. "Following the instruction in target language, the teacher code switches to native language in order to clarify meaning, and in this way stresses importance on the foreign language content for efficient comprehension. However, the tendency to repeat the instruction in native language may lead to some undesired student behaviors." (Sert, 2005). In Ahlberg & Bogunics (2000) degree paper all teachers in the study tended to code switch. They mostly used code switching when they translated difficult words and when to avoid disorder in the classroom. One of the teachers clarifies this strategy as beneficial for the students' progress in the target language of English. Lim Falk (2008) states in her thesis that the amount of code switching, made by teachers, is connected to their competence and security in the target language. In Celce-Murcias (2001) edition, Medgyes states many pros and cons by teaching English as a non-native speaker of the language. He states that the non-native speaker uses poorer English and tend to use the target language with less confident than a native-speaker does. On the other hand, he states that non-NESTs (non-Native English Speaking Teachers) are more committed and insightful in their work than NESTs (Native English Speaking Teachers) are.

### **1.1.3 Why students use the mother tongue in class**

As it is the case for teachers, the students are not always aware of the reasons for code switching as well as its functions and outcomes. Although they may unconsciously code switch, it clearly serves some functions, beneficial or not. (Sert, 2005). Along with Sert (2005), Harmer (2001) states that students' use of L1 in the classroom is an entirely natural thing to do. Harmer says that; "when we learn a foreign language we use translation almost without thinking about it, particularly at elementary and intermediate levels. This is because we try to make sense of a new linguistic world through the linguistic world we are already familiar with." He further writes that this type of code switching between L1 and L2 should not be seen as a misguided behavior other than something logically in the development.

Skolverket (2011) states in the curriculum that "teaching of English should aim at helping the pupils to develop knowledge of the English language and of the areas and contexts where English is used, and also pupils' confidence in their ability to use the language in different situations and for different purposes". However, learning a foreign language can be difficult and challenging for the students

and Lazaraton underlines a number of features in Celce-Murcias (2001) edition. To begin with; the students must acquire the stress, rhythm, and intonation of English, which Lazaraton stresses as a complicated task for many students. She also illustrates that perhaps the most difficult aspect of spoken English is that it is almost always accomplished via interaction with at least one other speaker. This means that a variety of demands are in place at once: monitoring and understanding the other speaker(s), thinking about one's own contribution, producing that contribution, monitoring its effect, and so on. Lazaraton (ibid) further claims that all these components are contributing to why many people are shocked and disappointed when they used their second or foreign language for the first time in real interaction. They had not been prepared for spontaneous communication and could not cope with all of its simultaneous demands. Harmer (2001) equally argues that the activity is very important when learning a foreign language. He believes that to be able to use the L2 in the classroom the teacher must hand give the students tasks that they are linguistically capable of. If the teacher for example asks the students to have a free and fluent discussion about a topic that is out of their knowledge zone, they most likely are going to use their L1. He further believes that this code switching should not be blamed on the students. Likewise, Stoltz (Thornberg, Malmqvist, Valfridsson, red. 2009) highlights from his study that clear connections between teachers and students use of L2 can be made. In situations where teachers regularly use L2 in the language classroom the students also improved their use of the target language.

Another reason why students tend to code switch is equivalence, says Sert (2005). The student makes use of the native equivalent of a certain words in target language and therefore code switches to his or her native tongue. This course of action may be connected with the deficiency in linguistic competence of the target language, which makes the student use the native words when he or she has not the competence for using the target language. Sert (ibid) states, that this method gives the student the opportunity to continue the communication by bridging the gaps resulting from foreign language incompetence. Since English teaching should essentially give pupils the opportunities to develop their ability to use language strategies to understand and make themselves understood (Skolverket, 2011) this technique of code switching can be of good use. Sert (2005) further writes that this way of code switching also affect students that cannot recall the appropriate target language structure or lexicon and by using these types of language alternatives, the students' learning process might be negative affected. He yet states there is a risk it may result in loss of fluency in long-term. However, is it always up to the students if they intend to use their L1 or L2 in the language classroom? Harmer (2001) claims it is not. He writes in his text that, if the teacher frequently uses the students' mother tongue, the students will easily adapt that behavior and it is therefore very important for the teacher to be aware of what kind of example they themselves are providing. It is not only a matter of how teachers provide themselves it is also important for the student to be perceived in the right way. Another reason for students' use of code switch can for that reason be avoidance of misunderstanding. They tend to utter words for specific purposes to avoid misunderstanding and code switching is a strategy to transfer the intended meaning. (Sert, 2005). A further reason for students to code switch is when the target language is repeated by the student in native tongue through which the learner tries to give the meaning by making use of a repetition technique. Sert (2005) believes that the reason for this specific language alternation case may be two-folds: "first, he/she may not have transferred the meaning exactly in target language. Second, the student may think that it is more appropriate to code switch in order to indicate the teacher that the content is clearly understood by him/her."

### 1.1.4 How to promote the use of English in the classroom

Harmer (2001, p.132-133) stresses that there are a number of actions which teachers can take to endorse the use of English in the language classroom and to explain clearly what is expected of students. These are his recommendations.

