Bilingual Education: the view of pupils and educators.

Delphine Percipalle / Naiyya Westberg
Bilingual Education: the view of pupils and educators.

Delphine Percipalle/Naiyya Westberg

Abstract

This study is about how children of early school age, specifically children who have both English and Swedish at home, experience a bilingual school system in Sweden. The study on the early student’s viewpoint of a bilingual instruction was narrowed down to an elementary school in Stockholm which proposes an English-Swedish bilingual education. This research revolved around information obtained from interviews with children and educators. The “field-work” approach provided a set of data which were analyzed and summarized in bars diagrams to have a clearer idea about the student’s experience and perspective of an English-Swedish bilingual education from a very early age. We have also studied how adults- educators, experience this Bilingual education. Our results show that English-Swedish bilingual children even at a very young age, experience English as an international language and are proud to have English as one of their languages. Our results also show that educational pedagogues experience that English-Swedish bilingual children generally are more flexible with language development and are more open to the world. From the children’s point of view, these results altogether suggest that bilingualism is influenced at a very early stage by the institutional language spoken in school, by the social arena and by the input parents have provided prior to school. From the educator’s point of view, the findings reported in the present study indicate a requirement for extra competence needed by the school personnel to support children with a bilingual background. The findings were collectively placed in the context of known literature in the field of bilingualism. Based on the above, the main conclusion is that bilingualism is an asset for children and a major advantage that allows a higher degree of flexibility in the learning process but requires close guidance by the school system.

Keywords

Bilingual education in Sweden, bilingualism, language prestige
## Contents

1. **Introduction** 4  
   - Aim 4  
   - Background 5  
     - Bilingualism 5  
     - Development of English in the Academic world in Sweden 6  
     - English as a Global language 7  
   - Studies Around Bilingual Students 9

2. **Method** 10  
   - Selection 10  
   - Participants 11  
   - Procedure 11  
   - Interview Questions 12  
   - Ethical Issues 13  
     - Information Requirement 13  
     - Consent Requirement 13  
     - Confidentiality Requirement 13  
     - Utilization Requirement 14

3. **Results** 15  
   - The Students 15  
     - Reading in English and Swedish 15  
     - Writing in English and Swedish 16  
     - Understanding and Communicating in English and Swedish 16  
     - After School Activities 17  
   - The Pedagogues 18  
   - Concluding Remarks 19

4. **Discussion** 22  
   - Aim and Questions 22  
   - Analysis of the Method 22  
   - Discussion of Analysis 23  
   - Comparison to Earlier Studies 25  
   - Suggestions for the Practice in the Field Based on Findings 26  
   - Further Research 27

5. **References** 28

6. **Appendix** 30  
   - Appendix 1 – Letter to Parents 30  
   - Appendix 2 – Letter to Educators/Members of Staff 31  
   - Appendix 3 – Questionnaire to Educators, After School Staff and Students 32
Introduction

Nowadays societies are changing at a rapid pace and one of the consequences of modern societies is a globalization of ideas and goods. Along with this globalization is a huge mobility of people and the notion of bilingualism and multilingualism are concepts a society has to deal with more and more in their educational programs. Sweden is no exception to a globalization and internationalization of ideas, goods and people. This has been accompanied by a steady growth of the English language as the language of communication for foreigners in Sweden. Among the foreigners are many native English speakers who have moved to Sweden for studies or in search of work. Many mixed marriages have resulted and the children from these marriages are potentially bilingual and bicultural. As this phenomenon has grown especially in Stockholm, so has the demand for a system which accommodates Swedish-English bilingual children. In this context, it is relevant to study what the educational system offers to satisfy this demand and what the discussion points are around this issue. It is interesting to follow the child’s perspective of the bilingual education offered and to understand the issues around bilingual education from the educator’s point of view so as to eventually contribute to an improvement in the system. A clarification and a general background of the issues at stake help give a clearer vision of the current situation.

Aim

The main aim of the study is to discover the early school-age student’s experience of a bilingual education. By an early school-age, we intend to study students between 6 years old and 8 years old. We also aim to discuss the educator’s perspective on a bilingual education.

Other questions that are brought up are the following:

- The children’s attitudes towards understanding, reading and writing in two languages at the same time.
- What are the positive and the negative aspects of being bilingual in the academic and in the social aspect of the student’s school day?
- From the educators’ point of view, do educators feel that children who speak both English and Swedish have an influence their learning approach.
- What have educators observed as positive and negative aspects of working with bilingual children?
- Do educators feel that they need extra competences when dealing with bilingual children?

In the present study, both children and adults engaged in a bilingual program have been questioned to gain insights to children’s attitude towards bilingualism.
Background

Bilingualism

There are many definitions of bilingualism. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica online, bilingualism, is the “ability to speak two languages”. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines different ways of becoming bilingual. It says “It may be acquired early by children in regions where most adults speak two languages (e.g., French and dialectal German in Alsace). Children may become bilingual by learning different languages in two different social settings... A second language can also be acquired in school. The encyclopedia also states that Bilingualism can refer to the use of two languages in teaching, especially to foster learning in students trying to learn a new language

It is important to understand what type of “bilingualism” we are dealing with in this study. We are focusing on children who acquire two languages in early childhood. There are two main ways in which more than one language is acquired: either simultaneously or sequentially. Simultaneous bilingualism takes place when children are exposed to two different languages from birth (DeHouwer, 1996). Sequential bilingualism is bilingualism where the second language is acquired as a new language. Two patterns of exposure to another language are usually discussed in simultaneous acquisition: one person-one language (one parent speaks one language and the other parent speaks another one), or both parents speak both languages. Many researchers claim that the “one person-one language” language acquisition method is the best for bilingual language acquisition (Saunders, 1988; Takeuchi 2006). However there is not much research in other language acquisition methods. We have focused on children who have developed simultaneous bilingualism from birth and whose parents have communicated with them in two different mother tongues since they were born. All children given the opportunity can develop several languages. Children use and need a language to make themselves understood and to understand people around them. However speaking and understanding more than one language from a very early age can be influenced by many factors. One of the most important factors is the influence of the environment. A bilingual child can get one language from one parent which is the same as the language of the society he/she lives in and another language from the other parent. Another factor which influences the child’s language development is how active the parents are in supporting the child cultivate his/her language. The language input of each language has a significant influence on the bilingualism of a child-in fact “active bilingualism requires initiative on the part of the parents when the society does not provide the support needed” - and it is important to take into consideration the amount of input (Lanza, 1998). Romaine goes further and says that even the input of the child’s friends and family can influence bilingualism (Romaine 1989). Carolyn Kessler was of the opinion that children develop faster in the language which is used most in their environment (Kessler, 1992) The reality is that the way a child acquires a bilingual condition can be greatly influenced by multiple factors.

