Multilingualism and Translanguaging in Swedish Upper Secondary School

An exploration of English teacher candidates’ attitudes

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Abstract
This ethnographically informed, qualitative study aims to investigate English teacher candidates’ attitudes towards multilingualism and translanguaging in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms and in the school environment. More specifically, the study intends to identify potential contributing factors to the formation of said attitudes, such as the influence of policy documents and of the teacher training program on the perception of the future working environment. The data was collected with semi-structured interviews; the participants were four teacher candidates, two females and two males, enrolled in the teacher education program in a Swedish university. In addition, at the time of data collection, all participants had completed most of the teacher education program, an aspect that increased the relevance of their responses, since they would soon be active teachers in the Swedish school system. Overall, the participants expressed positive attitudes towards multilingualism and translanguaging in a school environment. However, some hesitation in their answers was detected when they are asked how they would work with multilingual students in their future practice. These findings suggest that, if teacher candidates receive adequate education to approach their future working environment with confidence they would be better equipped to provide adequate pedagogical support to students whose L1 is other than Swedish. This would foster positive attitudes towards multilingualism and translanguaging and would, consequently, lead to an improvement in the academic results of multilingual students. The teacher candidates’ increased awareness of the benefits and challenges of multilingualism and their ability to put into practice the general principles they learn at university would benefit from changes in the teacher training program, in the curriculum compiled by the National Agency of Education, and in the national pedagogical approach to language learning.

Keywords
Multilingualism, English as a foreign language (EFL), translanguaging, attitudes, linguistic capital, National Agency of Education (NAE).
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1. Introduction

Schools in Sweden are expected to develop students’ existing knowledge, and to promote the acquisition of new knowledge and of values of the society. The National Agency of Education (henceforth NAE) is responsible for formulating the curriculum and knowledge requirements for the entire school system. All personnel in school undertakes the task of turning these institutional policy documents into practice and of complying with the requirements set out by the government and NAE. In the introduction to the curriculum for compulsory school and upper secondary school in Sweden, NAE (2013) states that:

The task of the school is to encourage all students to discover their own uniqueness as individuals and thereby actively participate in the life of society by giving of their best in responsible freedom. (p. 4)

Sweden has long been a multicultural society; a large number of children and young adults attending schools today are multilingual and have experiences from other countries and cultures. Their linguistic repertoire is arguably a part of their uniqueness as individuals and multilingual students should therefore, according to the curriculum for upper secondary school in Sweden, be encouraged to recognize it. What is not specified, however, is how this recognition is to be manifested in quotidian classroom environments and converted into practice and to what extent a student’s first language should be taken into consideration when structuring education. The important correlation between the development of an individual’s entire linguistic repertoire and knowledge acquisition has been acknowledged by NAE (Skolverket, 2012). There is indeed vast research highlighting the importance of valuing a pupil’s linguistic capital in the school field to assure optimal knowledge acquisition and academic development for multilingual students (Benson, 2009; Cekaite & Evaldsson, 2008; García, 2008; Kerfoot & Basirat Olayemi, 2014). However, apart from the voluntary mother tongue education, in the curriculum for upper secondary schools in Sweden there is no specification as to where and in what way a multilingual student’s entire linguistic capital can work as a contributing factor to the acquisition of knowledge. Research indicating benefits of translanguaging in second and foreign language classrooms (Turnbull & Dailey-O’Cain, 2009; Kramsch, 2009; García, 2009) has evidently not been taken into account when formulating neither curricula nor syllabi for upper secondary schools in Sweden. In addition, the Swedish school inspectorate found in 2010 that teachers within the Swedish school system lack significant knowledge concerning how to work with multilingual students. Furthermore, there is also research indicating that attitudes towards students’ linguistic knowledge and repertoire can have a substantial effect on self-confidence, identity formation and educational outcome (Ladberg, 2000; Skolverket, 2012).

As there is very little Swedish research conducted within this field, the present study aims to conduct exploratory research in order to acquire insights into the current situation, uncover possible problems, reflect on potential practical implications, and develop relevant hypotheses for further research. More specifically, this study aims to investigate the attitudes of English teacher candidates towards multilingualism and translanguaging in the school environment in general and in EFL classrooms in particular. Teacher candidates form a vital part of future school development in Sweden and, thus, their knowledge and attitudes regarding the current topic are crucial. Knowing what factors might contribute to the formation of attitudes allows educators to make relevant adjustments to the teacher training program and might ultimately ensure a positive development of academic achievement and overall educational outcome for multilingual students.
2. Rationale for the present study

As it will be explained next, teacher attitudes towards multilingualism in a school environment are pivotal for optimal knowledge acquisition for students with an L1 other than Swedish. The policy documents can be described as somewhat contradictory and vague in matters concerning multilingualism and the pedagogical approach that would be most beneficial for multilingual students. Furthermore, the investigation realized by the Swedish school inspectorate in 2010 proves that teachers in the Swedish school system today lack the necessary knowledge that is required to work with multilingual students. This fact might be contributing to the formation of negative attitudes towards a student group that is academically weaker than students who have Swedish as their L1 (Skolverket, 2012).

However, there is scant research on teacher attitudes towards multilingualism in a school environment and on the factors that might contribute to the formation of these attitudes. The present study thus focuses on the attitudes developed by teacher candidates, as they play an important role in the future of the Swedish school system. Based on the hypotheses that adequate knowledge regarding policy documents, multilingual students and translanguaging will prevent the formation of negative attitudes, the present ethnographic study aims to explore English teacher candidates’ attitudes towards multilingualism and their understanding of policy documents. The study therefore intends to answer the following research questions:

1) Do English teacher candidates have positive or negative attitudes towards multilingualism and translanguaging in a school environment?

2) What could be contributing factors to the formation of negative attitudes towards multilingualism and translanguaging in a school environment for teacher candidates?

3) How do English teacher candidates interpret requirements placed upon them by policy documents?

3. Literature review

3.1 Multilingualism in Sweden

The fact that contemporary Sweden is a country where more languages than Swedish are spoken might appear evident. However, Sweden has historically been considered a monolingual country, where speakers of other languages were expected to adopt the majority language. It was not until the 1960’s and 1970’s, with increasing immigration, that minority-language speaking groups began gaining some rights regarding language use (Börenstam & Huss, 2001). Today a lot has changed regarding language policies in Sweden. Several laws have been passed to preserve, protect and favor minority languages and, consequently, the position of minority groups in society has been strengthened. These laws concern the five national minority languages of Sweden (Finish, Yiddish, Meänkieli, Romani and Lappish), but these laws can also work to protect other minority languages (Melander, 2013). In addition, the Swedish language has also gained a consolidated position by being acknowledged as the official language of Sweden in 2009. The purpose of passing this language legislation was to protect the Swedish language from the increased influence of English, a language that today serves as a lingua franca in many fields of society, nationally as well as internationally (Lindberg, 2011). In other words, Swedish holds a contradictory position in that it is both a minority and a majority language and such position leads to the double-faceted nature of language policies in Sweden,
which has been problematized by Lindberg (2011). The issue at stake is that the contradictory position of Swedish calls for a delicate balance between preserving the status of Swedish as the official language of the country and favoring language diversity.

Formally, it has become easier to be a speaker of a minority language in Sweden but the monolingual norm is still not completely erased. Although an investigation ordered by the government in 2002 showed positive attitudes towards multilingualism and acknowledgement of the importance of a broad language competence (SOU, 2002), the reality reflects somewhat contradictory attitudes towards multilingualism.

3.2 Language attitudes

Since the focus of this study is on language attitudes, a terminological specification is in order. In this study attitude is a superordinate term that subsumes terms such as prejudice, stereotype, habit, value, opinion, etcetera (Edwards, 2011). Attitudes are commonly known as the internal system that people use to understand and make sense of the complex reality in which they live. Specifically, attitudes play an important role in the creation of identity, in both individual and group contexts (Ladberg, 2000). Attitudes can, for example, be applied to strengthen pre-existing positions within a group, but also between groups (e.g. the position of a majority group in relation to a minority group). This study adopts Edwards’ (2011) view of attitudes as consisting of three components: a behavioral component (disposition to act), a cognitive component (belief), and an affective component (emotion). The behavioral component regards a person’s inclination to act in accordance with values and pre-notions. The creation of these pre-notions and the perception of the object for the attitude pertain to the cognitive component which does not necessarily have to be factual. Lastly, the affective component is said to be the most fundamental element to the formation of attitudes and regards individuals’ emotionally influenced values that interact with the cognitive component. In present study it is the cognitive and affective components that are of interest since the behavioral component cannot be observed through interviews.

3.3 Linguistic capital and the creation of identity

Bourdieu (1977) distinguishes between linguistic competence and linguistic capital. Specifically, Bourdieu (1977) defines competence as “the capacity for infinite generation of grammatically regular discourse” (p. 646). He argues that the notion of competence does not include the capability to adequately use the language, whereas the term linguistic capital does. Producing grammatically correct sentences in a coherent sequence is not problematic; the real issue is to do so in various social situations. As Bourdieu (1977) points out:

All particular linguistic transactions depend on the structure of the linguistic field, which is itself a particular expression of the structure of the power relations between the groups possessing the corresponding competences (e.g. “genteel” language and the vernacular, or, in a situation of multilingualism, the dominant language and the dominated language). (p. 647)

In any linguistic interaction, there is a symbolic power relation between the participants. This relation is formed based on more than the linguistic capital of the participants in that it incorporates other variables such as knowledge, capacity to command etc. These variables form a capital of authority and determine each participant’s location within an imaginary hierarchy of speech (Bourdieu, 1977). In a school environment, the respective capital of authority between two speakers and their symbolic power relation becomes important as it regards not only the
interaction between students and teacher but also between peers. Students whose capital of authority and linguistic capital are perceived by others as less valuable could, consequently, experience a significant loss in self-confidence and start to question their identity (Kerfoot & Jih Tatah, 2016). What is also important to note is that the value of linguistic capital can change drastically depending on the context. A highly valued linguistic capital in one society or group is not necessarily valued in a similar way in a different society (Weber & Horner, 2012).

3.4 Translanguaging in second and foreign language learning

In many parts of the world language teaching is based on the myth of maximum exposure to the target language (García, 2009). In addition, there has also been a historical tendency for a monolingual bias within the discipline of applied linguistics. Thus, there is very little room for students’ L1 in traditional EFL classrooms. The usage of a student’s L1 is often viewed as a disturbance since maximum exposure and use of target languages are seen as pivotal to language learning (Guzula, McKinney & Tyle, 2016). Recent research, however, suggests that translanguaging and the use of L1 serve an important purpose in second language education (Fuller, 2009; García, 2009; Kerfoot & Basirat Olayemi, 2014; Potowski, 2009; Turnbull & Dailey-O’Cain, 2009). Specifically, translanguaging, that is the use of all the linguistic resources at a person’s disposal (Weber & Horner, 2012), is not a sign of deficiency, but a characteristic feature of advanced bilingual speakers. Turnbull and Daliey-O’Cain (2009) point out that:

[…] it seems clear that if we are to regard the language learner not as an imperfect monolingual speaker of the second language but as a budding multilingual whose model is the multilingual speaker, it therefore seems reasonable to expect and allow codeswitching [translanguaging] to emerge naturally within second and foreign language classrooms. (p. 8)

Translanguaging fulfills social and pragmatic functions in a wide variety of situations and forms a natural part of language interaction for multilingual children (Potowski, 2009). Target language input must be converted into target language intake, which means that the student must understand and internalize all components (e.g. form, meaning, context etc.) of the utterance in the target language. First language use and translanguaging can facilitate understanding and internalization, and thus contribute to learning (Cook, 2001; Turnbull & Dailey-O’Cain, 2009). In addition, connections between prior knowledge, ideas and target language can be facilitated by first language use since students who are not at a highly advanced level in the L2 think in their L1 (Turnbull & Dailey-O’Cain, 2009).

4. Background

4.1 Policy documents

4.1.1 Curriculum and syllabus

The Swedish curriculum for the entire national school system, including upper secondary schools, is based on democratic values. NAE specifies the national goals through the norms for equivalence. The Swedish school curriculum stipulates that schools are responsible for promoting the students’ lifelong desire to learn. Schools should also foster the learning process with a pedagogical approach that is based on scientific grounds and proven experience. NAE also establishes the curriculum for upper secondary education. Such curriculum specifies overall goals and guidelines, fundamental values and school tasks. It is, and should be, the core inspiration for all teachers as they plan, structure and implement their lessons. The upper
secondary education curriculum also takes into account the internationalization process and the challenges it poses. Specifically,

The internationalization of Swedish society and increasing cross-border mobility place high demands on the ability of people to live with and appreciate the values inherent in cultural diversity. (Skolverket, 2013, p. 4)

These demands regard all personnel in the school environment as the school is a social and cultural meeting place. The tasks, demands and requirements on the school, the teachers and all who work in Swedish upper secondary schools are many and in no way easy.

For the present purposes, certain requirements are particularly relevant. An excerpt from the curriculum for upper secondary school (Skolverket, 2013, pp. 9-10) states that teachers should:

- take as the starting point each individual student’s needs, circumstances, experiences and thinking,
- reinforce each student’s self-confidence, as well as their willingness and ability to learn;
- stimulate, guide and support students and provide special support to students experiencing difficulties,
- organize and carry out work so that students:
  - develop in accordance with their own preconditions and at the same time are stimulated to use and develop all their ability,
  - experience that knowledge is meaningful and that their own learning is progressing
  - receive support in their language and communicative development.