- **Set clear guidelines:** student need to know when mother tongue use is permissible and when it is not.
- **Choose appropriate tasks:** teachers should choose tasks that the students, at their level, are capable of doing in English.
- **Create an English atmosphere:** if the teacher creates an English environment, making English the classroom language as well as the language to be learnt, then there will be more chance of the students making the classroom truly English themselves.
- **Use persuasion and other inducements:** if the teacher has encourage the students to speak more English during the lesson and the students do not respond to that, stop the activity and tell the students there is a problem. This sometimes changes the atmosphere so that they go back to the activity with a new determination.

## 2 METHOD

To be able to emphasize the topic of this study and to collect data about it a qualitative investigation designed by observations, questionnaires and interviews have been used. The target group in this degree paper is students and teachers in year 9 at elementary school. In this following section, facts regarding the process of choosing participants, collecting data and procedure will be presented.

### 2.1 *Choice of participants*

Since my degree qualifies me to teach at both compulsory and upper secondary school, I choose to execute this degree paper somewhere in the middle of these grades. I carried out my research at two classes in year nine and their teachers at a middle size school in a fairly large city in the middle of Sweden. My choice of school is based on practical aspects since I have been in contact with this particular school before this degree paper took place. I believed that my earlier acquaintances with the school might be beneficial for me while collecting my data. To perform this research, about students and teachers use of English in the language classroom, there were in total 51 students and 2 teachers participating. Of those 51 students, there were 24 girls and 27 boys, and together with the 2 teachers formed the basis of the result of this degree paper.

### 2.1.1 Internal and external loss

The ethical rules state that students in compulsory school need authorization from their parents to participate in a survey and therefore I sent out a form to the students' parents to fill. There were only seven students that did not bring back the form in time for the questionnaire to take place and was counted as external loss in this study. The internal loss was also extremely low because all students that handed in the form from their parents chose to participate and answered all the questions, except from three students that skipped one question each.

### 2.1.2 Ethical rules

Johansson & Svedner (2006) highlight in their book how important it is to treat the participants in a research with respect. They stress five different rules that are based on ethics, which I have had in mind while executing this entire project. The rules that Johansson & Svedner (2006) emphasize as important are:

- ⇒ Participants will receive a fair description of survey methods and survey purposes.
- ⇒ Participants shall be informed that they may refuse to participate or withdraw their participation without any negative impact.
- ⇒ Participants must be confident that their anonymity is protected. Of the completed report it will not be possible to identify whether preschools /schools, teachers or students /children.
- ⇒ If participants are not of age, the parent or guardian must be informed and asked if the children can participate.

## 2.2 *Collecting data*

To be able to answer the issues in this degree paper as fairly as possible, several methods have been used to acquire information. By using more than one source while collecting data is something that Johansson and Svedner (2006) highlight as a successful approach and it will increase the credibility of the degree paper. In this paper a triangulation have been used in order to find out how frequently the students and their teachers tend to use the target language of English in the language classroom.

### **2.2.1 Observations**

I believe that making observations would give a better understanding about the teachers' and the students' use of L1 and L2 in the language classroom. I further hoped my observation would result in me grasping the situation from a third position, which I could use to compare with the results from the questionnaires and the interviews. Johansson & Svedner (2006) recommend the examiner to use an observation schedule that is designed with accuracy while performing an observation. With that in mind and since I have no previous knowledge of writing an observation schedule I decided to use a previous one that I received from my university that was constructed for observations only. This schedule had a clear structure, which made it easy to take notes from the beginning of the lesson to the end. (See appendix 5). All documentation during these observations was performed by using this particular observation schedule and a pen.

### **2.2.2 Questionnaire**

The design of the questions for the questionnaire was based on the three issues for this degree paper. Consciously, a short form that only consisted of seven questions for the students to answer was created even though Eljertssons (1996) recommend that a study of this kind could last up until 30 minutes. The purpose of this design was that I wanted to be sure that the students did not lose the interest and concentration while responding and by that, minimize the internal loss of the study. Stensmo (2002) claims that an overwhelming questionnaire could result in total loss, which means that none of the participants tend to answer the questionnaire. Both Eljertsson (1996) and Johansson & Svedner (2006) state in their texts the risk of using questions with an open answer in a questionnaire. They say that people might not answer the question and the result would be hard to summarize. With that in mind, I decided to create my questions containing only fixed answers that were created in a symmetrical scale. There were as many positive as negative alternative to answer and some questions contained an alternative where they could write their own opinions. To have this symmetrical scale in the answers does Eljertsson (1996) stress as very important. He further highlights the importunateness of using the appropriate language for the target group, which was something I had in mind while creating my questionnaires. (See appendix 2). In order to involve as many students as possible I furthermore used the Swedish language in both the covering letter and the questionnaires. I wanted it to be easy for the students to understand the questions and my motive for doing the research, which I believed their L1 language would help them with.