Another interesting factor which Taeschner discusses is that simultaneously bilingual children do not necessarily develop both languages at identical levels. They usually have one dominant language most likely connected to the input i.e. the dominant language is often the language the child is most exposed to (Taeschner 1983). The language a child is educated in can also become the dominant language which the child starts preferring.
French was an important language among the upper classes in Europe in the 18th century. This was true even in Sweden during the time of King Gustav III when people spoke French in his court. However during the 19th century, Sweden became more industrialized, media was developed and as many Swedes came in contact with English; its’ importance as a foreign language grew. Right from the 1850-s, English was already a subject for natural science students. After the Second World War, English was made compulsory in the Swedish school world. Other modern languages were similarly introduced in schools: German, French and later Spanish. As the United States was defined as one of the most powerful countries during the Second World War, the English language gradually became accepted as the most important common language in the world. When the present nine year public school system was introduced between 1950 and 1962, English was made compulsory for all children and about 40% of those also studied German while 20% studied French. At the beginning, English was compulsory from grade 5 and since 1969, from grade 3. As from the end of the 1980s, German started becoming less popular and Spanish was promoted as a foreign language to the same level as German and French (Parkvall, 2005). Spanish proved more popular than German and French and has become more widely chosen by students than German or French. Studies have indicated that Spanish and French are more prevalent in big cities and communes with high incomes whereas German remains dominant in smaller working communes which are economically weaker (Isaksson, 2006). A report from the National Agency of Education (Skolverket 2004) has also indicated that Spanish seen as a world language and associated with vacation and pleasure might also explain why Spanish has become popular as a foreign language. The presence of the Finnish language in Sweden has an important place. Finnish has been spoken as long as Swedish has been an independent nation. In fact partly due to its’ history in Sweden, since 2000 Finnish has been recognized as one of Sweden’s minority languages. However nowadays, English it is the most prevalent foreign language in Sweden. Hyltemstam describes English more as a second language than as a foreign language (Hyltenstam & Österberg 2010). According to a Euro-barometer survey in 2005, 89% of the Swedish population maintained they were able to hold a conversation in English (European Commission, 2006), although Hyltenstam claims that Swedes tend to overestimate their proficiency level in English (Hyltenstam, 2004). Today all schools propose English as the first foreign in some cases even as early as from the first grade. By the sixth grade, all students have obligatory national tests and one of the subjects is English as a foreign language. Even the national school curriculum defines English as a subject which gives students the opportunity to increase their participation in different social and cultural contexts and to partake in international study and work (Skolverket , LGr 11, 2011-Engelska).

Educational possibilities are yet another reason why people adapt to English in Sweden. To learn English is also considered important by students to give them a possibility to educate themselves abroad under an international program that many different countries have to offer to foreign students. It is important here to realize that in Swedish society English is rapidly becoming a second language. In Sweden the concept of Sprint (Content and Language integrated learning) exists. Sprint is schooling where the Swedish is replaced by English as a medium of education in certain subjects (Höglin 2002) Sprint is less seen with languages like German or French. It is seen mainly in English. This is just an example to see how English is becoming popular in the Swedish society.

English is an important language even for the academicians in Sweden. To be able to keep an international standard the academicians have to be well read internationally and keep up with the international research and literature too. A typical example is at universities. Falk says English is increasingly dominating in research and higher education in Sweden and in fact more and more lectures, seminars and even courses are held in English whether or not there are foreign guests (Falk
Of course it is in science and technology that English is most used. The need to use English in many contexts has pushed the development of education policies regarding foreign languages, with English as the first priority.

**English as a global language**

The evolution of English as language in Sweden clearly shows that English is spreading widely in the Swedish society. English was first introduced in the Swedish school system after the Second World War, but English has also permeated other aspects of the Swedish society. The Swedish media for instance has slowly witnessed an increase in foreign language programs with English being on the top of the list of foreign language. Television broadcasts started in the mid 1950’s with one TV channel and today there are four main Swedish TV companies with many channels and television networks, some of which are pay television networks which broadcast programs in Swedish and in original version; many programs imported from English speaking countries. Most of the radio stations are part of a network of stations and in the big cities in Sweden many stations broadcast with a lot of English speaking influence: many songs broadcasted are in English and English words infiltrate the Swedish broadcaster’s language ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Television_in_Sweden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Television_in_Sweden)). Even within the press today, one finds that there are a few English language general news websites in Sweden; for example “The Local,” “Stockholm News” and “Scandinavia Now.”

Swedish is more and more influenced by English and the term ‘Svengelska’ is getting a more defined meaning in the society (Moon, 2002). English is to be seen in media more and more too. A pure observation is the advertisements of Swedish commodities for the Swedish society use a lot of English words. One can relate it to globalization or even internationalization. Consistently, more and more commodities are borrowing words from English for example the names of different media games, television programs, parts of the car that sometimes even don’t have corresponding Swedish names.

The Swedish immigration policy has also facilitated the spread of English in the society

English is widely appreciated as a communication language in Sweden which has experienced over the last decades a growing internationalization. English is becoming more widespread in the Swedish society, especially in education, research and industry, where English terms are common. For some, the spread of English in Sweden has been a concern (e.g. Melander, 2001; Teleman, 1992; Teleman & Westman, 1997). In reaction to this concern, a national policy on language “Mål I mun” was drafted in 2002 to promote and protect Swedish due to the development of multilingualism (especially English) in Sweden while not hindering the employment of English (SOU, 2002a: 21.) In his article, Hult (2005) describes the development of “Mål I mun”. One of the major factors which has contributed to the increasing strength of English versus the local Swedish language is the globalization of communication media such as television. Is English a threat to the Swedish language?

According to Högl (2002) internationalization and globalization have become active factors in discussions regarding the school education in Sweden. Högl (2002) makes an interesting and thought provoking observation that this is the case in all the Nordic countries. The same policies and priorities are observed in Denmark and Norway. Parents and schools prefer English to other languages like German or French. This preference of English over other languages is acknowledged as a threat to the diversity in the society.

Nevertheless, there is an on-going support for English due to its’ global use and its’ importance as a global language in Sweden.
Because English has become such a global and widespread language and has even been considered as a threat to the Swedish language, can one go further and call it a “high-prestige language?” The sociolinguists define the prestige of a language as the respect for a language as compared to level of respect for another language (retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prestige_(sociolinguistics)). Prestige, according to them is connected to the social class of a society with “positive prestige associated with the language or dialect of the upper classes and negative prestige with the language or dialect of the lower classes” (retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prestige_(sociolinguistics)). A further interesting point which is mentioned is that “prestige is particularly visible in situations where two or more languages come in contact.” (retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prestige_(sociolinguistics)). In this context one can say that French was considered as a high prestige language in the Sweden of the 18th century due to court culture, as the court people were highly respectable in the society and speaking French was a reflection of the prestige. Today with the presence of the English language being so dominant in Sweden, one can ask if English is considered as a “positive-prestige” language? To a certain extent, the answer is yes. Based on the definition that positive prestige is connected to the language of the upper classes, then English is a positive prestige language. It is the members of the upper classes who work in the areas where English is most used; education, communication, research and industry. However, one has to say that English is more and more accessible to everyone. Also this does not mean that Swedish is considered as a “negative prestige” language. What is obvious is that English is a global language and everyone wants access to this global language to have as many opportunities as possible on the work market.

The development and spread of English in Sweden as well as its co-existence with Swedish makes these two languages widespread among bilingual children. The bilingual children in our study are children who have developed both English and Swedish at home in a situation with simultaneous bilingualism.

A bilingual school with English as first or second language is usually popular and has a good reputation based on its’ profile. The perspective that Höglund (2002) gives us about the growing popularity of English in Nord explains why.

“When children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years, they gain a deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. They have more practice in processing language, especially when they develop literacy in both, and they are able to compare and contrast the ways in which their two languages organize reality. More than 150 research studies conducted during the past 35 years strongly support what Goethe, the German philosopher, once said: The person who knows only one language does not truly know that language. The research suggests that bilingual children may also develop more flexibility in their thinking as a result of processing information through two different languages”. (Cummins, 2001, page 3)

The above extract from Cummins’ one of many researches about bilingual children clearly speaks the benefits of being bilingual. The bilingual children are said to develop a good understanding of the construction of languages.

The positives of English as a subject are many. But something to consider is how does bilingualism for such students affect their overall academic development.