These requirements suggest that NAE, through its norms for equivalence, takes into consideration the fact that not all students attending upper secondary school speak the same language. What is noteworthy, however, is that the students’ individual needs, circumstances, experiences and thinking are simply taken as a “starting point”; that is, this document does not explicitly encourage teachers to target the development and the acquisition of new knowledge in connection to such needs, circumstances, experiences and thinking. Moreover, it is not clear how students are supposed to “receive support in their language and communicative development”. NAE acknowledges the interplay between language, thinking and the development of knowledge and it is argued that it is taken into account in the formation of national steering documents (Skolverket, 2012). It is argued that language is crucial in the acquisition of knowledge; however, the complex nature of multilingual students’ linguistic repertoire is not mentioned. Moreover, there are some contradictions in the statements of NAE regarding the importance of mother tongue in knowledge acquisition. It is stated by NAE (Skolverket, 2012) that there is little Swedish research conducted in the field of second/foreign language education and, thus, NAE looks to research conducted internationally to find an optimal pedagogical approach to multilinguals students’ acquisition of subject matters. It appears, however, that research conducted regarding multilingual students and the importance of the development of all languages in a student’s linguistic repertoire has been overlooked. Research conducted in various countries with various constellations of multilingualism (Benson, 2009; Cekaite & Evaldsson, 2008; Guzula, X, McKinney & Tyle, 2016; Kerfoot & Basirat Olayemi, 2014) indicates that it is imperative for multilingual students’ acquisition of knowledge to develop all the languages in their repertoire.
Furthermore, NAE does recognize that there are noticeable differences between the educational performance of multilingual students with an L1 other than Swedish and multilingual students with Swedish as L1. One of the reasons for this is indicated by results from the investigation realized by the Swedish school inspectorate in 2010 as they point to the fact that teachers in the Swedish school system lack adequate education regarding the development of knowledge and language for multilingual students.

4.1.2 Mother tongue education

A student who speaks a language other than Swedish at home is, as stated by the Swedish educational act, entitled to mother tongue education during the compulsory school years and in upper secondary school. To be able to attend mother tongue education in upper secondary school the student requires a passing grade from the courses taken at the end of compulsory school. The education in the student’s first language is voluntary and, consequently, it is the student and the guardians who decide whether the student will participate or not. Mother tongue education is normally provided for seven years, unless there are specific reasons for the student to be entitled to additional instruction. However, if there are less than five students that request education in a certain language or if there is no adequate teacher, the municipality is not obliged by law to provide mother tongue education (Hyltenstam, Axelsson & Lindberg, 2012). An investigation conducted by the Swedish school inspectorate (2010) showed that schools often do not view mother tongue education as a general concern and that the responsibility for the development of proficiency in a students’ mother tongue is often placed upon the teacher of that specific subject or upon the student’s guardians. Mother tongue education is a seldom occurring topic during school – guardian – student performance reviews.

In addition, despite investigations indicating the benefits and importance of mother tongue education, the normal weekly time average for mother tongue education is no more than one hour that is commonly placed after the end of the obligatory school day (Hyltenstam, Axelsson & Lindberg, 2012). Axelsson (2013) argues that results from investigations conducted in Swedish schools demonstrate that students who participate actively in mother tongue education reached higher academic success than student who did not. It was also demonstrated that mother tongue education had a positive effect on additional language learning and that students’ attitudes towards their own identity and multilingualism in general were affected in a positive way.

Furthermore, Benson (2009) shows that, by forcing the transition from L1 use to L2 only use too hastily, students are deprived of a solid foundation of competencies, experiences and prior learning. Benson (2009) argues that “the mother tongue should remain part of the curriculum (at least as a subject of study) throughout their school careers” (p.75). Given the current formulation of the Swedish curriculum, it is an option for students to continue their mother tongue education throughout their school careers, however, it could be argued that it is not encouraged in practice.

5. Method

Ethnographic studies are inductive and qualitative on specific social contexts of interest. Empirical evidence is collected with participant observation during field work, interviews, and questionnaires; the data is analysed with both an etic (i.e., researcher-relevant) and an emic (i.e., participant-relevant) approach. From an ethnographic perspective, language is a resource that
is available to people in various groups and societies (Blommaert & Jie, 2010) and it should be studied not only in terms of language use, but also in terms of the participants’ attitudes towards such use. As a result of the researcher’s affiliation to, and interaction with the specific group of interest for present study it could be argued that present study is ethnographically informed. Furthermore, a qualitative approach seemed well suited for the purposes of the present study.

Indeed, a qualitative methodology is suitable to gain a deep understanding of value-systems, thoughts, opinions and attitudes (Dörnyei, 2007). More specifically, for present purposes, semi-structured interviews were deemed the most suitable, qualitative data collection method. The semi-structured approach to interviews allows questions to be altered when needed; furthermore, depending on the situation, questions can also be added to ensure that relevant data is collected. Interviewers may also perceive the need to rephrase or change the order of the questions in order to obtain an optimal input of respondents’ views and attitudes.

5.1 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were deemed the most suitable data collection method for the present purposes. An interview guide (see appendix A) containing three main sections was used to guarantee a clear line of argument. The first section attends to the respondents’ linguistic and educational background in addition to some general information; the second section contains general questions regarding school-related terminology and policy documents; and the final section is dedicated to investigate the respondents’ perception of their future working environment. All questions were formulated as open-ended to encourage elaborate answers, allowing the respondent to freely express thoughts, opinions and emotions regarding the topic under investigation. The interview guide was piloted at two occasions to enable revisions before the authentic interview sessions. The interview guide containing 35 questions functioned as a base for the interviews which were all audio-recorded to ensure that the interviewer could focus during the interview, but also to facilitate subsequent transcription work.

As respondents tend to perceive interviews sessions as “threatening”, abnormal and formal speech situations, the location for the sessions were tranquil coffee shops. This, to create good conditions for as normal speech as possible and a relaxed atmosphere (Blommaert & Jie, 2010). Furthermore, since the interviewer and the interviewees had a previously established relationship, the chance of the interview sessions becoming authentic and as close to a ‘ordinary’ conversation increased; thus, producing relevant data. However, the pre-established relationship between the interviewer and the interviewees could also have resulted in ambiguity and possible tension during the sessions as a result of perceptions of the interviewees regarding the interviewer as a particular kind of interlocutor. This was taken into consideration by the interviewer, who tried to remain as objective as possible throughout the duration of the interviews, remaining as quiet as possible to ensure authenticity in answers of the interviewees and, consequently, minimize the influence she might otherwise have had on the collected data. The duration of the interviews varied between 20 and 46 minutes. The data (audio recordings) was then transcribed and analyzed and the participants were given pseudonyms (H, I, J and K) to ensure anonymity. The transcriptions of the interviews in their totality can be found in Appendices C-F.

The four respondents (two male and two female) who participated in the interviews were chosen based on diversity in regards to teaching experience/background and language knowledge. The respondents were contacted at a university in Stockholm where they attended the teacher
education program. Brief information regarding the study was given orally at the time and the respondents were then asked if they would like to participate in the study. If recruited, the respondents were then emailed the information regarding the study in advanced. Hence, the respondents could formulate possible questions and concerns regarding their participation. In addition, the participants also received a consent form (see appendix B) containing relevant information regarding their participation in the present study which they were asked to read and sign before the interviews.

The respondents attended the teacher training program at a Swedish university; the participants had various first subjects, but English was the second subject for all of them. All the respondents were in the end of the teacher training program and, consequently, they would soon be active teachers in Swedish schools. Such aspect increased the relevance of their responses. All participants had completed two courses of practical training within the teacher training program (VFU). However, three of the participants had additional teaching experience. Specifically, at the time of data collection, participant H was working as a teacher while completing his degree at university and had done so throughout the entire teacher training program. On the other hand, participants I and K had some experience of working as substitute teachers outside of the teacher training program. All the participants mastered two languages: Swedish and English, and two of the participants’ (I and K) linguistic repertoires contained additional languages (Arabic, Polish and French). The respondents had all finished a large part of the teacher candidate program in Sweden; however, two participants had studied abroad before commencing the teacher training program (participant J in Japan and participant H in England).

5.2 Data analysis
As previously mentioned, the interviews were recorded. Directly after the interviews had ended and the interviewee had left the location, the recordings were played back to the interviewer. This, to ensure that the recording was of high quality but also to make some notes regarding first impressions after the interview. All the recordings were then transcribed and the transcripts were analysed through content coding. Every transcript was read carefully, line by line and relevant words, sentences or sections were marked and coded based on their significance to present study (e.g. positive/negative connotation, hypothetical ideas, feeling, emotion, thought, etc.). The codes were then analysed and sorted into categories (e.g. positive/negative attitude towards multilingualism, positive/negative attitude towards translanguaging, contributing factor, thoughts/opinions on policy documents, perception of future working environment etc.) which then constituted the results of present research. The analysis of the data was done as unbiased, open-minded and close to the transcripts as possible.

6. Results
The following paragraphs provide a summary of the respondents’ answers during the four separate interviews. Each paragraph highlights ideas, thoughts and values shared by the respondents and indicates where their responses differ.

6.1 Attitudes towards multilingualism in a school environment
All respondents share positive attitudes towards multilingualism in a school environment and unanimously acknowledge the possible benefits to knowledge acquisition within all subject matters in school if the right pedagogical approaches are applied. None of the participants could, however, specify which pedagogical approach they found preferable. They all recognize that
the students have a lot to gain from prior knowledge of various languages and experiences of cultures and countries. Respondent H, who is currently working in a highly multilingual environment, states that multilingualism in a school environment is “a brilliant thing”. He adds: “I think that especially when you draw from knowledge of the language and that when I have my class I learn a lot from them.”

While the respondents manifest positive attitudes toward multilingualism, their concerns emerge when they are asked about the practical implications of having multilingual classrooms. Words such as: problem, difficulty and struggle, which are arguably loaded with negative connotations, indicate the respondents’ hesitation in embracing multilingualism. “Obviously it’s a struggle” was the answer by respondent H to a question regarding how to ensure comprehension for hypothetical students who do not have an adequate level of Swedish or English. Respondent I, in turn, notices the need for a solution-based perspective on multilingualism at university: “I know that there is a problem and that maybe there are difficulties in this area but I still don’t know how to work with this. They show the problems but no solution.” In line with the previous quote, respondent J also expresses concern: “There are so many problems you are going to run in to.” In addition, respondent J notices that more problems might be created in the future working environment as a result of the lack of attention paid at university to solutions. Likewise, respondent K also acknowledges the lack of focus on solutions in the teacher training program but appears accepting of the fact that solutions will be found within a working environment, even though it might be hard in the beginning.

6.2 Perceptions of the future working environment

As mentioned before, the respondents have different working experiences as teachers. Hence, their perception of their future working environment spans from quite hypothetical thoughts to a firm and concrete understanding of their professional setting. In general, they all seem quite certain that they will face highly multilingual classrooms in the future. Specifically, they recognize that the spectrum of languages spoken in school today is wide and that they will not always understand the languages spoken by their future students. Furthermore, all the respondents seem to count on their future colleagues and employers as possible bridges between theory and practice. Specifically, they trust that the knowledge of experienced teachers and principals in combination with the knowledge they gained during their university studies will be enough to resolve hypothetical problems that might be encountered in their future working environment. Similarly, the respondents acknowledge that one teacher, especially a new one, will never know everything and that a trial and error approach should be applied in the beginning. Moreover, respondent J highlights the importance of support from leadership and colleagues in order to develop strategies, methods and techniques. An accepting and supportive environment is pivotal to feel confident and able to fairly assess/evaluate outcomes.

All participants express positive ideas and thoughts regarding the school environment. The respondents speak about the advantages of getting to know every student thoroughly and about the possibilities that knowing one’s students would create regarding the students’ academic development. They express that there is a lot to gain and learn from multilingual students in regards to other cultures, perspectives, study techniques etc. On the other hand, all respondents also express some scepticism towards the future working environment and whether they will be able to achieve and work in the way they aspire to. They talk about “school utopia”, “dream world” and “perfect world” indicating that their expectations might be unrealistic. The respondents question whether there will be enough resources in the school to give future
students the support they need. In addition, they mention the need for smaller student groups, but seem doubtful as to whether there will be enough economical resources to guarantee smaller group sizes.

6.3 Policy documents and the teacher training program

The requirement from NAE regarding the adaptation to each pupil’s knowledge, circumstances and needs is interpreted quite literally by all the respondents: they agree that all students should be seen as individuals and that it is important for a teacher to plan instruction accordingly. Each student’s strengths and weaknesses should be taken into consideration when a teacher plans her/his lessons and implements them. In other words, all students should be given the support they need and their previous experiences of countries, cultures and languages should be taken into account, so that all students can have equal chances to learn. However, the respondents express hesitation when it comes to applying this to their practice. All participants, in fact, indicate that there is a gap between theory and practice and that they would have liked to discuss the policy documents more thoroughly during their teacher training program (see below). In addition, the respondents state that they are not sure whether they have interpreted the policy documents by NAE correctly and indicate that the documents need to be more concrete. Moreover, respondent H expresses concerns regarding the requirement from NAE about the adaptation to each individual student in relation to the sizes of student groups: “in reality that is much more difficult […] I think that you have to make adjustments as much as you think is possible”.

When asked if they have spoken about the curriculum by NAE during their education at university the respondent’s answers are all similar: they either do not remember whether the policy documents have been discussed or state that the documents have been discussed but to a very little extent. The general guidelines stated by NAE, however, have not been discussed at all as far as the respondents can remember. They do, nonetheless, acknowledge that curricula connected to specific subject matters (e.g. Social science, English, Swedish etc.) have been brought up during courses of didactics but that there is a need for more in-depth understanding of such documents.

Finally, concerning mother tongue education, respondents I and K mention that they have first-hand experience of the importance of mother tongue in combination with developing knowledge in other subjects, as they both have a mother tongue different than Swedish. They do, however, testify to the fact that they did not feel encouraged to develop their mother tongue during their time in compulsory school and upper secondary school and that it is later that they have recognized the importance of having attended mother tongue education. Respondent K attended mother tongue education in compulsory school:

I didn’t want to go and learn my mother tongue, which I thought was terrible just because they didn’t encourage me to do it. So I think it’s important to encourage students to do that and I also think it’s very, very important that teacher candidates learn about these things and learn how to react in these situations.