### **2.2.3 Interviews**

I used the same fundamental thought when designing the interview questions as I did when I created my questions for the questionnaire. In both of these sequences, my issues for this degree paper was used as a starting point and the questions are clearly connected. Johansson & Svedners (2006) write in their book that there are two different types of interviews. I decided to use a method called structured interviews that contained seven fixed questions for the teachers to answer. I furthermore decided to perform the interviews in Swedish to make the interviews as natural and relaxed as possible. (See appendix 3).

## **2.3 Procedure**

This section will show how the covering letter and pre studies were designed. It will furthermore illustrate the methods how the data was collected and how it was administrated.

### **2.3.1 Covering letter**

To increase the participants' knowledge regarding the purpose of the study, a covering letter was created and placed as front page of the questionnaire. Eljertsson (1996) mentions how important it is to have a successful covering letter to arouse the interest of the participants. He also write about eight different suggestions how to create a successful covering letter and he highlights how important it is to use an appropriate language for the target group. I used Eljertsson (1996) advice and used these eight suggestions while creating my covering letter. (See appendix 1).

### **2.3.2 Observation**

To influence the participants, in this research, as little as possible they were not told about the aim and purpose of the study in the beginning. I started this study with my observation and because I wanted the teachers and the students to behave as they normally do in their classroom, they were not aware of my intentions for the observation. I placed myself in front of the class with an observation schedule in hand. I told the students and the teacher that my intention was to observe the lesson and that they should carry on as they normally do. In total I executed four different observations, two in each class and during the lessons I observed and wrote down notes in my schedule that was designed for an observation of this kind. (See appendix 4).

### **2.3.3 Pre-study of my questionnaire**

I believe the design of my questionnaire are very important because it should represent the foundation for my following result. One main rule, on the other hand, is that other people may interpret the questions different than the creator and because of that, the questions should be tested in a pre-study. (Eljertsson, 1996). The performance of my pre-study took place in a classroom where the students could answer the questionnaire in

stillness. Eljertsson (1996) states that you only need a small group of people when executing a pre-study and there were in total ten students from class 9 that took place in my pre study which I believed was enough. After reading through the questionnaires from the students, I analyzed if I had to re write or maybe add some questions and I decided to make some small changes.

### **2.3.4 The questionnaire**

After I revised the questionnaire and felt satisfied with the outcome of the questions I contacted the two English teachers at the school I earlier cooperated with. Each teacher decided a time for me to perform my research with their students and both of them took place in the beginning of their regular English lessons. I introduced myself and my purpose of being there, even though it was explained clearly in the covering letter. I also explained for the students that their participation was optional and if they chose to participate, they were fully anonymous. After my introduction, I handed out the questionnaires to the students. The students were placed in their regular seats so they could answer the questions in privacy. I was present in the classroom during both occasions so if the students had any questions I was easy to approach, something that Johansson & Svedner state as good ethics. When they finished the assignment, I handed in the questionnaires and the students had to continue to sit down in order for all to complete the task.

### **2.3.5 Pre-study for my interviews**

As mentioned earlier, Johansson & Svedner (2006) encourage their readers to perform a pre-study before the real investigation takes place. Once again, I listened to their recommendation in order to see if the questions fulfill its purpose or not and made a test on one of my student classmates. I felt that the questions brought me the outcome that I expected and I decided not to do any changes.

### **2.3.6 Interviews**

As a final method to collect my data for this study, I applied interviews. I performed the interviews with the two teachers whose students earlier answered my questionnaire. Teacher number 1 was 38 years old and was rather new in her profession and had only worked as a teacher for three years. Teacher number two, on the other hand, had been working as a teacher for totally 26 years and she was 54 years old. I sat down privately in a room with one teacher at the time. The reason for that was to create as little distraction as possibly for both of us and that is also something that Johansson & Svedner (2006) mention in their book as essential for a good outcome. Since both teachers were participants when I earlier that week executed my questionnaires with the students they already knew what the aim of my degree paper was. Therefore, I decided that a brief introduction

before the interviews was enough. In this introduction, I underlined their anonymity in the research and that they could stop their participation whenever they felt like, something that Johansson & Swedner (2006) mentions as good ethics. I had written down seven questions for the teachers to answer and I asked one question at the time and took notes of their answers by using paper and a pen. Both teachers responded with detailed answers and only a few answers in these interviews needed some follow-up questions. Because I really wanted to understand the teachers' situation and their perception of teaching English I needed to hear answers that were truthful and Johansson & Svedner (2006) stress that follow-up questions is the right way of doing that. When the interviews came to an end I asked the teachers if they had anything more to add but they both felt satisfied with the questions they responded to so I thanked them for their participation and ended the interview.

## 3 RESULT

This section will present the results regarding the three issues in this degree paper. The intention is to compare the answers from class 9A with 9B concerning the observations, questionnaires and the interviews to see if they differ from each other and why, there will also be some comparison of the result between boys and girls. One at the time, the issues will be presented, using both text and diagram in order to facilitate the reading and its structure. Because three different methods have been used to collect the data, the result regarding the three issues will furthermore be presented from three different aspects, the students', the teachers' and finally my own.