Cummins (1994) speaks about the additive and subtractive bilingualism. Additive bilingual means that a child learns a second language while constantly developing the first language. Subtractive language is where the second language is learnt at the cost of the first language. He also underlines the fact that the children with additive bilingualism succeed better than children with subtractive bilingualism probably because they are more receptive to the variability of language structure.
In our research the students that we are interviewing are bilingual by birth. However their family situations and language conditions at home can mean that one of the two languages (English or Swedish) falls under the risk of becoming a second language.

To summarize, research revolves around the effects of bilingualism as an ongoing and wide-spreading side effect of globalization. One can also wonder if bilingualism with English as one of the languages is the future. Keeping in consideration that some countries accepted and introduced English as a second language much later than others, it seems that English language’s acceptance and embracement by the society is rapidly increasing. Bilingualism can depend on many factors as explained above. It can even be influenced by factors like environment, globalization, parenting and schooling but the core of bilingualism lies on how positively it has been spreading in our society and how well accepted it has become over years.

There is a lot of research in the field of bilingualism and more and more academicians seem to take bilingualism and also English as a language as an interesting subject to look deeper into. With the increasing globalization of English, it is at this point important to understand what the early school-age English/Swedish child’s perspective is faced with a developing bilingual educational system. It is also interesting to examine the question from the educator’s point of view and discuss their approach to a bilingual education and what consequences this type of education has on the learning abilities of children as well as how they could improve their methodology.

**Studies Around Bilingual Students**

There have been studies around bilingual children in Sweden and in particular studies among Finnish/Swedish speaking children. One study in particular was carried out by the Department of Education in Lund between 1972 and 1980 on four groups of Finnish children in a very similar situation to the one we have described in the set-up of the school system. The study was on a larger scale than the one we have done and the children’s development was studied over a period of two years. The results of the study with Finnish children showed that the Finnish children who had learned Swedish, had a better level of reading and writing in Finnish than Swedish at an early school age (grades 1 and 2). One of the reasons given was that this group of children had learnt to read and write in Finnish. (Löfgren, H. & Ouvinen-Bigerstam, 1982).

Insofar as instruction methods of English/Swedish bilingual children are concerned in Sweden, there is not much research material. Methods used for bilingual teaching are often limited to methods used for teaching one language as a main language and the other as a second language, or both languages as a first language. However the issue of bilingualism and the most suitable educational method to follow has been a discussion topic for a long time. In the United States, there were already studies in the 1930’s on the educational approach to have for native and minority groups and bilingualism. In 1941, educators were recommending the preparation of vocabulary lists, strong reading programs, songs, games, conversation lessons and reading in teaching methods for bilingual children (Tireman, 1941).
Method

“The research community and those using the findings of research have a right to expect that research be conducted rigorously, scrupulously and in an ethically defensible manner” (Cohen, Manion, Morrison 2006, page 47)

The authors underline in their literature, the importance of ethics and most importantly the spectrum of research area. They have also mentioned the importance of planning research.

In our research we have a planned structure where decisions like selection, participants, questions and procedure have been thought through. This planning not only made the research structured but also more clearly defined our own aims. This has helped to stay focused on our main issues.

Interviews
We chose to conduct interviews with students in elementary classes, educators in elementary classes and after-school (fritids) personnel.

As a major part of this group is children, a qualitative interview gives us the possibility to expand our questions, modify them and to be able to improvise to get the answers.

When we interview the children, we want the possibility to be able to lead the conversation to our research’s central problem.

Another reason not to have chosen the questionnaire method is that questionnaires can be easily forgotten, misplaced and neglected by the people who would fill them up. Sometimes the forms are never posted back or sent back.

Interviews with staff members can also lead to details that we may not be aware of, example names of organizations, special terms used for pedagogical and administrative purposes etc. This gives the possibility of expanding the interviews based on the nature of information collected during the interview.

Questionnaire as base for the interviews-
For the interviews, questionnaires will be used as a stencil. These are the basic questions that would be asked to the various parties. Follow up questions that come up during the interview would be documented too. These questionnaires are important to have a base for the interview.

Interviews have been chosen to other possible methods as one has the possibility to gather more information during a dialogue, than by filling up a written questionnaire. The answers given out in a questionnaire can be very short and precise.

Selection

Our research is based on the feedback attained from 10 students in the elementary classes from a public school that has a special bilingual curriculum. Feedback and information from the school teachers and staff members is utilized. Their perspective is also of vital importance in our research.

In our study we have chosen to target one medium sized public school.

The public school is an F-6 school in central Stockholm with almost 500 students representing around 40 countries. At each grade level there are 3 classes, one class being an English-Swedish bilingual class and the other two classes being Swedish classes.

The students from the bilingual classes have entered the school either because they have an English speaking parent or because they have experienced living in English speaking countries for a while and have become fluent with English. These students also have Swedish as a home language.
Participants

Students
We have chosen to interview 4 students from the bilingual pre-school class, 2 students from the first grade bilingual class and 4 from the second grade bilingual class. These students are between 6 years old and 8 years old and are selected so as to give a wide perspective of the student’s view of bilingualism and bilingual education in a public school in Stockholm. In the pre-school class, we selected 2 boys and 2 girls to interview. In the first grade, 2 girls were selected to be interviewed and in the second grade 2 girls and 2 boys were also selected. We chose the children partly because we thought their parents would be positive to letting us interview their children. We chose children whom we thought would be able to clearly express their feelings and views towards bilingual education. We were careful not to select any children with special needs because we felt that their needs could affect the objectivity of the data interpretation.

Educators
Insofar as the educators are concerned, we decided to interview 6 pedagogues from different areas involved in the education of bilingual children. These 6 educators include 2 teachers from the bilingual classes, 1 after school staff who has the responsibility of both children from the Swedish classes and children from the bilingual classes, 1 Swedish teacher involved in teaching Swedish to specifically bilingual children and 2 special-needs pedagogues for children needing extra resources. Since there is only one bilingual class at each grade level, we chose to interview bilingual teachers who had a long experience with bilingual children and who if possible had an experience in different schools. The after-school staff chosen was chosen because he had worked with different age groups, both with younger children and slighter older children (until the age of 10) and had worked for over 10 years with the various groups. The Swedish teacher we chose to interview was chosen because she had a long experience with English-Swedish bilingual children but she had also taught in only Swedish classes. There are 2 special needs pedagogues for the school and we chose to interview them both.

Procedure

After deciding how many students and how many pedagogues we would interview and which students and pedagogues we would choose, the next step for the implementation of our study was to inform both the parents of the children and the pedagogues involved with the children of the work we wanted them to participate in. We prepared information letters to all those participating in the study. The information letters are included as an annex in our dissertation.

Furthermore, we decided to record the interviews. The students, their parents and the educators were informed through letters that we would be recording the interviews with them. They had the possibility to refuse to be recorded if they wished. The recordings were either filming with the telephone or simple voice recordings.

All the interviews took place in the school premises during school hours. We chose to be in the children’s working environment in order to give them the security of a familiar environment. The students were already informed by their parents that they would be interviewed. Where the students are concerned, we asked for the teachers’ permission to take the children out of the classroom during lesson time to conduct the interviews. It was also important to make sure that the student would be able to recuperate the time he/she had missed of the lesson time. The interviews with the children were
conducted in familiar classrooms/rooms which were empty at the time of the interviews to make sure there was no interruption or distraction during the interviews. The beginning of the interview consisted in informing the students about the interview and their rights and asking the student very general questions to put them at ease and to give the student the possibility to open up and say as much as possible. Only one child was seen and interviewed at a time, so the children were not influenced by each other’s answers. The interviews with the children took an average of fifteen minutes (with the younger children) and were at most half an hour.