6.4 Attitudes towards translanguaging and L1 use

The respondents recognize the importance of being able to use the L1 in the classroom and translanguaging between the languages in one’s linguistic repertoire. At the same time, they are all aware of the difficult balance between L1 use and a maximum exposure approach to
language learning. None of the respondents would forbid L1 use in the classroom, but they have slightly different views as to what extent, in what way and how the L1 should be positioned in a classroom environment. For example, participants H and K express thoughts in line with the theory of maximum exposure. Respondent H highlights the importance of making sure that “everyone speaks the target language”, while respondent K states that: “I feel that if it’s [the use of L1] needed and they really don’t understand in Swedish or English, they should be able to use it, but only if they really need it.” On the other hand, respondent I states that L1 use in a language classroom is not “just good or just bad”; rather, it is a multifaceted matter that depends on the situation and on each individual student’s capacities. Finally, concerning L1 use in the classroom, participant J observes: “of course I’m very positive to it if you can make it work and if there are obvious profits to it, then go for it. It’s brilliant.”

They also speak about possible problems when faced with languages that they do not understand. Respondent I reports being in a situation in which a group of girls alienated themselves from the class by strictly speaking their L1 that no one else understood. Respondent I expressed concerns that L1 use might lead to unwanted distance between groups in the classroom. During one of the periods of practical training (VFU) within the university education respondent I noticed a student group that had been separated from the rest of the class due to their use of L1. The group of girls spoke solely in their L1 until they were explicitly asked by the teacher not to. This led to the alienation of one student, who felt stuck because “she couldn’t speak Swedish well enough to speak with the other students”.

Furthermore, all the respondents seem to maintain the same attitude towards L1 use regardless of the specific language that constitutes the L1. They do, however, highlight that it is important for the whole class to understand such L1(s). In other words, active use of an L1 that is not understood by all students might be problematic, especially when students are working in groups. For example, respondent K notes: “Because they are in a group and not everyone understands Spanish, I think it’s important that everyone speaks English.” Respondent H expresses a similar thought: “[…] a group of 6 people and 5 of them speak Arabic, then obviously that would be terrible for that one who will not understand.” Some of the respondents also raise the issue of assessment: as respondent I points out, it would be hard to evaluate a student’s knowledge if it cannot be expressed in words understood by the teacher. So, at least for assessment purposes, it would be important to encourage students to use the target language of the class.

Finally, respondent J expresses a will to encourage the use of L1 and the importance of making room for translanguaging in education.

One point that might be overlooked occasionally is that […] the first language is very important even though it might not be the subject at hand. It should definitely be respected and needs to be calculated into the kind of education you want to provide.

The respondent does not, however, offer any thoughts on how a teacher should respect and take into account a student’s first language when planning instruction. This uncertainty in how to approach translanguaging and L1 use in a practical way is shared by all the respondents.

7. Discussion

The results of the present study indicate that teacher candidates have positive attitudes towards multilingualism in a school environment (see research question 1) but that they are hesitant as
to how they can work with multilingual students to ensure optimal knowledge acquisition. The hesitation might stem from a lack in knowledge and a perceived gap between theory and practice, which are arguably two important factors in the formation of English teacher candidates’ attitudes towards multilingualism in a school environment (see research question 2). Furthermore, all the respondents appear to have at least a partial understanding of the policy documents (see research question 3). However, they do indicate a gap between theory and practice and suggest that more time is dedicated to a discussion of the NAE policy documents in the teacher training program.

The investigation by the Swedish school inspectorate conducted in 2010 found that there is a general interest in schools for understanding students’ various experiences and cultural backgrounds. The findings of the present study confirm the existence of such interest among teacher candidates. All respondents, in fact, expressed an interest in learning from multilingual students regarding their cultural and linguistic background. The respondents want to encourage the development and use of students’ L1, but are concerned as to the practical aspects of using each student’s L1 in the classroom. The respondents’ concern reflects the findings of the Swedish school inspectorate, which observed that the interest for the students’ linguistic background does not manage to have an impact on the pedagogical practices used in the classroom. Indeed, in the schools investigated by the inspectorate, education is inspired neither by a multilingual perspective, nor by an intercultural perspective. Moreover, the inspectorate found that the content of the courses in school is seldom relatable to the students’ experiences and lacks comprehensible context for multilingual students which leads to diminished understanding for many (Swedish school inspectorate, 2010). Ultimately, schools lack the necessary pedagogical expertise that would allow teachers to work with developing language and knowledge for multilingual students. This investigation is well known to NAE, which has quoted its findings in policy statements and other supporting documents (Skolverket, 2012). It is therefore alarming that the same lack of expertise is emphasized by respondents in the present research, since they started their education three years after the investigation by the Swedish school inspectorate. It appears in fact that, despite the shared awareness of the lack of resources that are needed to support multilingual students and the teachers who are in charge of their education, future teachers are still not given the theoretical and pedagogical tools to productively work with multilingual students, even though they are required to work towards the improvement of these students’ academic results; teachers therefore find themselves in an impossible situation. This would, as expressed by respondents in this study, contribute to negative attitudes towards multilingualism.

It has previously been shown that there are many benefits to gain if students develop their L1 together with other languages (Benson, 2009; Fuller, 2009; García, 2009; Kerfoot & Basirat Olayemi, 2014; Potowski, 2009; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009). Apparently in line with such research, the Swedish educational act stipulates that all students with an L1 other than Swedish are entitled to mother tongue education during the compulsory school years but also in upper secondary school. However, from a practical perspective, it could be argued that mother tongue education is not encouraged by authorities since it is not obligatory, it is often an after-school activity, and there is very little time devoted exclusively to mother tongue education. Some respondents in the present research testified to the fact that they did not feel encouraged to participate in mother tongue education. If students are not encouraged to develop their L1 through mother tongue education, it could be questioned to what extent they are encouraged to
develop their linguistic repertoire in other subject classrooms. The importance of developing the students’ L1 was acknowledged by all respondents in this study, but not all teacher candidates might acknowledge the interplay between the development of all languages in a student’s repertoire and general knowledge acquisition. If the teacher education program fails to educate all teacher candidates regarding the beneficial development of multilingualism and if schools do not get the necessary resources to address the needs of multilingual students, it is likely that some future teachers might end up viewing translanguaging and language alternation as a disturbance in the classroom and, consequently, develop negative attitudes towards multilingualism in the school environment.

Teacher candidates’ perceptions and pre-notions of their future working environment and of multilingualism in a school environment can be positively affected by more practical experience and knowledge. Indeed, the provision of such experience and knowledge would affect the cognitive component in the formation of teacher candidates’ attitudes. Instead of hypothesizing and pondering on possible approaches to multilingualism, more discussion regarding contemporary research on such topic would arguably render teacher candidates more confident and would give them a more positive outlook on their future careers. At the same time, the gap between theory and practice that was clearly identified by the respondents is bound to have an impact on the affective component of attitude formation. There is also a noticeable gap in the teacher training program in regards to policy documents. All respondents expressed some hesitation in terms of the practical implementation of the requirements posed by NAE. The respondents all argued that there was very little connection between their education at university and the curriculum for upper secondary school; they also pointed out that the general guidelines had not been discussed at all. Arguably, teacher candidates need to be provided with an adequate education with respect to the requirements that will be placed upon them in their future workplace; if not, an education that does not really prepare teacher candidates for their future job is bound to lead to frustration.

In line with what has been found in many studies regarding language practice and language alternation in classrooms (García, 2009; Kerfoot & Jih Tatah, 2016; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009), some of the respondents in the present study also seemed to consider translanguaging as somewhat important; however, they pointed out that the target language should always remain the predominant language to be heard and spoken in class. The respondents’ stance is arguably influenced by the national approach to language learning and by the methodology promoted in their EFL teacher training education. This does, however, contradict to some extent prior findings concerning translinguaging in language education (Fuller, 2009; García, 2009; Kerfoot & Jih Tatah, 2016; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009), which suggest that, for example, student L1 use can work to enhance overall knowledge acquisition and that the maximum exposure approach to language learning is a myth more than a truth. There is evidently a need for the Swedish government and NAE to revise policy documents to better support multilingual students in the Swedish school system. Interestingly, this information seems to already have reached the government and NAE through the rapport from the Swedish school inspectorate (2010), so it can be questioned why the teacher training program has not been submitted to changes in recent years.

The findings of the present study might suggest that extensive changes could be made to the teacher training program, to the national curriculum by NAE, and even to the pedagogical approach to language learning in the Swedish school system. There is a need to bridge the
perceived gap between theory and practice noted by the respondents in this study. As previously mentioned, a closer connection to the school environment through case-studies and more practical training could be beneficial. In addition, a stronger collaboration between NAE and the universities could enhance the teacher candidates’ understanding of policy documents and strengthen the vision of how the institutional guidelines specified in those documents are to be converted into practice.

Finally, the teacher training program should arguably contain at least one obligatory course where alternative approaches to language learning are studied. Apart from literary studies (e.g. Benson, 2009; Bourdieu, 1977; Cekaite & Evaldsson, 2008; Guzula, McKinney & Tyle, 2016; Turnbull & Dailey-O’Cain, 2009), lectures by teachers actively working within the Swedish school system and cases related to a multilingual reality could work to strengthen teacher candidates’ self-confidence regarding their future working environment and ensure positive attitudes not only in theory, but in practice as well.

8. Conclusion

The English teacher candidates in the present study have overall positive attitudes towards multilingualism and translanguaging in theory and in hypothetical situations. However, when asked to express how they will apply their ideas in future practice, words with arguably negative connotations (e.g. problem, struggle, hard, etc.) were used during the interviews. This might suggest that, without any additional education on how to ensure multilingual students’ academic development, the respondents’ attitudes towards multilingualism could change negatively, if not accurately supported by future employers. The strong focus on problem and not on solution might be a contributing factor to the somewhat resigned stance towards pedagogical approaches that might be suitable for working with multilingual students. The perceived gap between theory and practice in education regarding both policy documents and possible solutions to issues that are openly acknowledged as such by NAE and the Swedish school inspectorate might also affect the cognitive and affective components of attitudes. Furthermore, in regards to the call for an equivalent education by NAE, the respondents expressed a desire for more education and discussion to better their self-confidence. All respondents appeared to understand what was implied by NAE, but seemed hesitant as to how this would, or could, be applied to practice. The findings of this ethnographic qualitative study might suggest that the teacher training program could benefit from a closer collaboration between the universities and NAE. Such collaboration could assure that the intentions of NAE in formulating curriculum and syllabi are made clear to teacher candidates and can then be put into practice in upper secondary school.

Lastly, the findings of the present study are only indicative, in that they emerge from only four interviews; therefore, no general conclusions can be drawn with any certainty. Furthermore, all participants attended university in Stockholm; hence, the results and the conclusion might not be representative of all teacher education programs in Sweden. There is evidently much more research needed in this field, both regarding the formation of attitudes and how to bridge perceived gaps between theory and practice in relation to the teacher candidate program and in relation to multilingual students. Should further research on this topic be conducted on a larger scale and confirm the present findings, it would then become apparent that restructuring the teacher education program at university would be beneficial, in that it could have a positive impact on the educational system, on the student educational development and on the overall academic outcome of multilingual students.
9. References


Appendix A

1. How old are you?
2. What languages do you speak?
3. How much of the teacher candidate program have you completed?
4. Have you studied abroad?
   For how long? Where? What courses?
5. What grades will you teach?
6. What subject/s will you teach apart from English?
7. Have you worked as a teacher in Sweden?
   When? For how long? What subjects?
8. Are you currently working as a teacher? Substitute teacher etc.
9. Have you worked as a teacher in any country other than Sweden?
   What country and how long?
10. How would you define “good learning conditions”?
11. Would you define “good learning conditions for multilingual children” differently?
12. How would you create good learning conditions for multilingual children?
13. What kind of support do you think a teacher needs to create good learning conditions for multilingual students?
14. In what way do you think that pupils can benefit from their prior knowledge of various languages in class?
15. In what way do you think that pupils can benefit from their prior experiences of foreign countries/cultures in class?
16. How do you think you can build on your pupils’ prior knowledge of various languages and prior experiences of various countries/cultures when you plan your lessons?
17. Do you feel that your education to become a teacher so far has prepared you to plan lessons where pupils’ prior knowledge of various languages and prior experiences of foreign countries/cultures are valued?
   If not, what do you feel is missing?
18. How do you feel about L1 use in the classroom?
19. When and why do you feel that students should be encouraged to speak their first language/mother tongue in school?
20. How do you interpret the following quote by Skolverket?
   “teaching should be adapted to each pupil’s circumstances and needs. It should promote the pupils’ further learning and acquisition of knowledge based on pupils’ backgrounds, earlier experience, language and knowledge” (Skolverket, 2011).
21. How would you approach this in your future practice?

   Have you spoken about the curriculum for compulsory school during your education at university?

   Has previous quote by Skolverket been discussed?

22. Do you feel you have gotten the adequate education at university to comply with the demand from Skolverket regarding the adaptation to each pupil’s knowledge?

   What do you feel is missing? Do you think it would have been beneficial to speak about it more at University?

**Following questions are hypothetical. To see how you perceive your future working environment in upper secondary school. There are no wrong answers. Think about a group that you will teach in English that includes 27 students.**

23. How many students might not have Swedish as a first language?

24. How many students might not have English as a first language?

25. Might there be any languages spoken in your classroom that you do not understand?

26. What language might you use to communicate with the students that do not speak enough Swedish or English to comprehend instructions?

27. Would you encourage you students to code-switch between the languages they know?

   Why, how and in what situations?

28. How would you work to ensure comprehension of working materials such as textbooks, handouts etc. for the students that do not have an adequate level of Swedish or English?

29. Do you think that the hypothetical students’ inability to speak Swedish/English would aggravate your work?

   In what way? How could you work to solve this problem?