### ***3.1 The students use of L1 and L2 in the language classroom***

To be able to answer the first issue in this degree paper, which is, ***How frequently do the students use the target language of English in the language classroom*** the students were asked, the in the questionnaire, how often they respond back to their teacher in English. (See question 1 in appendix 2). To broaden the perspective of the students' use of the target language the teachers were asked in the interviews of their opinions about their students use of English (see question 4 in appendix 3) and additionally the observations. Furthermore, the students and the teachers were asked what element that could contribute the students to use English more in the language classroom (see question 6 in appendix 2 and question 7 in appendix 3) which also will be presented in this section. Teacher number 1 in this study is teaching class 9A in English and teacher number 2 teaches class 9B. Throughout the result section, the teachers will have invented names; teacher 1 and 2 will be named as Sarah and Erica.

#### **3.1.1 Questionnaire**

Of all 51 students that took place in this study there were totally 61 % that believed they respond their teacher 50 % or less in English if they were addressed in English and in class 9B were the result 71 %. In the same

class only 4 % of the students answer that they *always* respond back in English and in class 9A there were slightly more, namely 11 %. There were in total 0 % of all students that answer *never* to the target question.

**If the teacher addresses you in English how often do you respond back in the same language?**

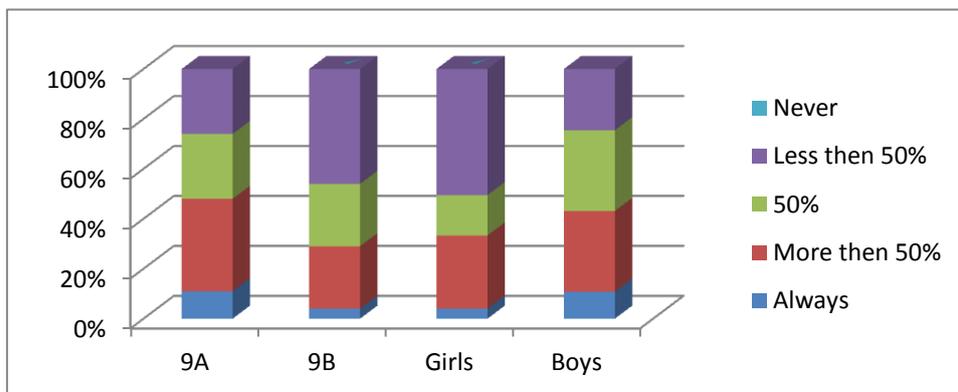


Figure 1. Students' use of English in the language classroom.

The question regarding what element that could be contributors for the students to speak more English the answers differ a lot between the classes and the genders. Only 4 % in class 9A believed that they would talk more English *if the teacher also used the language more*, instead they responded that *working in smaller groups* as a winning concept. The majority of the students in class 9B, 37.5 %, state that their use of English would increase if the *teacher used the target language more frequently*. In addition, this class believed that *working in smaller groups* would be beneficial for their use of English, even though there were 20 % less that gave that answer in comparison to 9A's 45 %. Another factor that both classes felt important in order to use the target language more was their own competence in English speaking. A third of all students in 9A responded they *would talk more English if they were better at it* and a quarter in 9B, which was the second highest number in that category for both classes. Only students in class 9A responded at the alternative, *if I felt more comfortable in my group*, in total there were 15 % of these students who felt it would be beneficial but none of the students in 9B chose that alternative. There were also a majority among the girls that gave this answer in comparison with the boys, even though the differ was bigger between the classes than the sexes.

### 3.1.2 Interview

Sarah believes that her students answer her back in English most of the times but it is more frequent when the students work in small groups, she adds. Sarah also states that some of her students never say anything in English because they do not have the self-esteem to do so. Furthermore Sarah states that the use of English is certainly depend on what task the students are working with and can vary for that reason but she tries to encourage her students to talk more English but she believes that she cannot demand them to do so.

Unlike Sarah, Erica believes that her students mostly respond back to her in Swedish.

When they do so I tend to ask them what they said in English and then they often switch their speech to English, Erica says. Erica additionally believes that the students are afraid of talking English and working in smaller groups helps the student to be more orally active in the language classroom.

In order for the students to talk more English during the lessons, Sarah believes that she has an important role to play. If she herself uses English more and encourages the students to do so, the speech would probably increase a bit. She additionally mentions self-esteem as an important factor, which could be improved by practice more orally than they do today.

Like Sarah, Erica believes that encouragement from her position is of big importance to increase the use of English in the language classroom. She would also prefer to work more frequently in smaller groups since many of her students never speak out when they work together with all their classmates. However, Erica points out that working in smaller groups comes with a risk. Unfortunately, she claims, many of the students do not get much work done while using this method because several of the students are noisy and troublesome. Another aspect how to promote the students' use of English is not to interrupt them while they are speaking so that they get an opportunity to practice their fluency, which Erica states as important.

### 3.1.3 Observation

The four different observations that were made, illustrated that the students' use of English, overall, was deficient. Small differences could be seen between the two classes but in general, both classes respond there teacher and spoke aloud using their L1. There was absolutely no indication of L2 use when it comes to two students having a conversation with each other, regarding all four of the observations. Small questions between the teacher and the students on the other hand, were in some occasions in English. The differences between the two classes were that the students in class 9A tend to use English slightly more than 9B did, mostly when they answered their teacher or asked questions aloud, even though all of the class was listening. This behavior was not very common but it did appear at some points. It was clear that a few students in each class used their L2 considerably more than their classmates and those were the students that spoke impeccable English.