With the adults, the interviews also took place in classrooms and in the teacher’s staff-room, all which were empty at the time of the interviews. The beginning of the interview session was information to the participants about our study, asking the participants if they agreed to partake in our study and asking them for permission to film the interviews. The figure below shows a schematic representation of the work flow (Fig. 1).

![Schematic diagram of the work flow. The methodological approach consists of five different phases. During the first step there was an identification and classification of the questions which served as the basis for the interviews. This phase was followed by the selection of students and educators to be interviewed. Before interviews took place, information and request letters were sent to the parents of the children we were planning to interview to grant permissions. Subsequently, the actual interviews to both children and educators took place. The final step consisted in the analysis of the answers.](image)

**Figure 1.** Schematic diagram of the work flow. The methodological approach consists of five different phases. During the first step there was an identification and classification of the questions which served as the basis for the interviews. This phase was followed by the selection of students and educators to be interviewed. Before interviews took place, information and request letters were sent to the parents of the children we were planning to interview to grant permissions. Subsequently, the actual interviews to both children and educators took place. The final step consisted in the analysis of the answers.

### Interview Questions

We prepared interview questions for the students and for the educators. There was also a separate set of interview questions for the after-school staff which were more related to the student’s social attitude towards bilingualism. In general these interview questions were meant to be guidelines during the interviews and were meant to lead to open discussions on several aspects of English-Swedish bilingualism. The interview questions which we used as guidelines are also included as appendix to our dissertation.

As children were part of our research, it was very important to try to see things from the child’s perspective. We thought it could be difficult to do good interviews and get sufficient information from children. Thomsson says that one should keep in mind that one of the goals of the interviews is to reflect around a situation by evaluating, describing or developing theoretical arguments (Thomsson, 2010). She highlights the importance of reflexivity in both the interview process and the analysis which results in information being as valuable and appreciated as possible (Thomsson, 2010). We tried
to keep this in mind during the interview process, especially with the children and then during the analytical process.

**Ethical Issues**

As research is important for the development of a society, it is essential that knowledge is deepened and research methods are improved. The privacy of members of the society who participate in any research must be respected. Researchers must follow rules and regulations of a country which protect the participants of any study against discrimination, and physical or psychological harassment (www.vr.se). There is also a respect for secrecy terms which should be taken into consideration before, during and after the research has been completed. In Sweden, the agency which protects participants and gives guidelines to the ethical issues to be respected is the Vetenskaprådet-VR (The Scientific Council). When studies are made, it is of utmost importance to consider ethical issues to protect participants and their privacy and avoid eventual negative consequences or individual conflicts with scientific/research demands. According to VR, there are four main ethical issues to protect individuals to be taken into consideration. We took those issues into consideration.

**Information Requirement**

The information requirement states that the researcher should inform the participants about their project and inform them about the conditions regarding their participation. In our study, we provided all the people we planned to interview with an information letter explaining who we were, why we wanted to interview them and how we would be conducting the interviews. We have also given them the possibility to refuse to be interviewed. In so far as the students are concerned, since they are minors, the information letter was directed to their parents. However before the interviews started, the student was also informed of what the interview consisted in, why we were conducting them and of and how it would be conducted. The information letters for the educators and for the parents of the students are included in the annex of the dissertation.

**Consent Requirement**

The consent requirement states that the participants have the right to decide whether to participate in studies or not. When participants are not adults, the consent of the parents/guardians is required. In our study since all the students we had chosen to interview are minors we needed the consent of the parents to be able to interview their children. Attached to the information letter we gave the parents, we added a consent slip to be signed by the parents. This consent slip gives us the permission to interview the children. We have also asked the children their permission to be interviewed. If either the parents or the students had refused to give their consent, we would not have gone ahead with the interviews. If at any point during the interview, it became clear that the student was uncomfortable with answering questions or did not feel secure, we would have discontinued the interview. We have also asked the educators for their consent to be interviewed.

**Confidentiality Requirement**

According to the confidentiality requirement, participants in studies should be given the widest possible confidentiality and personal data should not be made available. Therefore it would be impossible to discover the identity of the participant. In our information letter, we have mentioned that we would respect the confidentiality of the participants. We have not referred to anyone by name
though in some cases, in the report of our result, we have mentioned whether the student participants were boys or girls.

Utilization Requirement
According to the utilization requirement, information gathered should only be used for research purposes. We guaranteed through our letter that the information we would get from the interviews would only be used for the purpose of our thesis. The information would remain confidential and we would not publicly distribute the information.
Results

In this section, the results of our observations are described, identifying how students felt regarding different aspects of the bilingual situation during schoolwork, and their language situation during after-school activities. For this purpose certain areas of language development were specifically taken into consideration for the students, including reading, writing and understanding. Under the common denominator of students’ bilingualism, the outcomes of individual interviews with educators are also described. In this case the results provided insights into potential actions that may facilitate the learning process of bilingual students.

Collectively, the main points identified above have been classified as potential advantages or drawbacks in the learning process of bilingual children independently of the category of interviewees. Once defined, advantages and drawbacks have been respectively termed positive or negative aspects with respect to simultaneous development of the English and Swedish language. It is important to understand that positive and negative aspects are with respect to simultaneous bilingual development and are not necessarily positive or negative per se. Finally, the main results are summarized as bars diagrams (see figures 2 and 3).

The Students

Reading in English and in Swedish

Positive Aspects
In the pre-school class, neither of the boys could read yet but they thought that they would have no difficulties in reading in either Swedish or English. They were beginning to recognize words in both languages. The two girls were beginning to read. One of the girls was practicing reading exercises with her daddy in English and with her mummy in Swedish. The other girl was trying to read only in English. All the children put emphasis on English. They spontaneously spoke about reading in English and had to be asked questions specifically about reading in Swedish.
In the first grade, the two students interviewed were reading simple books both in English and in Swedish. Neither of the two students seemed to have any preference for reading in either language. They were both happy to read books in Swedish and in English.
In the second grade bilingual class, all the students were reading both in English and in Swedish. The students were fluent readers and have practiced reading since they started the pre-school class in the school. They have developed their reading skills gradually through the years. However since most of the reading assignments are in English, and that they read a lot home with the English speaking parent, their English reading shows more qualities like use of expressions and punctuations than their Swedish reading. The children did not say this in their interviews, but this was something which was remarked by the educators following the children which we thought was important to note. The students felt they were able to read texts both in English and in Swedish.
Negative Aspects
Both of the girls in the pre-school class were trying to read. However one of the girls gave priority to reading only in English. She felt that her reading was not good in Swedish as compared to in English. She said she had not practiced reading at all in Swedish.
In the first grade, none of the students mentioned any negative aspects with respect reading either in Swedish or in English.
In the second grade, as mentioned earlier, the reading assignments at home were mainly in English. When asked why since one parent is Swedish, one of the children said that since the Swedish parent was sure that the reading was supported by the environmental language Swedish, the Swedish speaking parent felt responsible to make sure that the child spoke and read English at least equally well. However one of the students who has alternate weeks with the Swedish speaking mother, read a lot of Swedish books at home. He felt like his Swedish reading was equally good as his English reading.

Writing in English and Swedish

Positive Aspects
In the pre-school class, the two boys interviewed could not write yet but they were open to writing in both languages. One of the boys said he had tried to write some words in English. The girls were trying to write both in English and in Swedish and they did not mix up the languages.
In the first grade, the students were beginning to write both in English and in Swedish. They found it easy to write in either language.
In the second grade, all the students talked about wanting to get the spelling right with English. They were writing both in English and in Swedish.