30. How you think your education to become a teacher has prepared you to handle these kinds of situations?

**I will now present four specific situations, please explain how you think you would handle them?**

1. You have just presented a task and handed out a worksheet. Four of your students seem to have begun working with the task but they are code switching between English and Swedish. How would you react?

2. You notice that a group of students are participating in a discussion and they seem to become more and more agitated. You fear that the discussion might turn into a fight, but you cannot understand what they are talking about because they are speaking a language you do not understand. How would you approach the situation? Would you approach it differently during breaks?

3. You are completing a diagnostic exam in your subject and you ask your students to complete the task individually and without help. The instructions for the task are written in Swedish and English. You know that one of your students does not understand Swedish enough to understand the questions and usually needs your help to
comprehend. He/she receives the task and looks to you for assistance. What would you do?

4. Your students are working in groups preparing an oral presentation. The students in one of the groups are code switching between English and Arabic but they seem to be working with the task. How would you react?

To conclude:

Do you think that multilingualism in a school environment is a good thing or a bad thing?

Why and in what way?

Is there anything you would like to add that you feel you have not gotten a chance to express throughout this interview regarding current topic?
Appendix B

Consent for participation in a research interview for the project: *An Exploration of English Teacher Candidates Attitudes Towards Multilingualism in Swedish Upper Secondary School* by Linda Rosén at Stockholm University. I agree to participate in a research project led by Linda Rosén. The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project through being interviewed.

- I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.
- My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate.
- Participation involves being interviewed by a researcher from Stockholm University (Linda Rosén). The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. I allow the researcher to take written notes during the interview. I also allow the recording by audio of the interview. It is clear to me that in case I do not want the interview to be taped I am at any point of time fully entitled to withdraw from participation.
- I have the right not to answer any of the questions. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from the interview.
- I have been given the explicit guarantees that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.
- I have read and understood the points and statements of this form. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I have been given a copy of this consent form co-signed by the interviewer.

Participant’s Signature ____________________________ Date________________________

Researcher’s Signature ____________________________ Date________________________

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Appendix C

Transcription interview

Participants: Subject H and Researcher (R)

Total time: 37:11

R: How old are you?
H: I am 28.

R: what languages do you speak?
H: Swedish and English

R: How much of the teacher candidate program have you completed?
H: Roughly 4 years out of 5

R: Have you studied abroad?
H: Yes

R: For how long?
H: For a year.

R: where?
H: In England

R: what grades will you teach?
H: Upper secondary school

R: What subjects will you teach apart from English?
H: Swedish as a first language

R: Have you worked as a teacher in Sweden?
H: Yes.

R: When?
H: I am working as a teacher right now. So from 2014 til’ now.

R: and what subjects do you teach?
H: Swedish as a second language and English

R: Have you worked as a teacher in any other countries other than Sweden?
H: No

R: How would you define good learning conditions?
H: I think it is very important to have decent sized groups. And I think for me the best thing is roughly around 20 to 25 peers otherwise it is difficult to make sure that everyone gets the information that they need and that you can pick up those who are struggling. And I also think that you need as a teacher to have support from the school and from your colleagues and it is very important to have everything that you need in your classroom so that you don’t have to struggle for like, you can’t print stuff, or if you...
don’t like have any whiteboard pens or if you don’t have… mm.. I don’t know, stuff you need. It is very important to have everything and that everything is working and that you have enough time to plan you lessons.

R: Would you define good learning conditions for multilingual children differently?

H: No, definitely not. I think that it is especially important with multilingual that it is not too large a group. So perhaps even 15 to 20 to make sure that everyone speaks the target language otherwise it is very easy… for example, I have a group of 40 people and half of the would speak Arabic and it is very easy for them to switch to that language when they are supposed to learn Swedish. And then they don’t really learn anything.

R: So how do you work to create good learning conditions for multilingual children?

H: Erhm, what I try to do is to make sure that I divide them up so they don’t sit next to people who speak their mother tongue because if the do it very easy for them to, again, switch to that language when they don’t have enough skills to express themselves in the target language. Sorry, what was the question again?

R: how do you work to create good learning conditions for multilingual children

H: right, so that. And to make sure that they speak out loud to each other and with the teacher… erhm… I think it is very important just to use the language as much as possible… erhm.. and for them to you know have to meet other people to speak it and not change to their mother tongue.

R: What kind of support do you think a teacher needs to create good learning conditions for multilingual students?

H: Sorry, can you repeat that?

R: What kind of support do you think a teacher needs to create good learning conditions for multilingual students?

H: Do you mean in the form of material or other people?

R: Both

H: Both…erhm.. I think it is very important when you are new as a teacher to have the experience from other teachers. They have done this before and they can give you suggestions on what works and what doesn’t work and I think that from my own experience that I started to teach.. erhm.. my students, obviously they are a bit older but, erhm just talking to other colleagues and just to figure out your self what works like in the beginning it is very difficult to know if it will work or not you tried something and then you realize that this is not working at all.. erhm… so it is very important to have a backup plan like you know I’m just going to try this and if it doesn’t work and I still have one hour left to have another task for them to do and not just keep going.. erhm.. and I think in form of resources I think it is very important to have decent material. I know that we work with like several books and the first one we had was really plain and boring and very artificial and I think that the students weren’t very involved in the class when we read from that book but then we got another book and it is infinitely better so they’ve gotten used to more authentic texts and then they have to answer more relevant questions about the text and use their own experience to apply to what they have just read instead of just answering like what did it say in this page because it’s not really that much fun to read and try to understand but then to you know, just think outside of the box, and be like, so how does this apply to what I know and my language. So that they can actually get a more in depth understanding of what they’ve learnt.
R: In what way do you think that pupils can benefit from their prior knowledge of various languages in class?

H: Well that really connects to what I just said. I think that it is very like all of the obviously speak another language already and it is infinitely easier for them to… take for example if they try to learn Swedish a second language, many of them comes from countries where they speak for instance Arabic but sometimes they have another, like a second language, perhaps English, perhaps.. I don’t know, German or what ever and just [unhearable] I think it is very much easier to learn a third language than a second language because if they’re monolingual at the age of I don’t know, 20, then it is much more difficult than if the are.. if they speak two languages already they know how to think in two different languages so it’s much easier to learn a third. So if you take in that knowledge from their language but also to see because languages are related to one another in some ways so they can use some knowledge and try to figure out some kind of.. erhm.. strategy and how to connect it to what they already know. But that is a struggle if there are so many of them who do not... who speak different languages in a multilingual world. Let’s say, if you teach English to Swedish speaking people then you could say: oh, think about it this way because that is very similar to a Swedish word and I will know it, if it is multilingual erhm.. it is very difficult for you to know five languages and know how to connect it so that is a struggle... so then you have to try and teach them how to do it themselves.

R: In what way do you think that pupils can benefit from their prior experiences of foreign countries or cultures in class?

H: erhm… this is something that happens in my class all the time... erhm… there are so many people that comes from so many countries and they always... I always try to engage them to speak about their own language and their own culture and what they do and what they don’t do and it’s much easier for them to speak about it because that is something they know and they draw from that knowledge and be able to speak about it and they feel is more relatable to them and it will make the lesson more fun… so I try to make them use it as much as I can.. and as much as they want to talk about it because it has been occasions where... especially when it comes to different religions when they say: oh we do this and then someone says: oh why do you do that it’s stupid. And it’s like you have to instantly just say that it is not stupid it is just the way that they do something and you have to respect the things they do.

R: You answered the next question without me asking it (How do you think you can build on your pupils’ prior knowledge of various languages and prior experiences of foreign countries/cultures when you plan your lessons?) so: Do you feel that your education to become a teacher so far has prepared you to plan lessons where pupils’ prior knowledge of various languages and prior experiences of foreign countries or cultures are valued?

H: hmm. No I don’t think that university has taught me that. I think that working in the school has taught me that but perhaps like we do have our teacher training within Uni and I think that has taught me... but that’s again within the school.. not in university itself.

R: what do you feel is missing in class at university? Do you think it is a course or…

H: I think that perhaps we could have a course that is more relevant to what we will actually use when we work. I think that it is very common for us to not really speak about what will happen in a classroom. We speak about the language and how it works and for us to be fully prepared to answer questions about our subject and not how to actually teach it and what struggles we may have.. erhm.. for instance we took a course in literature we would just analyze it ourselves and not how to teach our pupils how to analyze it we just try to draw from our own knowledge and I think it’s very strange that they don’t focus
more on that because ultimately it is what we will do as teachers so it’s a bit like not preparing us to face real life and I think it is very noticeable amongst some of my fellow students is that they go to university and they read about stuff but not really sure how they will be as teachers and I think it is very important to give them the opportunity to actually apply stuff and make them better prepared to be teachers because that is... for me for instance. I’ve worked as a teacher almost all the way through the university education and there are some of us that haven’t worked at all which mean that they just have the teacher training which in reality is very short so when they will actually work they will not be very prepared at all and I think it is very good to be able to... I don’t know... just know what to do in certain occasions and not just play by ear all the way through

R: How do you feel about L1 use in the classroom?

H: Do you mean if... let’s say Swedish in a Swedish classroom or do you mean their own language?

R: For example if you are teaching English and they are code-switching or using their L1 if it’s something else than Swedish or English

H: I think that... I remember when I did.. erhm.. I had.. I worked at a school for a bit and I remember when I did the like teacher... they gave some feedback on how I was as a teacher because it was my first class ever and they said that they wished that I had forced them to speak English more which is funny that they wanted me to force them when they could have done it all along.. erhm.. but I do see their point and I think that when you are learning a new language you should try to avoid your L1 as much as possible and try to just work your way around it or maybe perhaps just look it up in a dictionary if there is a word that you struggle for but obviously sometimes it is so much easier to just.. if you try to explain something and you just don’t understand it and if you just know the language in your target language.. sorry in your L1 language.. then it’s so much easier. But I think it is normally quite inefficient... but I remember when I went to the school in England and they said: at the really low levels there was a teacher who tried to explain something to some Korean students... and he tried to explain and he tried to explain and they did not just understand and there was one student who just said it... still said it in English but in a different way and they instantly understood him so that is something as a teacher you will struggle with... how to explain stuff... but he said like it is very good that they got it explained not in their language because that again does not really teach them.

R: When and why do you feel that students should be encouraged to speak their first language or mother tongue in school?

H: I think that there is.. that’s difficult... I think that obviously if they speak... if they share the same mother tongue but it is not a language that they learn in school then I don’t think that it should be in anyway forbidden obviously it’s not like you can’t speak your language but I think that in class it will... it will leave them a bit alienated from the rest of the class if they speak.. for instance.. if they speak Arabic and no one else in class will speak it they will not only... erhm.. they will only understand each other so people will not interfere in their conversation and that will leave them out of the rest of the class and they will also... if they just talk to each other perhaps they will be just not a part of the class which is not very good. However, obviously during breaks and you know.. when ever they want to they are allowed to do it but if they are in school to learn English for instance they should just stick to English even if it’s difficult they should do it for their own sake

R: okey, I will read a quote from Skolverket and my question is: how do you interpret this quote?

H: okey
R: “teaching should be adapted to each pupil’s circumstances and needs. It should promote the pupils’ further learning and acquisition of knowledge based on pupils’ backgrounds, earlier experience, language and knowledge”

H: How do I interpret that? I’ve seen it before obviously and my opinion is that you will have a group of a certain amount of people, pupils, and they are individuals and if they have a certain way of learning or like some of them might have to you know like have extra time to understand stuff and have it explained twice and you want your entire group to learn equally as much it’s not supposed to be like some people will struggle and you move on too fast and they will just lose track of what you are speaking of… then they won’t learn anything but I think that you have to make adjustments as much as you think is possible I think that is is very common for new teachers to try to do it too much and that does wear you out and that’s why.. coming back to the whole like being smaller groups… if you have 20 pupils it is much easier than if you have 30.. even if it is just an extra 10 it is so much more difficult to adjust your learning to the extra 10 ones and I think it’s like.. what I do with the background of language is that I try to connect it’s just to your background is that try to have them interact about their language speaking of it but you don’t have to speak the language you speak of the language that’s how I interpret it. And the culture of course… same thing.

R: Erhm.. So my next question would be… you have semi-answered it already… then how do you approach this in your practice?

H: yeah. So I try to engage them in speaking about their background but it doesn’t really matter what languages they speak. I do it with Swedish students to.. just remember like .. what did you do when you grew up.. how were your grand parents? Did you go to a summer place or not? And what did you do? I think that it is very important to draw from your own experience even if you’re not that old you have lots of experience and it’s always relevant… and I think that if you make the students background relevant it will be more engaging for them and more fun.. if it’s like.. what I say matter… what I’ve experienced is relevant and I can… it’s a bit like sometimes you feel like you just give them a task to just write this and come up with.. think for your selves and to be very productive and it is so much easier if they can just.. I have experienced this I can talk about something I already know.. I doesn’t feel like a test.

R: Have you spoken about the curriculum for compulsory school during your education at university?

H: yes.. but… I think that virtually it’s just from the.. the ones about that specific subject which has so far been like.. what.. two courses… so.. I don’t know how many courses I’ve done but.. I don’t know.. like 50 is that relevant… I don’t know… that right.. when you.. when you speak literature you never speak of it… when you’re doing your linguistics you don’t speak of the curriculum at all… you just speak about the subject and not how to apply it to anything… which again comes back to what I’ve said earlier… that makes it feel irrelevant and it’s a shame that that happens.

R: Has the previous quote been discussed? The quote I read you from Skolverket

H: the one about the background and stuff? Erhm… I would say not explicitly… perhaps we’ve mentioned it and I think that students like… all of us when we speak we will say that of course we will do that… that seems like basic instructions for a teacher.. you should do that… but I think that in reality that is much more difficult and I’m trying to do it but I think that.. I don’t think I do it because it’s in the curriculum… I do it because I think it’s relevant and I want to engage the students… erhm… and I notice that when I do… they do… they do get more involved… erhm… and if it is in the curriculum that’s good that I’m doing what I’m supposed to do… yeah…
R: Do you feel you have gotten the adequate education at university to comply with the demand from Skolverket regarding the adaptation to each pupil’s knowledge?