From the teachers' point of view, Sarah tend to encourage her students to use English slightly more than Erica did during the lessons these observations were made, but overall the effort of encouragement was not that frequent. Any other method to increase the students' use of L2 was not demonstrated during these observations.

## 3.2 *The teachers' use of L1 and L2 in the language classroom*

The second issue in this paper is **how frequently the teacher uses the target language of English in the language classroom**. To gather information regarding this topic students were asked how they perceived their teachers use of English in the classroom

(see question 3 in appendix 2) and if they thought the teachers used English with moderation. (See question 7 in appendix 2). Furthermore, the teachers were asked if they were aware of how much English they tend to use during a lesson and if they decide on what to say in L1 and L2 before a lesson takes place, and if they stick to it. (See question 1, 2 and 3 in appendix 3). Finally, observations were used as a third perspective of the teachers' use of English in the language classroom.

### 3.2.1 Questionnaire

In total, there were 96 % of the students in class 9A who perceived their teacher to use the L2 *more than 50 %* or *always*. Only one student believed that the teacher used English at 50 % and none answered *less than 50%* or *never*. These result differ a lot compared to class 9B there 62.5 % believed that their teacher used the L2 *more than 50 %* or *always* and 37.5 % answered 50% or less. In the result of class 9B's questionnaires it could clearly be distinguished that the boys perceived their teacher to use more English than the girls which also was consistent with the answers regarding if the L2 was used with moderation. 8.5 % of the boys wanted their teacher to use *the L2 more than today* compared to the girls there 66.5 % wanted their teacher *to use the L2 more frequent*. In class 9A 92.5 % felt satisfied with the amount their teacher uses the target language. The result showed that students who believed their teacher used the L2 50 % or *more* in the language classroom also answered that they felt satisfied with the teachers' amount of use. On the other hand, students that believed their teacher used L2 50 % or *less* wanted their teacher to use English more.

**How frequently do you perceive your teacher uses the target language of English in the language classroom?**

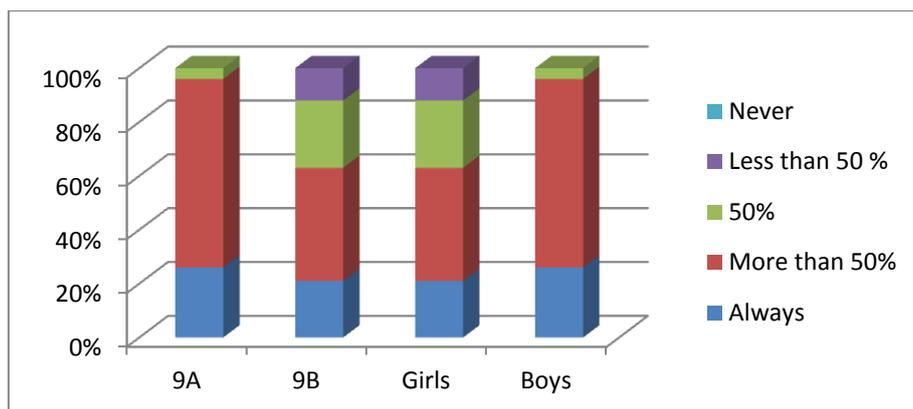


Figure 2. Teachers' use of English in the language classroom.

### 3.2.2 Interview

Sarah says that her intention is to speak English all the time but at some points, instructions need to be hold in Swedish in order for all students to understand. She further claims issues like getting everybody to grasp the

context, as the biggest reason for using the L1 in classroom. Even though Sarah claims to use English most part of her lessons she never hesitates to use Swedish when it is necessary though she believes that everybody must understand to be able to learn. She further says that the lessons not always end up in the way that she planned since her intentions are to speak English all the time, which is impossible. "I also start to get comfortable in my role as a teacher and for that reason uses the L1 more than I planed, especially when it comes to answering small questions to the students," she says.

The amount of English that Erica uses varies a lot, now she uses it rather rarely, about 50 % L1 and 50 % L2. The introduction of the lesson is the part that contains most English speech, Erica states and then she intends to use it more seldom. She further comment that she does not plan what to say in L1 or L2 before a lesson starts except from some words or terms that she know is going to be difficult for the students to understand in English. In these cases, we talk about the meaning of the words in Swedish before we continue, Erica says. During a lesson, Erica tries to stick to English but she admits its complexity and unfortunately, she falls back to Swedish in many cases.

### **3.2.3 Observation**

In the opening of these lessons, Sarah held her whole presentations in English even though the students asked her question in Swedish she continued to speak English. As longer the lessons went on, more Swedish was introduced in all conversations even though English was the main language that Sarah used. The most common sequences that Sarah tends to use the L1 were in individual conversations with a student or when she explains important information about something the students do not understand in L2.