Negative Aspects
In the pre-school class, the four children interviewed did not think there was any negative aspect connected to writing either in English or in Swedish.
The two first grade children all felt that writing in English was more difficult than writing in Swedish. They thought that the spelling in English was more difficult than in Swedish. They both thought that there were many more words in Swedish which are spelt as they sound.
The children from the second grade felt very confident about writing in English. They clearly said that they enjoyed writing free texts in English. In other words they were more expressive in writing in English. This can be based on the fact that they do not write as regularly in Swedish. They have a weekly lesson where they write free creative text in English and they have followed this practice since the preschool class. Even though their writing skills were hardly established then, they have kept it a practice. They drew pictures and wrote very short sentences/texts. This practice could be the reason why these students feel so secure and confident in writing in English. The negative aspect of this is that due to the school system, they prioritized one of the two languages only.

Understanding and Communicating in English and Swedish

Positive Aspects
Among the pre-school students, three of the children could understand and could communicate both in English and in Swedish. One of the boys though he understood both languages, felt that his English was stronger and preferred to communicate with everyone only in English. All the children had one Swedish parent and one parent who was a native English speaker. None of the children had lived
abroad. One of the girls said that the best thing about English was that you could speak it everywhere in the world. She also said that the best thing about Swedish was that when she went abroad, it felt like her own secret language.

In the first grade, both students had one parent who was a native English speaker and the other parent Swedish. Neither of the students had ever lived abroad. The children found it easy to understand and to communicate in both languages. One of the girls seemed to have a preference for speaking in Swedish. She explained that she spoke more Swedish with her friends and with her brother. The other girl did not even seem to realize when she changed language because she was so comfortable in both languages. One of the girls said that the best thing about English was that she could use it when she went on holiday and everyone understood her.

In the second grade, all the children also had one parent who was a native English speaker and the other parent Swedish. The students had different usage of languages at home though. For example it was only Swedish with the Swedish speaking parent and only English with the English speaking parent for some. This was the case for some of the children who spoke a mix of the two languages at home. As a part of our observation, one of the children mentioned that the English speaking parent could not speak Swedish so well. A child also mentioned that he/she felt a bit reluctant to speak English when he/she went to the preschool as English was not an active language there. However starting at a bilingual school had helped him to develop the language skills—especially the English. All of the children in the second grade felt proud and ‘lucky’ to be bilingual. This mainly as English is a language that many other people speak and understand. They even mentioned how speaking English can be of an advantage while travelling to countries where Swedish is not spoken. English is important to these children not only because it is a home language but also helps them keep in touch with and communicate with their extended families (the part of the family that does not speak Swedish). The children who were interviewed mentioned that they were allowed to speak whichever language they wanted to during the after-school activities as opposed to their school day where one is only allowed to speak English during the English lessons and Swedish during the Swedish lessons.

Negative aspects
Among the pre-school students, most of the lesson time is in English. Although all the children could understand both languages, one of the boys wanted to communicate only in English. He said that he sometimes felt he did not know the words in Swedish. He however did not want to speak Swedish because his mum only spoke English to his dad (though she spoke to him in Swedish).

In the second grade, 60% of the lesson time is held in English and 40% in Swedish. The students are expected to speak English only during the English lessons and only Swedish during the Swedish lessons. They have some mathematic lessons during the week where they are allowed to speak both of the languages. Both English and Swedish teachers take these lessons together to integrate the languages. One of the students mentioned that although teachers usually understand, it could be a bit confusing sometimes to switch between languages.

After school activities (Fritids)

The school has an established After School organization that starts right after the school day. At every grade level there are 2 Swedish speaking pedagogues and 1 English speaking pedagogue who run the organization.
As the parallel Swedish classes have between one to two English lessons every week (depending on the grade), English seems to be a functional language at school. The children who were interviewed mentioned that they are allowed to speak whichever language they wanted to during the After School activities as opposed to their school day where one is only allowed to speak English during the English lessons and Swedish during the Swedish lessons. These children interviewed who are going to the same bilingual second grade are used to speaking English with each other on a social level. They seem to have some kind of a common link with English. However, when they are in After School organization, they speak mainly Swedish, even with their bilingual class fellows. It was interesting information and when we asked the children why it was like that, they replied that that’s what they hear during the “fritids” period.

The Pedagogues

6 pedagogues from different areas involved in the education of bilingual children were interviewed. Out of these 6 pedagogues, 2 were native English speakers and the others were Swedish native speakers. The Swedish native speakers were all fluent with English, although none of them had ever lived in an English speaking country for any length of time. All the pedagogues had worked with bilingual children for at least 10 years. Two of the pedagogues: -one of the special-needs teachers and Swedish teacher involved in teaching Swedish to specifically bilingual children- had taught children with only one language (Swedish). None of these pedagogues had knowledge in any other language.

Positive aspects

All the pedagogues felt that they were many positive aspects encountered working with bilingual students. They suggested that the children were in general more flexible with their language. The fact that the children spoke and understood both Swedish and particularly English gave them a wider opening to the world. They felt like the students were more in touch with things going on in the society and in the world, despite their young age as compared to children who had only Swedish. This was clearer with the students by the time they got to the second grade. The special-needs pedagogues and the after-school pedagogue were the educational staff who worked with groups of both bilingual children and only Swedish speaking students at the same time. They felt that a positive aspect of having the two groups of students together was that the Swedish speaking students were influenced by the English of the bilingual students. The Swedish-speaking students were more sensitive to listening to English and developing their own knowledge of English. This was obvious in some of the exchanges they noticed among Swedish speaking students. The after school pedagogue for instance had witnessed Swedish speaking students speaking about what different words meant in English. The special-needs pedagogues sometimes found their Swedish speaking students picking up on things in English which they would explain to their bilingual students.

Negative aspects

The pedagogues also felt that some of these bilingual students encountered language difficulties. For all of the students these difficulties were often but not always linked to the language practices they developed at home. The two special-needs teachers remarked that by definition, their jobs mainly entailed meeting children with difficulties. They rarely worked with children who did not have social or academic difficulties. Sometimes they went to classrooms to observe but even there focused on children with difficulties. All the pedagogues felt that a lack of consistency with the languages at
home could easily lead to a “superficial” language development. This consistency could be the parents themselves mixing English and Swedish. It could also be the parents speaking one of the languages poorly and transmitting a "bad" language development to their children. The pedagogues often felt that if students had difficulties in one language, they usually had difficulties in the other language too. The special-needs pedagogues felt that dealing with language difficulties could sometimes hide deeper academic difficulties. It generally took them a longer time to uncover learning difficulties among bilingual children than among children with only one language precisely because the language difficulties sometimes hid the other difficulties or were in some cases part of them.

Insofar as competences were concerned, apart from the after-school pedagogue, all the other pedagogues felt that extra competences were needed when dealing with bilingual children. For all the pedagogues, an obvious competence was a good knowledge of both English and Swedish. The two bilingual teachers and the Swedish teacher for bilingual students thought it was a plus to have educational methods specific for bilingual students, which involved “hands-on” and very visual techniques.

**Concluding Remarks**

We observed positive and negative aspects described by both the students and the educators with respect to a bilingual Swedish and English education. It is important to highlight that these positive and negative aspects are not positive or negative per se but are termed as such with respect to simultaneous development of the English and Swedish language for the purpose of this study. Insofar as the students were concerned, the positive and the negative aspects were connected to reading in English and Swedish, writing in these two languages and understanding as well as communicating. We asked questions regarding the student’s academic perspective of an English/Swedish education and we also asked questions connected to the bilingual student’s language attitude in social situations in school.