H: erhm.. I think perhaps I have gotten some of it from university but I think that most of it comes from… I think that when you’re doing your teacher training out in schools with your supervisor then that’s definitely when you learn because they always say like do you remember you have to take it from the curriculum… you always have to… erhm… justify why you’re doing one thing or another so I think that’s when you really learn and then that is a part of the university education so I suppose in a way but the in reality it’s definitely when you get to do it and not before that

R: Would you like to have spoken about it more at university?

H: like I said… I think our education is… we are very… we get very… we get to be very proficient when it comes to our subjects we do learn a lot about it and we are very… hopefully very good at it in the end but we should speak about how to learn.. because I think that if you’re good at something.. I think it’s very natural amongst some of our seminar leaders… some of them has been experts in their field… erhm.. and they have like written essays and published books about a subject and they are… you know… someone who are perhaps the best at what they do… however, they cannot really teach us and some of them are really terrible… I know that they know but they can’t really get that knowledge out in spoken word at teach someone how to know about it and I think about… I don’t want to end up the same… I don’t want to be very knowledgeable and not be able to teach it and I think that is a risk that we’re taking because we’re not really practicing how to teach it.

R: Following questions are hypothetical. To see how you perceive your future working environment in upper secondary school. There are no wrong answers. Think about a group that you will teach in English that includes approximately 27 students.

H: okey.

R: How many students might not have Swedish as a first language?

H: 7

R: How many students might not have English as a first language?

H: oh… aa… 27

R: Might there be any languages spoken in your classroom that you do not understand?

H: yes

R: What language might you use to communicate with the students that do not speak enough Swedish or English to comprehend instructions?

H: erhm.. if it’s an English class I will still do English and I know that it’s difficult for them to understand but I think you can always use your body language to draw stuff and point at stuff I think you’d get really far… you’d be surprised.

R: Would you encourage you students to code-switch between the languages they know?

H: erhm… no, not in English I would think that would be quite the opposite… I would encourage them to stay on just one language… which would be English in this case.

R: How would you work to ensure comprehension of working materials such as textbooks, handouts etc. for the students that do not have an adequate level of Swedish or English?
H: erhm.. see I think this is a bit… obviously it’s a struggle and I’ve had this when I’ve done Swedish as a second language and you have a group where some of them are very proficient and some of them are not at all.. some of them lived in Sweden for less than a year and some of them have lived in Sweden for more than ten years… and like… there are different reasons for why they are at the same level… some of them are very proficient when it comes to reading and writing and then there will be terrible speakers and then you have them who are the exact opposite… they have been working and talking Swedish but they’ve never written it and that makes it really hard to read because they haven’t really had that knowledge of how to read… erhm… and I think this is a… I think that in a dream world is when you have a class and you are teaching… because when you are at secondary school and you’re teaching like English 5… even as a first step you have to have passed English 4 and that means you should have an adequate knowledge so this is something that shouldn’t happen… if it does.. and I really hope I doesn’t… then you have to give them some extra work or try to have them to… I don’t know… take another course… erhm.. and see what the school say about their proficiency level but it should be adequate at that level and I know that it wont be because I know that there will be instances where you have people who are refugees and just happened to that age and you just put them in class and their English will be not that proficient… it will happen but then you have to make really sure that something happens because then… if they’re not proficient enough there will be very little point in having them in class if you need to be at a very high level and they will not.. they will struggle to understand what you are saying… on the other hand… you cannot really change the other 26 peoples level into like a lower one because then that means that they will not learn… again… difficult but in a group of English 5 everyone should be at a level that has passed English 4.

R: so again you have almost answered the next question but… Do you think that the hypothetical students’ inability to speak Swedish/English would aggravate your work?

H: erhm.. yeah.. probably… very much so

R: How you think your education to become a teacher has prepared you to handle these kinds of situations?

H: erhm… not at all… we never really speak about that and what if something goes horribly wrong and then someone’s there and they don’t really understand you… erhm… because I think that.. I think that every single planning we’ve done we can always… we’re not really given a case with like you have 36 students and everyone sucks… how are you going to do it’s always like.. oh make a plan and just plan your lesson and then just say well… you always do the dream scenario like I’ve got 21 students and everyone is really good and everyone loves their teacher and everyone gets along and… so I think that’s something… again… we don’t really… we’re not really provided with the difficult situations of reality… we’re always provided with a… do you know when it’s a student text… it’s always one from Skolverket from like a national test and there’s always like… oh this has gotten a C-level and we’re never given the F one and see what can be improved… and never to even hypothetically speeches so you know what they should improve and see what that would do… we always speak about dream scenarios like.. oh I can see here that you’re not very good at spelling but I’ll give you a dictionary and you’ll be fine… it doesn’t really work in reality.

R: I will present four specific situations, please explain how you think you would handle them? Okey, first one… You have just presented a task and handed out a worksheet. Four of your students seem to have begun working with the task but they are code switching between English and Swedish. How would you react?
H: I would say: bare in mind that you’re… you’re just supposed to like… what I do with my students now is that when they switch language I’d just say like.. this is Swedish as a second language and not… and then what ever speech I hear and not your first language… so I would probably say… this is not Swedish, this is English so please speak English.

R: You notice that a group of students are participating in a discussion and they seem to become more and more agitated. You fear that the discussion might turn into a fight, but you cannot understand what they are talking about because they are speaking a language you do not understand. How would you approach the situation?

H: erhm.. again.. what I do is like just remember that this is English or Swedish and we’re supposed to speak in it and should it continue.. erhm.. then I would have to step in and see like what is going on and what’s the problem and then would have to explain in a language that I do understand… obviously there will always be… we will hand out texts and tasks that are somewhat… for some people controversial or for what ever reason agitate them and just to make sure that… obviously we’re not going to hand out something that will insult someone on a personal level hopefully… erhm… but if it does then just make sure that you talk it thru and that you just… again.. and this is the thing if you like have descent material… if you have… if you do hand out a task and you notice that this is like going tits up… this is not going well.. and you see that in every single group that this is something very controversial… for instance say like what… if you would be dumb enough to be like what religion is the best one… obviously there will be clashes amongst the students but then again… you should understand this as a teacher but you can also.. and you will make mistakes… but the to just like try to divert their anger and be like I was trying to speak of it and then I was just… I don’t know… you can actually just say like obviously this didn’t work and I’m just going to abort this task and opt for another one… hopefully… I just hope it will never happen abvously… it sounds terrible

R: and if the same situation was during a break… during lunch break… how would you handle it then? So it’s not in your class…

H: erhm… see that’s a very tricky one… and I think it’s very good question as well… erhm… I’ve heard that some schools there are some teachers who like… especially if it’s a school that has a lot of students who will… like eh… a school that’s known to have like arguments over stuff… I think it’s important for teachers to understand that they are working… if they’re on their break it doesn’t mean that they are not responsible for anything… if you see something and you feel like this is starting to become something… and it looks like a fight then you have to step in… I know that it can be very terrifying but I think it’s your duty as a teacher to step in… and make sure that something… like you don’t want to to fight obviously… and I remember I showed my students… when I was with the nine-year-olds… erhm it was about bullying and then they were bullying someone and then the teacher walked by and you could just hear her thoughts… and she said like.. oh that’s terrible but I’m on my lunch break… erhm.. and then she just.. erhm… you know she just walked passed and let the bullying continue… and I think that that is the worst thing you can do as a teacher and that you will have your break and you will be busy and you will have your 20-minute lunch and you’re starving but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t step in… erhm.. but it can also be a misunderstanding… especially with languages that sound a lot harsher than they are… erhm.. like my father-in-law… they speak finish… when he speaks with my mother-in-law… it sounds like they are fighting about something… it’s like shit… something terrible has happened… but it’s just their way of speaking and it’s really hard to understand what’s going on so that’s… so you can… obviously you can… if someone stands there and they do gestures with their hands and if they are angry and it sounds like they’re angry then you can’t just step in and just put one of them to the side… if they were talking about something else… that would just be stupid… but you could just
simply step in and be like… what’s going on… how are you doing… or like just remember.. or you could speak about something and just divert them from what they are speaking of and you can notice instantly if the way they will answer you… if they are like very upset or like… talking about… I don’t know… some idea that they.. and they were just explaining how close I was to it… that’s what I would do… in a dream world

R: You are completing a diagnostic exam in your subject and you ask your students to complete the task individually and without help. The instructions for the task are written in Swedish and English. You know that one of your students does not understand Swedish enough to understand the questions and usually needs your help to comprehend. He/she receives the task and looks to you for assistance. What would you do?

H: I think.. and this is not really the answer but… I think that for my class one of the biggest difficulties I have is that they cheat a lot and normally because their classes are like ten weeks and they have to pass it sometimes in order to get a job and they will cheat and look at each other which is obviously very stupid because the one next to them will not.. probably not… necessarily be right… but in this scenario… I think that if you know a student does not understand I think that you have… either you can adjust the assignment for that particular student… if you feel that there is a reason to do it… you have people with, for instance dyslexia that will sit in another classroom and do another thing and I know that in, for instance when I worked in Blackeberg which is a very good school and they have a lot of resources… but all the students with dyslexia… when ever there was a test.. I would hand it to a special teacher and they would do it in a different room with extra time and you know with support from extra teachers… so I think that’s an adjustment to a student’s need… so again… in an ideal world everyone would have as much resources as that school does but that’s not reality… it would be much more difficult than that… and I don’t know there is this thing you need to speak to with who ever is in charge like the principal or the what ever at school and see what you can do… because if you know that the students has the knowledge then it’s your responsibility as a teacher to provide the student with the tools to show the knowledge and sometimes if he or she doesn’t understand then I don’t know rewritten questions or maybe like an oral exam or just sit in another room or something… but it’s very difficult… obviously if there’s a classroom of 27 students and you have to make sure that they do not cheat so you cannot sit next to one student… again… it’s about resources and this is why… I think that during a test you should be at least two teachers… then again it’s a question of whether the school will give you that and in 98% of the cases they will not give you anything of that… reality once again.

R: Your students are working in groups preparing an oral presentation. The students in one of the groups are code switching between English and Arabic but they seem to be working with the task. How would you react?

H: again I would just walk up to them and approach them and be like… just remember that it’s English… however, and this is so common among my students that they will work but lets say there’s a group of 6 people and 5 of them speak Arabic then obviously that would be terrible for that one who will not understand and try to learn and all they hear is a different language that they have no knowledge of and do not intend to learn either then it’s absolutely futile… but then again you should stick to English in a English class. As much as you can… however, like you said you see that they are working and that it is working… again… im trying to have them speak as much English as possible but if… I don’t know they… that’s a though one… I would try and have them speak English anyway… because ultimately it is what they will present in English if they are… lets say it’s five students that want to speak Arabic and then during the presentation three of them will hold the presentation I will not hear if they can actually speak English properly because every single thing they do in class I’m supposed to hear them preform
orally because some of them will stand in front of the board and be so super nervous and will not be able to speak out of nervousness and it doesn’t actually show what they can or cannot do and if they just speak Arabic during class… then obviously I’d have to fail them because I would say well you cannot actually speak English… you have not proven that to me…yes.

R: now, to conclude… Do you think that multilingualism in a school environment is a good thing or a bad thing?

H: I think it’s a brilliant thing… I think that especially when you draw from knowledge of the language and that when I have my class I learn a lot from them… how it works… and sometimes words would be adapted from their target language and it’s also very interesting to hear… I have a lot of students who are from like Uzbekistan and most of the do speak at least Russian as well and then like some French then when they come here to learn Swedish it will be like their fifth language or fourth language which is very impressive for them to actually be able to do it… but I think that it is interesting… especially with the demand of drawing from your previous knowledge… your background and your culture that… that it is infinitely more interesting and that the entire class can benefit from hearing… not just in terms of language but in terms of their culture knowledge and for them to be good citizens and to understand other people.

R: Is there anything you would like to add that you feel you have not gotten a chance to express throughout this interview regarding current topic?

H: No… it was very good.
Appendix D

Transcription, interview

Participants: Subject I and Researcher (R)

Total time: 45:06

R: How old are you?
I: 23

R: What languages do you speak?
I: Swedish, English and a little bit of Polish

R: How much of the teacher candidate program have you completed?
I: Soon 4 out of 5 years

R: Have you studied abroad?
I: no

R: What grades will you teach?
I: Upper secondary school, English and social science studies

R: Have you worked as a teacher in Sweden?
I: Yes

R: When?
I: Before I started my education and a little while in the beginning of the education so like 4 years ago

R: For how long did you work as a teacher?
I: for a year and the a little bit… like a few weeks here and a few weeks there

R: What subjects did you teach?
I: it was in primary school so a little bit of everything

R: Are you are not currently working as a teacher?
I: No

R: Have you worked as a teacher in any country other than Sweden?
I: no

R: How would you define “good learning conditions”?
I: I think that it is both on an individual level and in the classroom as a whole it needs to be a good environment where the students feel secure and safe and dare to expand and speak for example English and not be afraid to do wrong so they dare to develop and try to express themselves even though the might not be sure in how to say it or express it or if their answer is right or not they’re not just afraid to try and the individually everyone has their own needs so… some people need complete silence and some people don’t so… I think it’s important to work with study techniques and to give the students a chance
to like find out what their best techniques are… and stuff like that and the of course… as many resources as possible as a teacher and in the classroom.

R: Would you define “good learning conditions for multilingual children” differently?

I: I think it can be different because they have other experiences and knowledge that can be both in their favor and in their… “nackdel” [disadvantage] because if you haven’t learnt… if you have less leaning… if you have less knowledge in a language it’s going to be more difficult to work and especially in… I think in Swedish or in every schoo but in Sweden I think it’s an assumption that everyone speaks Swedish and that everyone have parents at home that can help them with their homework and that everyone has the same “förutsättningar” [prerequisites].