Erica opened her lessons with an introduction on the whiteboard, which consisted of L2. When she used difficult words, she translated them directly into Swedish and in the end of the introduction she presented the whole task again in Swedish. Erica supported her students in both L1 and L2 during these lessons, but when she corrected the students' behavior or responded their individual questions, it almost occurred 100 % in Swedish. The amount of L2 that Erica used decreased during both lessons but she ended them in English.

## **3.3 Consequences of using L1 or L2**

The third and last issue of this degree paper is, **how does the teachers' use of English in the language classroom affect the students' use?** In order to gather some information and understanding regarding this issue the students were asked in the questionnaires what reason they might have to not use English more frequently than today. Furthermore the students were asked how questions and tasks were explained to them if they had problems understanding them in English. (See question 2 and 5 in appendix 2). The teachers were asked if they thought their use of English affected their students' use and if they tend to encourage their students to use their L2 more frequently. (See question 5 and 6 in appendix 3). Equally as previous sections of the result, this section will be ended with the result from the observations.

### 3.3.1 Questionnaire

A third of the students in class 9B declare that *they do not have to answer their teacher in English* and that is their reason for them not to speak more of the target language. Unlike 9B's result, only 7.5 % of the students in 9A gave the same answer. The most common answer from class 9B was that they *perceived themselves as lazy* and therefore used their L1 instead of their L2, there were in total 37.5 % who answer that in comparison with 9A's 22 %. Some students in 9B, namely 8.5 % state not to use the L2 more frequent because they believe that *their teacher uses the L1 herself* at most parts. Only 4 % of this class answered that *it would be embarrassing if they might say something that would not be accurate pronounced* and for that reason not use English more. This is a huge difference compared with class 9A were 41 % thought it would be embarrassing to pronounce something wrong. Furthermore there were just over a fifth of the students in 9A that answered they *felt insecure at the target language* as a reason, which was slightly more than 9B's 12.5 %.

There were different ways how the teachers explained the tasks or questions to the students if the students had problem understanding the first time in English. 37 % of the students in class 9A believed *their teacher explained the task once again in English, but this time the teacher simplified the explanation for them*. In class 9B the students thought differently, only 12.5 % replied that answer which was a difference with 24.5 % from class 9A's result. The figure below clearly show that the biggest differences regarding this result is between the two classes and not the sexes.

***If you do not understand what your teacher says, how do you get it explained the second time?***

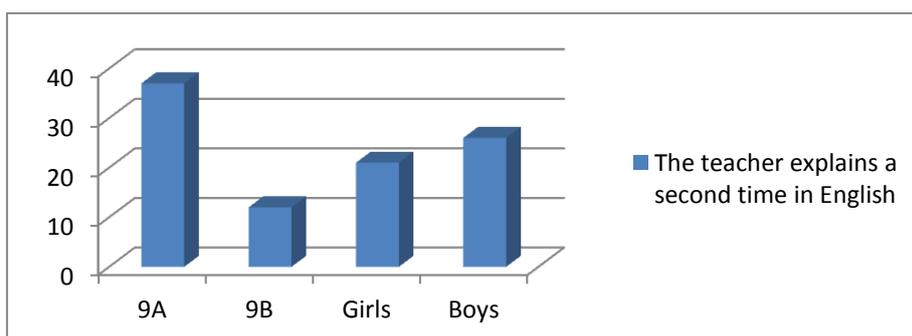


Figure 3. How many percent of the students that believe their teacher explains a task a second time in English.

### **3.3.2 Interview**

Sarah was completely convinced that her use of English in the language classroom had an effect on her students and for that reason, she also claimed that she should use the L2 more. Furthermore, she perceived herself to encourage her students to use the L2 in occasions they did not, except from their small talk.

Erica was not as convinced as Sarah was regarding her own use of English had an effect on her students, but she expressed that her use probably had some consequences. She declares that her students very seldom speak aloud but they probably need to hear it all the time. Moreover, she admits her shortcomings when it comes to encourage her students to speak more English in the classroom. The most common situation that she may correct her students is when the students ask questions in Swedish.

### **3.3.3 Observation**

It is difficult to draw any conclusions regarding how the teachers' use of English affected the students' use based on only two lessons of observations in each class. However, the encouragements from the teachers, to use more L2, were easier to spot. Sarah tends to encourage her students a bit more than Erica did and it was also these students that tried to express themselves in English to a larger extent. Since Erica's students did not get the same support, these students continued to speak Swedish at most occasions during a lesson.

## **4 SUMMARY**

The main ambition for this degree paper was to investigate how frequently the teachers and their students tend to use English in the language classroom and how the teachers' use of the target language affect the students use. Three varies of survey methods have been used to collect the data and in this section these results will be linked with previous theoretical researches and my own thoughts and statements regarding the issues.