The positive aspects showed that all the students, no matter what grade they were in, had no academic difficulty with learning and developing two languages at the same time. From a social point of view, they were extremely flexible with both languages. The negative aspects pointed to the fact that not the same priority seemed to be given to both languages. There was more emphasis on English, at least from an academic point of view, and this was reflected in the answers of the children. Furthermore, one of the students mentioned that constantly switching languages could also be confusing. Figure 2 below shows our summary of the children’s responses regarding reading, writing and communication skills for English and Swedish (Fig. 2).
Figure 2. Analysis of Reading, Writing and Communication in early school age children with an English-Swedish bilingual background. In the study children were interviewed and asked the following questions summarized in panels A to C in the figure below. (A) In panel A children were challenged as to how they felt when they read in English or in Swedish. Their answers were then categorized on the basis of their preferences towards one or the other language or no preference at all. The results are plotted in the bars diagram of panel A. The term “English” indicates a preference towards the English language, the term “Swedish” indicates preference towards the Swedish language whereas “Does not matter” signifies no preference at all as to which language. n=number of children. (B) In panel B children were asked about how they felt about writing in English or in Swedish or whether it did not matter at all. Their answers were clustered similarly to panel A on the basis of their preferences towards one or the other language or no preference at all. The results are plotted in the bars diagram of panel B. The terms below the axis have the same meaning as in panel A. n=number of children. (C) In panel C children were tested on their preferences to communicate in English, Swedish or both languages. Their answers were then grouped according to their preferences towards one or the other language or no preference at all. The results are plotted in the bars diagram of panel C. The terms below the axis have the same meaning as in panels A and B. n=number of children.

For the educational pedagogues, positive and negative aspects were also observed related to interaction with bilingual children. Among the positive aspects was the fact that they found bilingual children more open to the world and more flexible in their learning approach. Their bilingualism also made those around them more aware of English. The result was that bilingual children showed more flexibility in understanding new concepts because they could relate to terms in different languages and monolingual children would pick up English faster when they heard English spoken around them.

The negative aspect was associated with the fact that sometimes the bilingualism of the students was only apparent bilingualism and some students had no proper grasp of any language at all. Furthermore, bilingualism could hide deeper learning disabilities, make it more difficult or take a longer time to discover other learning disabilities. As a conclusion, educational pedagogues felt they needed extra competences when dealing with English-Swedish bilingual children which included a good knowledge of the languages and special educational methods which were very visual and “hands-on”. Figure 3 below shows the summary of the educators’ responses regarding the requirement of extra competence for bilingual children.
Figure 3. The point of view of professionals towards children with an English-Swedish bilingual background. (A) The left panel recapitulates the answers of educators as to the importance of having extra specific competence to deal with bilingual children. The majority of the interviewed educators suggest the need for extra competence. n=number of educators. (B) The right panel summarizes how the interviewed educators feel about assessing language development of bilingual children in comparison to monolingual children. The results pointed to increased difficulty in assessing bilingual children but the degree of difficulty was differently perceived. Similar proportions of educators answered that it is more difficult or easier to assess language development in this group of children. n=number of educators.
Discussion

Aim and Questions

The main aim of the study was to discover the early school-age student’s experience of an English/Swedish bilingual education. Our results show that children between the ages of 6 and 8 who have simultaneous bilingualism have absolutely no difficulty following an academic program which is mixed with both languages. They also show that they understand the “international” aspect of English and we understand that they feel proud they are able to speak English. Probably due to the fact that there is more emphasis on the language development of English during the early school years, the children show a general preference for English despite the fact they are bilingual. With regards to the pedagogues, the results of our study show that educators feel that children who speak both English and Swedish have a more open and flexible learning approach and can relate to the same concept in two languages. Educators also feel that the physical proximity of bilingual children to monolingual children in the environment increases the likelihood for monolingual children (speaking only Swedish) to learn and improve their English at a faster rate than monolingual children not exposed to English in the same way. Educators have felt that they need extra competences when dealing with English-Swedish bilingual children. They not only need a language awareness themselves, they also want special methods which are more visual and with hands-on.

Analysis of Method

Choice of interviews over questionnaires

The different methods used to attain information are the following, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2006, p 269) have described the differences between interviews and questionnaires. They have advocated advantages and disadvantages of interviews and questionnaires over each other. Although questionnaires can be more reliable in case they are anonymous, interviews can be of benefit in case of a complicated query and misunderstandings caused because of the complexity of the query. Opportunity for asking is extensive in comparison to a questionnaire where it’s limited.

Advantages of Interviews

Interviews with children and staff members give one the possibility of asking open questions which hopefully lead to discussions which cover points/issues which may not have been brought up by questionnaires. Furthermore questionnaires are difficult to use with young students since they are not at the reading stage yet, so they cannot read the questionnaires nor can they fill them up either, since they cannot write.

Disadvantages of Interviews

A disadvantage of the interview method can be found especially with young children. It could take a long time for children to feel comfortable in an interview situation. One might also have to interview the child several times to get information which is pertinent to the study. Another drawback of interviews is that they can take a long time and are usually more time-consuming than one expects.
Was the interview method adequate for our studies?
All things considered, the interview method was the only method we could use when dealing with young children who did not yet have the reading and writing capacity.

What would we have done differently?
Interviewing the younger children at least twice may have given more results. It can be difficult to get young children to understand what information you are researching and as a consequence for them to give specific answers to your questions. Interviewing these young children on more than one occasion gives the children the possibility to express themselves more and therefore there is more of likelihood to get specific and more in depth answers to one’s research questions.

Discussion of Analysis

With Regards to the Students
The results recapitulated by the bars diagram give a global view of the children’s attitudes towards reading, writing and communicating in both English and Swedish but there are differences to be noted in the year groups. Even though all the students in the pre-school class were open to reading in both Swedish and in English, it was difficult to evaluate more precisely their reading capacity in both languages because they had not properly broken the reading code. They could identify some words in both languages but they were not at the stage of reading whole sentences in any of the languages. Their evaluation of their reading capacity was therefore very theoretical. Through the interviews, it was clear that reading was stimulated by the school, especially with English from a very early age. Writing posed the same difficulty as reading among the children from the pre-school class. None of them could write properly so their views on writing were very general and speculative. It seemed obvious that because many of their lessons were directed in English, their attempts at writing would be more guided towards writing in English.
It was also clear during the interviews that the students realized that they had one English speaker at home and one Swedish speaker.
We generally felt that these students feel very comfortable in speaking English. As a part of the interview where the students ‘tell’ about their experiences of being bilingual, they mentioned that their ‘heart language’ is English. With this term we felt they meant it is easier for them to express their feelings and emotions in English which is consistent with our data on the skills on the communication skills summarized on the bars diagram of figure 2C. Although they are comfortable in expressing themselves in Swedish, they feel comparatively more comfortable in speaking English.
The fact that bilingual students speak Swedish during the after school period shows how flexible and how compatible these children are to the concept of bilingualism. It seemed that children were well aware of the international character of English. This can be deducted from the response of one of the girls in the pre-school class who said that the best thing about English was that you could speak it everywhere in the world. It was not the same with Swedish which she used as her “secret language” because no one could understand her. Another girl in the first grade related English to a personal experience and said that when she went on holiday, she could use her English and everyone understood her.