R: How would you create good learning conditions for multilingual children?

I: I think that it’s difficult to know just by the education and by looking at Skolverket because I think there is no concrete strategies that someone recommends to you so I think that you need to figure it out on your own and I think it can be difficult if you haven’t thought of this before or think about it in your teaching.

R: What kind of support do you think a teacher needs to create good learning conditions for multilingual students?

I: well I guess first of all the knowledge about what it means to… and have background knowledge… like maybe a course in the education that would help maybe that if it would be obligatory for everyone to read it and of course resources in school somehow… what these resources are I’m not completely sure of but it would be helpful to have them because I think it’s hard to know what to do with it because even if you have read about it it’s still not going to be easy to know exactly what to do and every class if different and every class is different but I think that more knowledge I think is the key to start working at it.

R: In what way do you think that pupils can benefit from their prior knowledge of various languages in class?

I: well… first you can I think that.. when you know two languages its easier to learn a third… with that said I think you need to know the languages that you already know sufficiently in order to it to be easier to learn a third language… but still I think it’s a strength and also when learning a new language you can use your repertoire from both languages or three or how many languages you know from before I did so when I learnt English in primary school I used polish to know how to pronounce things and to spell things and little ways to remember words and making my own techniques without even realizing it or think about it… it just came to me naturally to do so… so I think definitely it can be a strength.

R: In what way do you think that pupils can benefit from their prior experiences of foreign countries/cultures in class?

I: like before I think it can be a strength and you can use the knowledge you have if you are given a chance to use them… so I think it can be a strength but it can often be viewed as a weakness that you don’t know the Swedish culture or that you don’t know the Swedish language… what was the question??
I: so I think it can be a strength if you work with it as a strength but it’s often viewed as a weakness that the focus is that you don’t know Swedish or English culture and you don’t know the languages rather than to focus on what you know actually and how to use it learn new stuff.

R: How do you think you can build on your pupils’ prior knowledge of various languages and prior experiences of various countries or cultures when you plan your lessons?

I: I guess that you can if you talk about it explicitly… in English for example… in stead of talking about things that they don’t know you can talk about things that they do know but in English… that way they don’t have to struggle with like coming up with things to say but rather focus on how to say it… and like try to work with that actively and encourage that type of thing.

R: Do you feel that your education to become a teacher so far has prepared you to plan lessons where pupils’ prior knowledge of various languages and prior experiences of foreign countries or cultures are valued?

I: a little bit I have an optional course right now that is about multilingualism in the classroom now but I have not gone through the whole course yet but as it goes now I only know things that are theoretical but I still don’t know how to use it in school and I still think that it’s mostly just that… they show the problems but no solution… so I still feel like… I know that there is a problem and that maybe that there are difficulties in this area but I still don’t know how to work with this… what to do… what materials… where to go… what to look at and how to approach these things… I feel like right now it almost feels like there are no solutions… like you know that this is a struggle for people who come to Sweden but we don’t know what to do about it… and it’s just going to be a problem and I feel like as a teacher you have a chance to change this… because it’s it can sound like a huge problem and that it’s really difficult to work with it at a large scale but as a teacher you really have a chance to make a difference even if it’s on a smaller scale but none the less it’s still a chance to do something if you know what to do and how to do it.

R: How do you feel about L1 use in the classroom?

I: I actually don’t think that it is just good or just bad… I think it’s both… I think that there are pros and cons in both aspects… like both things can be positive things and both can be negative like if you let the students talk their mother tongue and if it’s not Swedish it can be a secure place for them to work with the material if they are struggling with the target language that they are supposed to learn or speak but I also think that it can be destructive as well.. that they exclude themselves from the classroom if they speak a language that no one else in the classroom know they isolate themselves from speaking and it becomes a negative circle to connect to the other students and sometimes like I’ve seen like… when I had my VFU I had three girls that spoke… a language… I don’t remember what language it was… they were not only bringing themselves down and they were just sitting in the back of the classroom together… never talking Swedish… because this was in social studies… and they did not work… they only did other things instead… playing games or being out on social media and also in the class they were always together… and I also felt that in the group… one of the girls didn’t like the situation she was in but she was stuck… because the group was so stigmatized and she couldn’t speak Swedish well enough to speak with the other students perhaps… I don’t know them… but just like what I saw I felt that one of the girls wanted to get out but she couldn’t because she was stuck in this circle and she couldn’t get out… so I think it can both be… and I also think that it can be different when you are in different ages… when you are younger I think it is better to… I think it’s more… I think it can be more positive to work with mother tongue… but at a higher level… this of course also depends on when you come to Sweden… and when you start learning the new language but I feel like at older ages I think that
it should be less mother tongue working and more like working with… because you don’t have as much
 time left in school to learn the language but also if you have been in Sweden or been learning Swedish
for a longer period of time you should always put the bar higher so you don’t speak your language all
the time.

R: When and why do you feel that students should be encouraged to speak their first language/mother
tongue in school?

I: like I said… mostly in the younger ages perhaps but that can also set a negative path for them in
coming years of education if this is… I think it can work better if you work with this… if you only just
let them speak whatever they want and you don’t regulate this or talk to them about this or anything I
think that it can just be… then it becomes negative but if you work with it somehow in a more explicit
way… it can be more helpful and yeah… it depends on the situation…

R: I’m going to read you a quote by Skolverket, how do you interpret following quote?

“teaching should be adapted to each pupil’s circumstances and needs. It should promote the pupils’
further learning and acquisition of knowledge based on pupils’ backgrounds, earlier experience,
language and knowledge”

So how do you interpret this quote?

I: I think that it sounds very good but I think it’s very vague… and I think that is a problem with
Skolverket generally… but in this specific topic if you are to interpret it to multilingualism I think that
we need more help and guidance with this… because I’m only reading about this and I’m learning about
this because I chose that course and everyone in my English class who didn’t chose this optional course
won’t know about this and that’s… how are they supposed to interpret it? I mean if I’ve read a course
about it and I still think it’s difficult… how are you supposed to know if you haven’t learnt anything
about this… or read anything about it… so I think that it sounds great but I don’t think it is the real
policy… both in Skolverket generally and in schools… I don’t think that you work with that explicitly.

R: So… How would you approach this in your future practice?

I: I don’t know because I think that it’s very difficult because it’s so hard to know how to do it because
you don’t know in what ways to approach it… and what theories and practical things to approach in
order to do so… but I definitely think that it is important to regard this aspect because you’ll always
going to have this in your class… you are always going to have someone who is bilingual… and you’re
always going to have people with different backgrounds and different experience and prior knowledge
and… in a perfect world you would have all the resources to… I don’t know.. I don’t even know in
Swedish what I wanted to say…

R: So you have already kind of answered this question but I just wanted to ask it again if you feel that
you want to add something… do you think that you have spoken about the curriculum for compulsory
school during your education at university?

I: yes when it comes to the subjects but not when it comes to the general guidelines… but not so much
in English either yet… I feel in like social studies I know all the goals pretty well and we’ve talked about
it quite thoroughly and I feel like I got kind of a picture what the teaching will involve but I think in
English it’s very vague and maybe it’s also because the goals are more vague because in social science
you need to teach about the democracy and bout the UN about EU and it’s very concrete what to talk
about… like economics and dut dut dut… it’s easier to just check off all the subjects and in English its
more general which makes the goals more general… but I still feel like we haven’t worked with it as
much as I would have like to... and neither English nor social science has... I don’t think we have worked with the general guidelines... which... the quote is from the general... right?

R: yeah

I: we have mentioned it but we haven’t discussed it and I think that’s a kind of a thing that is missing all the time we don’t discuss the actual teaching thing... it’s more about the subjects and not as much how to interpret it into teaching... to like draw it down from university level into a school level and so on...

R: So... Do you feel you have gotten the adequate education at university to comply with the demand from Skolverket regarding the adaptation to each pupil’s knowledge?

I: if I feel like I have... no not. I mean it’s not like I’m without any clue but many things are because of my own values an thoughts about it which means that not everyone will have the same views and maybe not the same understanding just because I have it...doesn’t mean that everyone else that’s going to be teachers has it... I don’t know how much I got from the education and how much I’ve gotten from thinking myself...

R: so you’ve mentioned discussions... do you feel like there is something else is missing from the university education... would you have liked to have spoken about it more?

I: I think that... yeah... we should if I could choose I would like to talk less about like theory and more about practical things... have cases and you know... what are we going to do if this happens... and of course there are no easy answers no obvious answers... it’s never black or white... it’s always a grey mess but I still think that discussing it would make you feel more prepared for all the different scenarios that I’m going to be faced with... so yeah... I would like more discussions and more focus on the actual teaching because I think that... like 99% of what we do is just theoretical... and the we have a little bit of VFU when we are out in the school and that is very resourceful...we could have way more VFU I think and also in the classroom we need more discussions and focus... and the... take it down from the science level to the school level because everything we read is not adapted to what we are going to talk about in the classroom but what you want to do if you if you are going to do if you want to study the subject deeper and become like a professor in English... so more focus on teaching.

R: Following questions are hypothetical. To see how you perceive your future working environment in upper secondary school. There are no wrong answers. Think about a group that you will teach in English that includes 27 students. How many students might not have Swedish as a first language?

I: I don’t know... it depends on where you work but maybe 10 or 15 or something

R: How many students might not have English as a first language?

I: maybe 1 but I think that is... none basically.

R: Might there be any languages spoken in your classroom that you do not understand?

I: yes.

R: What language might you use to communicate with the students that do not speak enough Swedish or English to comprehend instructions?

I: between them or for me or...?

R: if you want to give them instructions and they do not understand you in neither English nor Swedish.

I: I guess that that’s very difficult but maybe you need to try to scale it down and make it more simple... not the task but the instructions... and like you would have to work with it and give the instructions
more time than you would need if everyone just understood so you would have to take it bit by bit… you know images and body language… and stuff like that just try to make the instructions as simple as possible… that’s all I can do… I can’t go on google translate and like…but I mean maybe but…I don’t think that would be my first resort.

R: Would you encourage you students to code-switch between the languages they know?

I: it depends on the situation… I mean if we are talking about upper secondary school and everyone has… and we’re having English 5 or 6 or 7 that means that everyone knows English already so by that time it shouldn’t be needed to use as much code switching as English in the beginning… when you’re just learning English or when you are just learning Swedish then I think it would be more useful to have a bit of code switching… but of course under some sort of regulation… they can’t just be like… yeah I talk zero English during this English class… you still need to have some strategy and technique in how to do this… of course I don’t know what this technique would be… but it would be nice

R: How would you work to ensure comprehension of working materials such as textbooks, handouts etc. for the students that do not have an adequate level of Swedish or English?

I: I think that communication in that case is needed you need to check up if they understand and talk with them because you can’t just hand them a worksheet and be like… work now… have a nice day and hope that they figure it out you need to maybe ask them questions like… what are you going to do now and if they don’t understand then maybe try to explain more from what it said in the sheet but it’s difficult and it’s not sure that that works either but you have to be aware that you have that in the classroom… and I think that is a great first step because I think it’s just easy to assume that just everyone understands… I had that for example in my social science class… I don’t know how it happened but we had one girl who…she came from Greece and she had not been in Sweden for so long and she had gone through… I don’t know what it is called…

R: Swedish as a second language?

I: yeah and you know checking up where she is at and then placing her in this class and I wasn’t aware of this because I was… it was in year 1 of upper secondary school and I had just begun and it was in the autumn so the teachers didn’t know the students very well either but I thought they would have known them better than what they did… so what happened was that I gave them instructions and they were supposed to start writing on their assignments and I was walking around and she never wanted to show her work… and I was like.. do you understand and she was like…yeah… didn’t say much and I felt that it was something strange going on there so then a week later I was like… yeah but I can…I want to…I think that I had them hand in what they had written and then I gave them feedback I don’t remember but then when I got to read her text I realized that she didn’t know Swedish at all and she hadn’t understood at all… she didn’t know the assignment and I didn’t understand what she was writing because she really was at a… she was really not ready to be taken into class and no one had noticed this for a month… a month and a half and I think that you should know this after one week… you should do something where you get to know your students… you really need to understand their background and this… none of the teachers who had her in any subject knew this… not even the Swedish teacher and I was like… she barely knows Swedish at all she needs to have extra resources to… because she won’t be able to pass the other courses because social science is in Swedish.. and if she doesn’t know Swedish she won’t be able to understand the instructions and she won’t be able to make herself understood which will make me not able to give her a passing grade… so that was crazy… and everyone was like.. what?! And they all were like panicked and I just felt so sorry for her because she was… I don’t know what happened because then my practice was over and I went back to university but it felt really weird that I
was...as a teacher candidate... was the one who discovered this and that no one else had... that felt crazy to me but like I think that it depends on where you come from... in some cases you know English better because English is an international language so I'm thinking about that you can... you could easily... I could easily work in social sciences in English and since I have both subjects I could merge them together and that would make them who were struggling with Swedish could maybe have it easier to learn if I was teaching in English in some subjects... I actually had that in my school... we worked in cases where you merged a lot of subjects together so sometimes we would have social science in English and we also had like... something else... we worked with like a global phenomenon and like everything was merged and mixed together so that is a possibility as well to work with it... because many knows English and not Swedish and I think that we are very fixed by the... this need for like... you need to know Swedish in Sweden in order to get a job and stuff but everyone knows English by now and for example working in a store or working at an office and speaking fluently English should be just as good as speaking fluently Swedish... because everyone knows it... I think we are very stuck with this... but if you live in Sweden you should speak Swedish but you can manage by just speaking English... sure some people might be uncomfortable because they don't know English as good as Swedish but I still think that we are very... it's very indoctrinated that this is the way it's supposed to be and we can't change our minds about this but in reality we could I think.