### **4.1 Conclusion**

In this study, it was totally 61 % of the students who believed they responded their teacher 50 % or less in English if they were addressed in English and in class 9B was the result 71 %. There are different theories concerning why people tend to code switch in the language classroom, Sert (2005) states that students are not always aware of the reasons for code switching as well as its functions and outcomes. Along with Sert (2005), Harmer (2001) states that students' use of L1 in the classroom is an entirely natural thing to do. This is because

we try to make sense of a new linguistic world through the linguistic world we are already familiar with. He further writes that this type of code switching between L1 and L2 should not be seen as a misguided behavior rather than something naturally in the development. With that in mind, maybe the extremely low numbers regarding how often the students always respond back in English should not concern us. In class 9B there were only 4 % that perceived themselves as always respond back in English and in class 9A there were slightly more, namely 11 %. Although the students' answers showed result of minimal use of their L2 the teacher in class 9A believed that her students respond her in English most of the time. Additionally my observations confirm that the students in both classes, in general, responded their teacher and spoke aloud using their L1. There was absolutely no indication of L2 use when it comes to two students having a conversation with each other, regarding all four of the observations. Small questions between the teacher and the students on the other hand, were in some occasions in English. The teacher in class 9B believed that her students respond her in Swedish and I could in my observations, also distinguish a small difference between the two classes. The differences that I noticed were that the students in class 9A tend to use English slightly more than 9B did, mostly when they answered their teacher or asked questions aloud. Therefore, the teachers' answer regarding the students' amount of English speech could interpret as relevant. This result arouses my curiosity regarding why all three results point at the students in class 9A tend to use English more than 9B. Harmer (2001) writes, if the teacher frequently uses the students' mother tongue, the students will easily adapt that behavior and it is therefore very important for the teacher to be aware of what kind of example they themselves are providing. Likewise, Stoltz (Thornberg, Malmqvist, Valfridsson, red. 2009) highlights from his study that clear connections between teachers and students use of L2 can be made. In situations where teachers regularly use L2 in the language classroom the students also improved their use of the target language. These statements are very interesting and make logic sense to me and they furthermore confirm my own result in this study. The results showed there were totally 96 % of the students in class 9A that perceived their teacher to use the L2 more than 50 % or always. Only one student believed that the teacher used English at 50 % and none answered less than 50% or never. These results differ a lot compared to class 9B where 62.5 % believed that their teacher used the L2 more than 50 % or always and 37.5 % answered 50% or less. In other words, the class with the teacher who uses L2 the most also had the highest result concerning the students' use of English. These results match with previous researches and theories regarding students use of L1 or L2 and consequently increase the reliability of this study.

Harmer (2005) writes that a common motive for students to code switch in the language classroom is to avoid misunderstanding, which is consistent with the result in this study. Students in both classes felt that their own competence in speaking English was essential if they spoke or not. A third of all students in 9A responded they would talk more English if they were better at it and a quarter in 9B, which were both classes second highest answer in that category. In the class with the teacher who uses L2 less, a third of the students, declare that they do not have to answer their teacher in English and state that is the reason for them not to speak more of the target language. My result in this study does not emphasize facts regarding the underlying meaning of what this teacher does to bring out these statements from her students. Maybe the students' answers are connected to the lack of encouragement from the teacher when the students tend to use L1 instead of L2 in the language classroom. Results from both interviews and observations in this study show that this teacher intend to, in a smaller amount, encourage her students to switch back to English when they speak in L1 than teacher of class

9A. Associated with more encouragement from the teacher in class 9A there were only 7.5 % of the students that answer that they do not have to respond their teacher in English. I believe it is difficult not to see a connection between these two results, which demonstrates how important it is for the students that the teacher supports and maintains the use of the target language in the classroom in order for the students to use it. However, during my observations I noticed that both teachers believed themselves to encourage their students to speak more English than I perceived them to do, which could be a sign of how hard it is to reflect on one's own behavior. Another element that showed that Sarah, teacher in class 9A, emphasized English more in her lessons was the result from the questionnaires regarding how the teacher explained a task for the students when they had problems understanding it the first time. 37 % of the students in class 9A believed their teacher explained the task once again in English, but this time the teacher simplified the explanation for them. In class 9B the students thought differently, only 12.5 % replied that answer which was a differ with 24.5 % from class 9A's result. Harmer (2001) highlights that teacher talking time has an important part to play in language acquisition. It therefore makes sense for the teacher to speak English as much as possible in the class, because if they choose not to, students will not see the need to speak too much English either. My result further showed that students wanted their teacher to use the L2 in the language classroom. Students who believed their teacher used L2 50 % or more in the language classroom answered that they felt satisfied with the amount of use. On the other hand, students that believed their teacher used L2 50 % or less wanted their teacher to use English more. These two results from two different classes confirm that students want their teacher to speak English during a language lesson, which I believe is very interesting knowledge.

As a future English teacher, I am pleased with my result and previous researches that I have been taking part of during this degree paper. Results regarding teachers' use of English and what effect teachers' inspiration and encouragement has on the students and their use of the target language, surprised me a bit. It was apparent in this study that students wanted their teacher to use their L2 as much as possible, which moreover resulted in more frequent use of English for the students as well. Even though these results feel very realistic and logical when they are compiled, I did not expect an outcome of my work as consequently and consistent between the two classes and with previous researches as this. Even though the results from this study only represents by the two classes at this particular school I believe this degree paper have given me new essential knowledge regarding my role as a future teacher which I most certainly will apply in my upcoming work.