The main conclusion is that children with an English/Swedish bilingual background tend to favor English (at least at an early stage). There are many reasons which could explain this result, which can
be found both inside the school environment and outside the school environment. One of the reasons from within the school environment is that the particular system of this school is organized in such a way that there is more emphasis on teaching in English during the early years. Another reason from within the school environment could be peer influence. You choose to speak either English or Swedish depending on what your friends speak. In the school were the after-school period is mainly a Swedish language dominated arena, most of the children will tend to speak Swedish even if they are bilingual unless for some background reason, their Swedish is particularly weak. Reasons related to factors outside the school environment which could explain why English/Swedish bilingual children favor English at an early school age could be associated to the student’s home background. The fact that English is such a global language, as two of the children unconsciously mentioned, could also be one of the reasons external to the school environment which explain why children tend to favor English at an early age.

**With Regards to the Educators**

The educators had all worked many years with English/Swedish bilingual children. Even though 3 out of the 6 of them had worked with monolingual children in other schools, for 3 of them it was over 10 years ago. They did not think their comparison to monolingual children in the school was totally fair because they felt that the bilingual children and the specific bilingual program of the school influenced the language development of the monolingual children in that particular school. For the educators, it was obvious that having only a certain percentage of English/Swedish bilingual children in an environment of mainly Swedish monolingual children was advantageous to both groups of children. The monolingual children learnt English at a faster rate than monolinguals in other schools. The bilinguals were stimulated in their language development by the school environment and at the same time were judged more flexible in their learning approaches.

With regards to the bars diagram which summarizes the result of the pedagogues’ assessment, it is important to note that despite the fact the result is global (includes all the educators), the result is actually quite split among the pedagogues. In figure A, all the educators apart from the after-school staff think that some kind of extra competence is needed when dealing with English-Swedish bilingual children. Language awareness was the competence mentioned by the after-school staff, if this is to be considered as a competence. Figure B shows a result which is split among the educators. Even though the results seem to indicate that it is more difficult to assess English-Swedish bilingual students, it is important to note that the educators who thought it was more difficult to assess bilingual students were the two special-needs teachers and the Swedish teacher for bilingual students. One can wonder if the views and opinions of these educators, especially the special needs teachers, are not biased since they deal specifically with children with difficulties.

We conclude that educators generally feel a need for some kind of extra support when dealing with English/Swedish bilingual children. They also feel that knowledge of the two languages dealt with is an asset.
Comparison to Earlier Studies

Comparison to Other Bilingual children
An earlier study we have brought up around bilingual children which is very similar to our study is a study carried out in the mid 70’s among Finnish Swedish speaking children. This study is comparable to our English/Swedish bilingual students who show a preference for English and are at an early stage better in English because their first educational introduction is mainly in English. The result of this study also concludes that by the time children had reached the third grade their language knowledge in both Finnish and Swedish was equivalent and was at the same level of language proficiency as any monolingual child in either language (Löfgren, H. & Ouvinen-Bigerstam, 1982). Our study has not been as far as English/Swedish children in the third grade but if it had, it would surely find similar results. An interesting conclusion reached in the study was that “children need to know both their first language and Swedish in order to feel secure in their bilingual living environment.” (Löfgren H. & Ouvinen-Birgerstam, 1982, p.8). One main difference however is to be noted between the children in the study referred to in Lund and the children in our study; the children in the Lund study started off as monolingual children with Finnish as their first language and gradually from a very early age, entered a system which made them totally Finnish/Swedish bilinguals by the third grade. The children in our study are bilingual from birth. It is interesting that the result appears to be very similar, even by the second grade despite the fact that the children acquire their bilingualism in different ways.

Comparison of Teaching Methods
Many studies have been made on educational methods appropriate for teaching a new second language but they do not always focus on methods for teaching bilingual children. Nevertheless, one finds studies in the States where bilingualism and teaching minority groups has been an issue for a long time. Already in the 1940’s educators were recommending “hands-on”, practical programs to deal with bilingual children. This is already in line with our study where all the pedagogues mentioned the need for a deep knowledge of the languages the children spoke. “Games, songs, conversation lessons” these are all practical hands-on exercises which educators also said there was a need for. Purkarthofer and Mossakowski discuss dual-medium teaching methods developed at Slovene/German schools which aim to give the students equal time exposure to two languages and to use the two languages as mediums of instruction (Purkarthofer, Mossakowski, 2011). Different methods of exposing the students to two languages are described - instruction language based on time-tables, based on educator or based on subjects. Their results show that these methods are more or less successful depending on conditions which can promote their success (for example a shared social space) but they also show that “social practices which promote languages outside the educational domain stimulate further possibilities for the pupils’ use of the different languages (Purkarthofer, Mossakowski, 2011). To a certain extent, we use the dual-medium teaching method based on the educator especially with early-school age children (the children identify one educator to a language).

In conclusion, there is a lot of research regarding bilingualism and bilingual children but teaching methods used specifically for bilingualism and how successful they are in tackling the issue of bilingualism in the school arena remain limited to methods resembling the teaching of a second language. The development and progress made in teaching methods for English, (and for any foreign language for that matter) largely depends on the education policy taken by the Swedish state.
Suggestions for the practice in the field based on your findings

One of the most striking findings in our study among early school-age English Swedish bilingual students is the fact that one of the languages is dominant. During the school hours, due to the fact that the first years in school, most of the lessons are in English, English is the dominant language. During the after-school period, the children often fall back on the dominant language of the group which surrounds them. As the dominant language is often Swedish (the language of the society), it becomes the prevailing language among these simultaneously bilingual children. The choice of dominant language seems to be steered by the organisation of the school system. According to our results, most of the pedagogues involved in the education of bilingual children felt that extra competences were needed when dealing with bilingual children. These extra competences not only included a language awareness but also methods which were more visual and hands-on. A suggestion which could enhance the children’s bilingualism would be to give the pedagogues the opportunity to attend courses which could enrich their teaching methods for bilingual children. Visual enhancement is for example a system in which all classrooms have a team board/smart board which is effectively and regularly used. This has to be used alongside methods which allow the students to practically “do”. This could even benefit the monolingual students in the same school and their development of another language-English- would be faster.

Systematic language screening for both English and Swedish among children of an early school-age would be an advantage to monitor and identify potential language related problems or even learning difficulties at an early age. Presently, only children with suspected difficulties are screened. Furthermore, they are screened only when their language development (reading and writing) has reached a level where it can be analysed. Screening indifferently all children right from the moment they are in the pre-school class and systematically after that can be a good indicator to potential difficulties, not only with language but also as regards to their leaning process.

Another suggestion based on the finding that one language is often dominant would be to organise the after-school period in a different way. According to the description given of the after-school period, all students, irrespective of if they were bilingual or monolingual, were together during the after-school period. If separate after-school groups were introduced; one group in English and one in Swedish, it would give the bilingual students a choice to express themselves in the language they choose to and not be influenced by the language environment. It could also be an opportunity for the students (especially the very young ones) to improve on their English. Of course a negative aspect would be that it could create a segregation situation but to solve this segregation situation, one could integrate monolingual Swedish-speaking students into the English group and have a rotating process between the groups.
Further Research

Our research has shown that English/Swedish bilingual children of early school-age have a preference for English when it comes to reading and writing. This can partly be due to the impact of the language of education. This confirms what Taescher says when he claims that the language a child is educated in can become the language the child starts preferring (Taescher 1983). Other influences include the peer group and the student’s family background (Romaine 1989). We have tried to select students who are simultaneously English/Swedish bilinguals from birth. Our results have also shown that educators feel that bilingual children tend to be more flexible in their learning approach. Educators also indicate that bilingualism, specifically with English can benefit monolingual children. However educators feel the need for extra competences when relating to bilingual children. These include an awareness and knowledge of English and Swedish as well as methods which are more visually and practically oriented for teaching.

These results are very interesting but the study is quite preliminary because it is based on a small scale. Our study is based on the results of interviews from only one school and a few children interviewed from the early grades. To have a more general and widespread idea of the student’s perspective of an English/Swedish bilingual education, one would need to perform the study on a larger scale to obtain more statistics. Scaling up the study and increasing the number of children interviewed (for example the study of students in 10 schools in Stockholm) would give better statistics. Increasing the number of educators interviewed would also give more accurate results. One could of course expand the study even further to other schools within Sweden which offer bilingual education. Comparing the results of the studies from schools in the capital to the results of the studies of schools outside Stockholm could also be an idea for further research.

An interesting perspective would be research on the language perspective of monolingual children of the same age group compared to those who have an English-Swedish background.

More interesting further research could be comparing the perspective of different groups of bilingual children. There are many other languages which are not global languages, but are nevertheless strong languages: Finnish (with its history in Sweden), German, Spanish and French. What about the children who are bilingual with these languages/Swedish? It could give unexpected results to compare the perspective of English-Swedish bilingual children to Swedish and a “not so high-status language” bilingual children.

Comparisons can also be made between the language approach of children who are multi-lingual and the approach of those who are bilingual.

A very big question is how the system maintains bilingualism among the children? It is interesting to have study cases of the educators involved in teaching bilingual children to find out what their views are, what works and what does not work, what tools they feel they need, if any to support bilingual education. It is clear that the environment of the child, at home and especially in school plays an important role in encouraging/boosting this bilingualism and is partly responsible for the languages developing at different speeds.
References


To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01434632.1982.9994093


dual-medium models in Slovene-German schools in Austria  Int Rev Educ (2011) 57:551–565
DOI 10.1007/s11159-011-9255-3 Published online: 25 December 2011_Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2011


Tireman L.S. Review of educational Research: Chapter VIII: Bilingual Children June 1941 vol. 11 no. 3 340-352


On-line Publications


http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prestige_(sociolinguistics)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Television_in_Sweden

Stockholms universitet/Stockholm University
SE-106 91 Stockholm
Telefon/Phone: 08 – 16 20 00

www.su.se
Appendix 1_Letter to Parents

Stockholm, 17th October 2012

Johannes skola
Roslagsgatan 61,
11354 Stockholm

Dear parents,

You are getting this letter as we would like to interview your child for a thesis that we are writing as a part of our Teachers’ Training programme.
We are 2 students from the Stockholm University, Delphine Percipalle and Naiyya Westberg. We are both teachers at Johannes Skola in Stockholm. As a part of Teachers Education, we are supposed to be writing a thesis. As we have a wide experience of working with young children who are bilingual (specially with English and Swedish as our home languages) we have chosen to write about just that.
As a part of this work, we would like to interview your child to get a student’s perspective on the bilingual program in the school.
We think that it will be of benefit for us as teachers to use this opportunity to learn about how students experience bilingual education. This can help us in rethinking about our pedagogical ideas. Your child will be asked questions related to language and some questions will hopefully lead to a conversation. We will be recording these interviews. The information and feedback from your child will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purpose of our thesis. If you do not want your child to be interviewed, please let us know in advance by filling in the slip below. We will also ask your child if he/she agrees to be interviewed for our research work.
Please feel free to mail us if you have any questions.
Delphine.percipalle@stockholm.se
naiyyarastogi@hotmail.com

Thanking you in advance,
Delphine and Naiyya

I hereby agree/ do not agree to let my child _____________________________ (full name) in class _______________ participate in the interview based questions which will be recorded and used in a confidential manner for the purpose of a thesis.
Date:
Name of parents:

To be returned by Tuesday, the 23rd of October
Appendix 2_Letter to Educators, Members of Staff

Stockholm, 17th October 2012

Johannes skola
Roslagsgatan 61,
11354 Stockholm

Dear member of staff,

You are getting this letter as we would like to interview you for a thesis that we are writing as a part of our Teachers’ Training programme. We are 2 students from the Stockholm University, Delphine Percipalle and Naiyya Westberg. We are both teachers at Johannes Skola in Stockholm. As a part of Teachers Education, we are supposed to be writing a thesis. As we have a wide experience of working with young children who are bilingual (specially with English and Swedish as our home languages) we have chosen to write about just that. As a part of this work, we would like to interview you to get your educator’s perspective on the bilingual program in the school. We think that it will be of benefit for us as teachers to use this opportunity to learn about how you and your students experience bilingual education. This can help us in rethinking about our pedagogical ideas. You will be asked questions related to language and some questions will hopefully lead to a conversation. We will be recording these interviews. The information and feedback from you will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purpose of our thesis. If you do not want to be interviewed, please let us know in advance. Please feel free to mail us if you have any questions. We are highly grateful for your cooperation.
delphine.percipalle@stockholm.se
naiyyarastogi@hotmail.com

Thanking you in advance,
Delphine and Naiyya
Appendix 3_Questionaire for Educators, After-School Staff and Students

Questions for teachers/educators

1. What is your name? _______________________________________________________

2. How long have you been working with English/Swedish bilingual children?
   ________________________________________________________________

3. Have you worked with children who only focus on 1 language (Swedish) before?
   __________________________________________________________________

4. Do you teach in English or in Swedish?
   ________________________________________________________________

5. It is not always easy to work with children when they have several languages. Can you tell about your experience working with children who have 2 languages as opposed to children who only focus on 1 language?
   __________________________________________________________________

6. Can you go more into detail about positive and not so positive aspects of working with bilingual children?
   __________________________________________________________________

7. Do you feel that you need extra competences when dealing with bilingual children? If so which ones?
   __________________________________________________________________

8. Bilingual children do not always develop both languages at the same speed. Can you tell about your experience with bilingual children?
   __________________________________________________________________

9. Is there any particular method you use for teaching English/Swedish bilingual children?
   __________________________________________________________________

10. How do you evaluate bilingual children in your school system?
    __________________________________________________________________
Extra questions for the After School staff

1. How many Swedish and how many English speaking staff members are there at After School (Fritids)?
2. Do you speak only Swedish or English or both languages with the students?
3. What is your observation about which language is mostly used by children in the social situations?
4. Tell us more about your experience of what language the bilingual children speak. Do they speak English as naturally as Swedish with their friends who only speak Swedish?
5. Do the bilingual children speak English socially with their other English speaking friends?
6. Are there social situations in which the bilingual children tend to show preference for one language?
7. Tell us more about the interaction between the bilingual and monolingual children?
Questions for students

1. Your name ________________________________________________
2. How old are you?____________________________________________________________________
3. Which languages do you speak?____________________________________________________
4. Where are your parents from?__________________________________________________________________
5. Which languages do you speak at home?____________________________________________________
6. Which languages do you speak at school?__________________________________________________
7. Tell us more about how you feel when you speak English/Swedish?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
8. Can you write in both English and Swedish? How do you feel about writing in Swedish?
   How do you feel about writing in English? ________________________________________________
9. Reading is fun. Tell us a little more how you feel about reading in English. Tell us more
   how you feel about reading in Swedish.
10. If you were to choose, which language would you prefer to speak, and which language
    would you prefer to write?
    Speak____________________________________________________________
    Write____________________________________________________________
11. Do you think that English and Swedish in school is: Explain why
    Fun yes/no
    Tiring yes/no
    Confusing yes/no
    Challenging yes/no