R: so back to the hypothetical group... Do you think that the hypothetical students’ inability to speak Swedish/English would aggravate your work?

I: I mean I would... you would have to take this into consideration and think about how to approach it... you can't just do it your way and be like... no but the students need to adapt to this... I mean they also have to do it to some extent but you also need to have that “hånsyn” [consideration] for the students that they can't... this is not about power relations or what ever... it's simply that they don't have the repertoire that is needed and it's not necessarily their fault or that they are doing it inspite of you as a teacher it's just not possible to do it in any other way... and if you care about the students and of course you want everyone to succeed as well as possible you need to think about it and there is no like formula... like this is the way to always do it... but you always need to adapt it for the class and what resources you have and what prior knowledge they have and you always need to be like open minded and be able to change and adapt your teaching to the students as well... not just go on with like... it's your way or the highway

R: Do you think your education to become a teacher has prepared you to handle these kinds of situations?

I: well no not really because I think that most of the things I've said now are my own experience that I got in my VFU that was by accident, it was not planned, what happened in the classroom and it doesn't mean that everyone is going to experience it during their VFU and also my own experience from going in upper secondary school myself and I don't think that... I mean to some extent the education does but I don't think it does enough.

R: I will now present four specific situations, please explain how you think you would handle them, first one, you have just presented a task and handed out a worksheet. Four of your students seem to have begun working with the task but they are code switching between English and Swedish. How would you react?

I: I would encourage them to speak as much English as possible I think that in the social sciences I mean if I usually go around and listen to what they are speaking about so if they are speaking a language that I do not understand I won't be able to help or fill in or answer something more that they are wondering about... and I mean I can't tell what they are talking about... even if it seems as if they are working...
I still don’t know… I still can’t help them… and it’s also part of the evaluation… I can’t evaluate them if I don’t know what they are saying. I think it’s always okay to code switch if… like I have done now… if you can’t find a word or a couple of words… I mean it’s easier and it’s faster than searching and being stuck up on a word so I think it doesn’t need to be a 100% Swedish or English but the vast majority should be in the target language… because that is also the way to learn a language… if you never speak it you will never learn it… maybe 80% they need to speak English… or maybe more… I don’t know.

R: So the second situation… You notice that a group of students are participating in a discussion and they seem to become more and more agitated. You fear that the discussion might turn into a fight, but you cannot understand what they are talking about because they are speaking a language you do not understand. How would you approach the situation?

I: if it seems to be violent and that they are fighting… I don’t think that it matters what language they are speaking because as a teacher you need to interact in that kind of situation if they can’t sort it out themselves… if you are just approaching them, talking to them, having a dialogue with them and asking them what is happening, what’s up right now, what are you talking about… you always need to interfere in that kind of situation even if you do not understand what they are talking about… that’s what I would do… I would approach them and be like… what’s up…

R: third situation, you are completing a diagnostic exam in your subject and you ask your students to complete the task individually and without help. The instructions for the task are written in Swedish and English. You know that one of your students does not understand Swedish enough to understand the questions and usually needs your help to comprehend. He/she receives the task and looks to you for assistance. What would you do?

I: I don’t know… it feels like it is always so specific to each scenario but I think that I would… first of all, I would try to prepare the students before the test… like… make sure that… do you understand… are you following up with this… I don’t know in… I mean… a problem with, if I would go and help him or her it can be this feeling in the class over all that it is unfair that this person gets more help and everyone else are just left on their own… and stuff like that… so I would try to prevent as much as possible before the test and maybe if I knew that he or she had problems before I would try to go through the test maybe before or something… not the exact same questions but… the type of questions and stuff like that and… because I think that is an important part… I mean that’s the point of teaching before the test you are supposed to prepare the students so that they can understand what is happening in the test… you can’t just be like… this is how to build a sand castle and now on the test you’re supposed to build a real house… if that’s the case… I think that you have failed your mission as a teacher… and of course that is how students will feel sometimes but if you know before that this is going to be a problem then I think that the preparation is where you need to focus… and then… I think it’s okay to explain the question because no matter who it is or why you can always ask what it means… but then the answer… you can’t of course provide the answer.

R: The fourth, your students are working in groups preparing an oral presentation. The students in one of the groups are code switching between English and Arabic but they seem to be working with the task. How would you react?

I: if it’s code switching back and forth I think that it is okay but I would still be like… try to speak as much English as possible… because I know for myself that.. when for example, I talk to my grandmother in polish… I often code switch because it’s faster and I can’t find the words in polish and I need to rethink the whole sentence… you try to change your sentence because you can’t find I word so you need to approach it another way to say what you want to say and it can take a lot of time so I totally understand
it if you want to code switch sometimes but… like I said before… do it if it’s just a word and the other student knows it and they can help you and it’s helpful… and if I’m listening I can also like… oh… what were you trying to say… and try to give a translation and so on so I think that it is… I wouldn’t like punish them or anything but would urge them to speak as much English as possible and code switch as little as possible.

R: now, to conclude… Do you think that multilingualism in a school environment is a good thing or a bad thing?

I: I think that it’s a… it can be both depending on how you approach it so it can be a negative thing if you see it as a negative thing and it can be a negative spiral but it can also be a good thing if you know how to work with it and how to approach it and maybe have some techniques and ways of working with it… so depending on the knowledge of multilingualism or bilingualism it depends on if it’s a good thing or a bad thing… for me personally it’s a good thing but if you don’t know anything about it it can become a negative thing that you don’t understand why they do things… like they don’t want to learn this and you need to have an understanding that everyone has different resources and pre-knowledge of things and if you do so it’s a positive thing.

R: Is there anything you would like to add that you feel you have not gotten a chance to express throughout this interview regarding current topic?

I: no… I don’t think so… R: okay, thank you.
Appendix E

Transcription interview

Participants: Subject J and Researcher (R)

Total time: 32:05

R: How old are you?
J: I am 27 years old

R: What languages do you speak?
J: mostly Swedish and English

R: Have you studied abroad?
J: well I have, for a small amount of time… I studied in England for a month and a half just an English course and I think that is the extent of it

R: How much of the teacher candidate program have you completed?
J: im currently in my 8th term so almost 4 years

R: out of?
J: 5 years so that is 10 terms

R: What grades will you teach?
J: it will be upper secondary school

R: What subject/s will you teach apart from English?
J: Swedish

R: Have you worked as a teacher in Sweden?
J: ehm no I haven’t… I have done my VFU twice but I haven’t worked as a teacher

R: and you haven’t worked as a teacher in any country other than Sweden?
J: no

R: How would you define “good learning conditions”?
J: in the classroom I would say that there has to be a mutual understanding between the teacher and the students where the students understand that the teacher really wants to help the achieve… to give them the possibilitie to have a better future pretty much… to give them good conditions for succeeding in their education in upper secondary school end of course there are many variables to succeed with this but I think that’s the most important thing.

R: Would you define “good learning conditions for multilingual children” differently?
J: it of course depends on the level of these different languages but I think that one point that might be overlooked occasionally is that the mother language… the first language is very important even though it might not be the subject at hand it should definitely be respected and needs to be calculated into the kind of education you want to provide. It does not mean that you… you know… will teach that language during another subject because that’s not the point of it but you need to figure out like… how do I position my education to not become like something counter… that holds back the first language but
like make them both work at the same time… make use of the experiences that they already have… multilingual students.

R: So how would you work create good learning conditions for multilingual children?

J: wow… in English?

R: or in Swedish

J: okay… how would I go about doing that?…… let me tell you how I am going to do that…… I would say first of all you cannot I know that some languages… when you’re teaching… especially English, but also Swedish can pretty much ban the use of other languages during class which I mean I see the point… if like the students are at a low level and they really need the speaking experience and you fear that they won’t do this enough outside of your class then it might be very tempting to be like… you need to speak English all the time… I kind of agree to a point but you also need to be flexible and to understand the needs of the students… so say you have a couple of multilingual students in your class which perhaps have some problem communicating in English to a full extent… why not allow the to use their first language which they are of course accomplished in to study English… perhaps they can solve a task together… the focus needs to be on English but if they need to communicate about things that they don’t even have the terms to communicate in English… then forcing them to keep speaking English… there is just no point to it… so why not allow them like… discuss this in your language, try to find an answer and then come back to me try to do it in English we’ll work together and they can go back you know use their language to communicate with each other and solve the task.

R: What kind of support do you think a teacher needs to create good learning conditions for multilingual students?

J: first of all…as always in school… I haven’t worked in school as I said but I kind of figured this out on my own… if you have a leadership and peers in school that will really allow you to try new things and try out things in a good way to gain like positive goals and that will like back you up I think that is extremely important… if you can’t discuss with your principle like…. I want to try this based on this research you know it’s connected to multilingual students and I believe this will work much better, I want to try it. If you have a bed leadership that’s like: I’ve never heard of this, and I’ve been working here for 75 years… you know and will oppose you… it’s so stupid and it’s not going to work so you need to have backup from your leadership.

R: In what way do you think that pupils can benefit from their prior knowledge of various languages in class?

J: okay… so… id depends a lot on what language… we have some languages that are more closely connected to Swedish and English which are my focus… and some languages that aren’t but it is still all about communication and I read… well in school…studies that say that continuing to develop the first language in combination with learning a new language is very important so obviously there are cores in the languages that translates over and I believe it has to do to some extent with like developing ones thought in a language that you are very accomplished in and of course this carries over…

R: In what way do you think that pupils can benefit from their prior experiences of foreign countries/cultures in class?

J: its very interesting, of course, for any person with an open mind to encounter new cultures and practices and there is always, 100% of the time, very good things to learn from another’s perspective or country or culture so… if there can, some how, be created… thematic projects or something that will
actually benefit from both cultures, where students can act as peers and in like a give and take relationship… and if you can make that work, there is definitely a lot to be gained for both sides I think.

R: Do you feel that your education to become a teacher so far has prepared you to plan lessons where pupils’ prior knowledge of various languages and prior experiences of foreign countries or cultures are valued?

J: wow… hm… I wouldn’t say so explicitly… when I think back, we haven’t discussed how to value such things and how to go about doing it very explicitly… as I mentioned earlier, I think we have read and mentioned some studies that mention it in passing that it is important to continue to develop your first language but how to go about it or how to value it… I don’t think so…

R: do you think it would have been beneficial to have spoken or discussed it more?

J: of course! Especially as the world is becoming more and more globalized… as a teacher, no matter if you have special education for students who are new to learning a language and who traveled from abroad, who are refugees or you know etc. no matter if you if you are specialized in that or not you era going to encounter such students and you are going to need to help them and multilingual students are going to be there so I think it’s very connected to this recurring problem with our education to become teachers which is like the connection between theory and practice it’s so thin… I’ve been here for a while now and you almost feel like… now I’m doing school and then I’m going to learn how to be a teacher so of course like… these things that are so practical and so important if you can actually study them in school, that would be like the dream.

R: How do you feel about L1 use in the classroom?

J: of course I’m very positive to it if you can make it work and if there are obvious profits to it then go for it… it’s brilliant!

R: When and why do you feel that students should be encouraged to speak their first language/mother tongue in school?

J: well as I said before you have to be flexible and if you see an opportunity where the students would benefit you should go for it… also yeah I think that’s it.

R: I’m going to read you a quote from Skolverket and my question is, how do you interpret the following quote?

“teaching should be adapted to each pupil’s circumstances and needs. It should promote the pupils’ further learning and acquisition of knowledge based on pupils’ backgrounds, earlier experience, language and knowledge” (Skolverket, 2011).

J: that you have to be flexible in the education that you provide and definitely take into account the first language, how the student can benefit from using it and reflect actively upon how to go about doing this in your education.

R: So how would you approach this in your future practice?

J: First of all you really need to get to know your class and you need to communicate with each student and of course you have to evaluate every moment of your own education a lot… is this working? Are they getting better at the languages that I’m teaching or are they not progressing due to something…can this be improved? And how to look at first language usage and how to benefit from it. So definitely connected to being able to adapt and evaluate your own teaching.

R: Have you spoken about the curriculum for compulsory school during your education at university?
J: yeah I believe so we studied a couple of semesters of didactics where we have looked at the curriculum and we have planned some small teaching parts.

R: Has previous quote by Skolverket been discussed?

J: I don’t think so… perhaps we’ve seen it but we haven’t discussed it as an assignment or included in an assignment as far as I can remember.

R: Do you feel you have gotten the adequate education at university to comply with the demand from Skolverket regarding the adaptation to each pupil’s knowledge?

J: well… no… like, as you can probably tell from my answers how you can actually go about these things is not something that I feel ready for… I’m going to do my best and wing it one day when I actually have a teaching job. I think the theory to some extent… like: you have to adapt and such, just as I’m saying … I believe so because we have been taught that but as I said, how to bridge this gap between the theory and the practice it’s like… it’s just not there pretty much and these like, more complex questions like how to teach your regular Swedish class about literature you know, I’ll figure that out, but this is much harder. How to adapt individually to each student and actually help them.

R: Following questions are hypothetical. To see how you perceive your future working environment in upper secondary school. There are no wrong answers. Think about a group that you will teach in English that includes approximately 27 students, how many students might not have Swedish as a first language?

J: wow… of course it depends on the school but I can definitely see 15.

R: How many students might not have English as a first language?


R: Might there be any languages spoken in your classroom that you do not understand?

J: yes

R: What language might you use to communicate with the students that do not speak enough Swedish or English to comprehend instructions?

J: hmmm, I don’t know. Non I suppose, the language of love. That’s a hard one.

R: Would you encourage you students to code-switch between the languages they know?

J: of course, I belive in a pragmatic approach to languages where communication with others results in greater gains for the language and in the beginning, if you have to code switch that’s great. Then that’s incredibly important that you do and it’s an asset.

R: How would you work to ensure comprehension of working materials such as textbooks, handouts etc. for the students that do not have an adequate level of Swedish or English?

J: in the school utopia, which doesn’t exist, you could have someone help you with this… you know… a special someone who is there to support these students. You know, extra resources so you can be like: I planned this kind of exercise, this kind of project. How will I get these instructions across? How can you help me to make basic instructions available so later on we can use code switching and such to work with the same project. But as we know, the chances for that happening are pretty slim, definitely.

R: Do you think that the hypothetical students’ inability to speak Swedish/English would aggravate your work?
J: that’s a touchy one… but of course. Unfortunately, yes. Because you are probably going to feel frustrated… you probably want to do really good by them and feel unable to. these hard questions you’re asking like how do you solve this? Well, I really can’t see a solution. I’m not a special teacher who has studied special language skills to be able to handle these problems…. It sounds hard.

R: How you think your education to become a teacher has prepared you to handle these kinds of situations?

J: oh no, not at all. I mean I haven’t been prepared to handle way easier problems so there’s… the profession is so complex and there are so many problems you are going to run in to an I don’t feel I’m prepared for any of them. So these hard things like I mean… but I still have confidence I will be able to solve these issues eventually with the help of my peers and such. Some of the problems… but some of these harder problems though, not at all.

R: I will now present four specific situations, please explain how you think you would handle them? So first one: you have just presented a task and handed out a worksheet. Four of your students seem to have begun working with the task but they are code switching between English and Swedish. How would you react?

J: well… I’m not sure… perhaps I would strike up a dialogue just like… ask them about the assignment, how it’s going, if it’s hard, if that’s why they are code switching, do they feel like they are gaining anything from being able to go back to Swedish and communicate about problems and then go back to English and working with it. I think it sounds brilliant, like if you are on that level, then that’s perfect, that’s how you learn I think.

R: You notice that a group of students are participating in a discussion and they seem to become more and more agitated. You fear that the discussion might turn into a fight, but you cannot understand what they are talking about because they are speaking a language you do not understand. How would you approach the situation? Would you approach it differently during breaks?

J: it’s a touchy one… when you can’t really understand, you can’t be sure that they are actually getting agitated. You might feel like that in the situation but you don’t really want to step into something like a fool and maybe loose their respect or something. I would probably keep an eye out, if course, if they are starting to disturb class actively like really, then I would have to step in and say something but if it was like not that far gone but I felt that it was kind of weird I would probably just be observing them and kind of see if it escalated into a point where I could be kind of sure that it is actually something that I want to break up… so I would probably take a bit distant.

R: would you handle it differently if it was during a break?

J: yeah, definitely. Then I would be even less prone to like step in and ask what’s up.

R: So, third one, you are completing a diagnostic exam in your subject and you ask your students to complete the task individually and without help. The instructions for the task are written in Swedish and English. You know that one of your students does not understand Swedish enough to understand the questions and usually needs your help to comprehend. He/she receives the task and looks to you for assistance. What would you do?

J: interesting… if it’s… some diagnostic test, such as the national tests and such where it is, of course prohibited to interfere because the grades will be used as a benchmark for the entire country so… but if it’s I test that I have constructed myself, then I would probably have been thinking about this before hand I would say. I would, honestly, just personally, I would probably help, in some way but I would
have… I mean you need to think about it because it could be very touchy to the other students… it’s a tight rope, you need to, of course, you need to help comprehension especially if the student is showing you know disabilities to complete this task and the only barrier is that the language is not developed enough as of yet… I would probably try to help with comprehension in some way.

R: Your students are working in groups preparing an oral presentation. The students in one of the groups are code switching between English and Arabic but they seem to be working with the task. How would you react?

J: well… not at all I think. It depends, like I said to the other similar question like if I explicitly… if the task is supposed to be accomplished in English then I would probably strike up a dialogue like, just check like, how is it going? Is it hard? Or is it working good for you with using the code switching? Especially, and also you could have your… you know… your teacher’s “feelers” out… are they actually doing work or are they just slacking off… but in general I would definitely be positive to the usage of code switching, I think it’s a great tool to have.

R: To conclude, do you think that multilingualism in a school environment is a good thing or a bad thing?

J: is it a yes or no question?

R: good or bad and maybe explain why and in what situations…

J: I think it is really good. But as you have shown here… there are so many problems connected to our education that connects to multilingualism because I don’t really feel like im prepared to handle it… but the possible gains for both like the students them selves and other students in class if you can handle it correctly there are… they are great. It’s so interesting, it’s just these daunting questions that kind of loom over because we haven’t you know we haven’t had anything… not even, like of course, it’s really hard to provide answers… but we haven’t even had a… like this… we haven’t even reflected on the possible problems, and for me, that’s a huge problem… like you should think about these questions in class actively and discuss them, definitely… so I would say that I miss that.

R: Is there anything you would like to add that you feel you have not gotten a chance to express throughout this interview regarding current topic?

J: no I don’t think so.

R:okay, thank you

J:thank you.
Appendix F

Transcription interview

Participants: Subject K and Researcher (R)

Total time: 22:04

R: How old are you?
K: I'm 22 years’ old

R: What languages do you speak?
K: I speak Swedish, English, Arabic, a little bit of French

R: How much of the teacher candidate program have you completed?
K: three and a half years

R: Have you studied abroad?
K: No

R: What grades will you teach?
K: upper secondary school

R: What subject/s will you teach apart from English?
K: religious studies

R: Have you worked as a teacher in Sweden?
K: only as a substitute teacher

R: when?
K: for a couple of years some time back

R: and what subjects did you teach as a substitute teacher?
K: what ever they told me to teach

R: so you are not currently working as a teacher?
K: no

R: Have you worked as a teacher in any country other than Sweden?
K: no

R: How would you define “good learning conditions”?
K: I would define them as everyone should have their own table, everyone should have a chair, it should be quiet, everyone should be able to focus, everyone should be able to get the help that they need… if they can’t learn from one teacher, everyone should have a teacher by their side who can help them.

R: Would you define “good learning conditions for multilingual children” differently?
K: no
R: How would you work you create good learning conditions for your students, and the of course multilingual students as well?

K: I would look at each individual… I don’t know if I would have time for it but I would try to look at each individual and their needs and maybe find possible solutions for their problems if they had any.

R: What kind of support do you think a teacher needs to create good learning conditions for multilingual students?

K: I think it is important that all the teachers have the same values and also the principal so that one could find help in others… not that I put on some rules, like maybe you can’t speak in the classroom and then they go to another classroom and the can speak and do whatever they want… then that won’t work for me.

R: In what way do you think that pupils can benefit from their prior knowledge of various languages in class?

K: I believe that every language and experience that you have learned will help you in some way… maybe… I teach religious studies, so they might have knowledge about things that I don’t even know by help of their language and yeah…

R: So the next question is related to that… how do you think that pupils can benefit from their prior experiences of foreign countries or cultures in class?

K: the same way… I think… I don’t think it is negative in any way to have a second language and I think it has been said that if you know another language from before you have an easier time learning subjects… new subjects… I don’t know… I have no source for that but…

R: Do you feel that your education to become a teacher so far has prepared you to plan lessons where pupils’ prior knowledge of various languages and prior experiences of foreign countries/cultures are valued?

K: not so much no…. I think that we only learn maybe how to prepare lessons for students who speak Swedish as a first language.

R: so what would you say is missing?

K: I don’t know how I should react or how I should deal with a student that doesn’t understand the language that I’m teaching… so maybe books, information, some help for them and for me.

R: How do you feel about L1 use in the classroom?

K: if it is not Swedish?

R: yes

K: I feel that if it’s needed and they really doesn’t understand in Swedish or English they should be able to use it but only if they really need it… and also, as I said before, they can benefit from using their first language… so it might be good for them.

R: When and why do you feel that students should be encouraged to speak their first language or mother tongue in school?

K: when they don’t understand the question and they have tried in many ways to understand but still no success.
R: I’m now going to read a quote from Skolverket and my question is, how do you interpret the following quote by Skolverket?

teaching should be adapted to each pupil’s circumstances and needs. It should promote the pupils’ further learning and acquisition of knowledge based on pupils’ backgrounds, earlier experience, language and knowledge

K: that the students should be able to use their first language and their prior experience in their… in the classroom and that they should be allowed help when they don’t know how to move forward and yeah… all the help that they need. I think that’s important and I understand it like skolverket thinks.

R: How would you approach this in your future practice?

K: I would try to find help for the students and try to help the first of all and of course I don’t know if there are many books that are good for multilingual students so maybe if I can’t find any books I will try to fight to find books and then maybe I would find something on the internet to help them… I don’t know… yeah I would try at least.

R: Have you spoken about the curriculum for compulsory school during your education at university?

K: I don’t think so, I don’t remember

R: Has previous quote by Skolverket been discussed?

K: not that I know of.

R: Do you feel you have gotten the adequate education at university to comply with the demand from Skolverket regarding the adaptation to each pupil’s knowledge?

K: Absolutely not. I don’t think that we have talked about this at all.

R: What do you feel is missing, at university that is?

K: I think it’s important that we talk about this, especially now when we have many refugees and people who come from different languages… countries… and speaking other languages so… it’s very important to know how to deal with this… because we have to deal with it, we can’t just push them away. So I think it’s very important actually.

R: Following questions are hypothetical. To see how you perceive your future working environment in upper secondary school. There are no wrong answers. Think about a group that you will teach in English that includes approximately 27 students. How many students might not have Swedish as a first language?

K: I would say maybe 12

R: How many students might not have English as a first language?

K: I think that no one has as a first language

R: Might there be any languages spoken in your classroom that you do not understand?

K: absolutely

R: What language might you use to communicate with the students that do not speak enough Swedish or English to comprehend instructions?

K: that’s hard… I would try to show them, I would try to use dictionaries I would try to use English first of all because that’s what we are teaching them… yeah, I would try to find a way and a language…. I think you can create a language with the students even if they do not understand.
R: Would you encourage your students to code-switch between the languages they know?

K: If needed, yes. I think, as I said before that it is good to use your first language in cases... so yeah, I think that would be good if that would help them understand.

R: How would you work to ensure comprehension of working materials such as textbooks, handouts etc. for the students that do not have an adequate level of Swedish or English?

K: That's a hard one first of all... I will most likely... as I said before, it's not easy being a teacher. I would have to try and find books that has both their language and English so they understand... or a dictionary, they will probably need to use dictionaries... yes, I don't know.

R: Do you think that the hypothetical students’ inability to speak Swedish/English would aggravate your work?

K: Aggravate meaning?

R: Making your work harder?

K: No... yes, it might make it harder but I don’t think that it should be easy so

R: How could you work to solve this problem, to not make it harder?

K: I think it’s about finding solutions. In the beginning it’s going to be hard, finding literature and things that they will understand, finding ways... just because we haven’t read about it right now and we don’t have any like... do like this or if you’re in this situation find the solution this way... we don’t have anything like that so maybe at first it will be hard but later on it will be easier when you have solutions... and of course, not every individual from another country has the same problem or the same abilities so of course there will be some changes and so on but I think by the support from the school... hopefully they will support hand have books and such...

R: How do you think your education to become a teacher has prepared you to handle these kinds of situations?

K: I don’t think that it has...

R: I will now present four specific situations, please explain how you think you would handle them? So the first one: You have just presented a task and handed out a worksheet. Four of your students seem to have begun working with the task but they are code switching between English and Swedish. How would you react?

K: They are code switching between English and Swedish?

R: Yes

K: I would ask them to speak English if they know how to speak English, like first hand... and then ask them again, kindly and maybe... yeah, if they know how to speak English I don’t see why they should be code switching. Except if it is like a Swedish – English task.

R: Second, you notice that a group of students are participating in a discussion and they seem to become more and more agitated. You fear that the discussion might turn into a fight, but you cannot understand what they are talking about because they are speaking a language you do not understand. How would you approach the situation?

K: I would encourage them to continue with the task first of all... and then if that didn’t work I would change the task and talk to them about something else.
R: Would you approach it differently during breaks?

K: no, I think my work is in the classroom and outside of the classroom.

R: so third situation, you are completing a diagnostic exam in your subject and you ask your students to complete the task individually and without help. The instructions for the task are written in Swedish and English. You know that one of your students does not understand Swedish enough to understand the questions and usually needs your help to comprehend. He/she receives the task and looks to you for assistance. What would you do?

K: I would first of all ask the students to read for themselves then if they didn’t understand I would of course help the students…maybe at first, hand them a dictionary so they can find words by themselves because I know, by using a dictionary by yourself you will learn a lot of words and things that are important but I would of course try to help the students… I can’t just forget that the student does not understand… that would not give them any joy in learning… so…

R: so the last one, your students are working in groups preparing an oral presentation. The students in one of the groups are code switching between English and Spanish but they seem to be working with the task. How would you react?

K: because they are in a group and not everyone understands Spanish I think it’s important that everyone speaks English… I think, as I said before, this is an English class and you should be trying to speak English which will help you… if you don’t understand anything you can of course look it up or ask a friend but it has to be about the task and I can’t know that because I don’t speak Spanish… so for me it’s important that they ask for help… they can ask me for example in English and I can try to help them if it’s about the task of course… yes but I will encourage them to use only English first hand.

R: so to conclude, Do you think that multilingualism in a school environment is a good thing or a bad thing?

K: a good thing.

R: Why and in what way?

K: students can learn a lot from having multiple languages, they can give a lot to the other students as well, they have a lot of experiences that people who are born and raised in Sweden don’t have… most likely. I think that everything they know will help them in some way and at some point… honestly I don’t think that it can be negative in anyway actually…

R: Is there anything you would like to add that you feel you have not gotten a chance to express throughout this interview regarding current topic?

K: no, I don’t think so… I think it’s important that you put in your study that multilingualism is a good thing and that we should encourage the students to have multiple languages and learn their languages… because when I was younger I didn’t want to go and learn my mother tongue which I thought was terrible just because they didn’t encouraged me to do it… so I think it’s important to encourage students to do that and I also think it’s very, very important that teacher candidates learn about these things and learn how to react in these situations… yes.

R: thank you!

K: thank you!