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# APPENDICES

## *Appendix 1.*

### **Till Dig i klass 9.**

Som blivande Engelska lärare är jag väldigt intresserad av att höra Dina tankar, åsikter gällande din medverkan i Engelska undervisningen på Din skola. Jag har därför skapat ett enkätformulär med frågor där Dina svar kan öka min, och andras förståelse gällande Din relation samt inställning till ämnet Engelska.

Jag har valt att utföra denna undersökning på elever i klass 9 på Din skola med anledning av att jag tidigare haft kontakt med skolan samt att jag i är utbildad högstadielärare.

Det är det frivilligt att delta i denna undersökning men jag är väldigt tacksam och Du tar Dig tid och fyller i denna enkät så ärligt Du bara kan då Dina svar kommer att ha stor betydelse i min undersökning.

**Du kommer att vara helt anonym i undersökningen och dina svar kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt!**

Undersökningen kommer att ligga till grund för min Engelska C-uppsats på Högskolan i Gävle och om Du har några frågor gällande detta får Du gärna kontakta mig via Carina Larsson som är Engelskalärare på din skola.

Jag tackar på förhand för Din medverkan i undersökningen,  
Jenny Åkerblom

## Appendix 2

### Frågor till elever År 9

Ringa in det svarsalternativet som passar bäst in på dig.

Tjej                      Kille

- 1) Om du blir tilltalad på engelska av din lärare hur ofta svarar du tillbaka på samma språk?**

Alltid

Mer än 50%

Ca 50%

Mindre än 50%

Aldrig

- 2) Vad är orsaken till att du inte besvarar din lärare mer än du gör idag, på engelska?**

Jag känner mig osäker på språket

Jag tycker det är pinsamt om jag skulle säga något fel

Jag är slö

Vi behöver inte svara på engelska

Övrigt.....

.....

- 3) Hur mycket anser du att din engelskalärare använder sig av det engelska språket i klassrummet?**

Alltid

Mer än 50%

Ca 50%

Mindre än 50%

Aldrig

- 4) Förstår du allt som din lärare säger på engelska lektionerna?**

Ja

Det mesta men inte allt

Långa genomgångar är svåra att hänga med på

Jag förstår bara en del

Jag förstår väldigt lite

**5) Om det är något jag inte förstår får jag det förklarat på följande vis:**

På svenska av min lärare

På svenska av mina kompisar

På engelska av min lärare men denna gång är språket lättare och långsammare

Övrigt.....

.....

.....

**6) Vad skulle bidra till att du talade mer engelska på engelska lektionerna?**

Om min lärare pratade mer engelska

Om jag var bättre på språket

Om jag kände mig tryggare i gruppen

Om vi jobbar i mindre grupper

Övrigt.....

.....

.....

**7) Anser du att din lärare använder det engelska språket i normal mängd på engelska lektionerna?**

Ja det är bra som det är

Jag skulle uppskatta om min lärare använde det engelska språket mer

Jag skulle uppskatta om min lärare använde det engelska språket mindre

## Appendix 3

### **Frågor till två engelska lärare**

- 1) Är du medveten om hur mycket engelskt tal du använder när du undervisar på dina engelska lektioner?
- 2) Planerar du innan lektionen vad på lektionen som ska presenteras på engelska respektive svenska?
- 3) Håller du dig alltid till planeringen eller är det lätt att börja förklara på svenska när det blir frågor?
- 4) Upplever du att eleverna svarar på engelska när de blir tilltalade på samma språk?
- 5) Tror du att ditt användande av det engelska språket påverkar eleverna till att prata mer på samma språk?
- 6) Uppmanar du regelbundet eleverna till att prata engelska på lektionerna, både till dig som lärare samt till sina vänner?
- 7) Vad tror du skulle bidra till att eleverna pratade mer engelska på dina lektioner?

## Appendix 4

### **Målsmans godkännande**

Hej!

Mitt namn är Jenny Åkerlom och jag studerar till Engelska lärare på högskolan i Gävle. För tillfället skriver jag en C-uppsats som handlar om hur frekvent lärare och elever använder det Engelska språket i Engelska undervisningen. För att undersöka detta har jag valt att bland annat använda mig av en enkät som ska utföras på eleverna i år 9. Enligt forskningsetiken på högskolan får inte intervjuer eller enkäter göras till omyndiga barn utan vårdnadshavarens tillåtelse så för att möjliggöra detta utförande behöver jag härmed ditt godkännande i form av en underskift. Ert barn kommer att vara anonym i denna studie och allt material kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt. Jag tackar på förhand och hoppas att ni skriver under detta papper så att ditt barn kan delta på undersökningen, då det är till ett gott syfte.

Med vänliga hälsningar,  
Jenny Åkerblom, Högskolan i Gävle.

Elevens namn.....

Målsmans underskrift

.....

## *Appendix 5*

### **Observation of an English lesson**

Opening:

Introduction:

Support during lesson:

Questions from students:

Response from teacher:

End of lesson:

Student's use of English:

Teacher's use of English: