Degree Thesis 1
Level: Bachelor’s
Language use in the EFL classroom

A literature review on the advantages and disadvantages of teachers’ choices of instructional language in the EFL classroom

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Abstract:
This literature review investigates what previous research has found regarding target language use in the Elementary EFL classroom, and what different views there might be on communicating in English during English lessons. The study is conducted with Stephen Krashen’s (1982) Second Language Acquisition Theory as theoretical perspective. Findings show that one important reason for target language use in the EFL classroom is increasing the target language exposure to provide opportunities for the pupils to develop their language proficiency, while first language is used to instruct, translate, scaffold, explain, and facilitate and confirm learning, to discipline and criticise, and to give feedback and positive reinforcement. The results from the five reviewed studies in this thesis imply that both target language and first language have their place in the EFL classroom, and that the teachers’ choice of which language to use is highly individual. They also indicate that vocabulary acquisition and communicative skills call for different language approaches, and that different language theories apply to different teaching situations. Another conclusion from this review is that further research on teachers’ choices of instructional language is needed, as are further investigations of pupils’ preferences and in what situations they benefit from target language and first language respectively.

Keywords: EFL, target language, first language, target language instruction, teachers’ motives
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1. Introduction
Should instruction in the EFL classroom be in only English, only Swedish, or a mix between the two languages? While there may be different opinions on advantages and disadvantages of target language use in the EFL classroom, both teachers and pupils agree on the importance of practicing target language communication in the EFL classroom (Skolinspektionen, 2011:7, p. 23). However, a recent study by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate showed that 80% of the schools that were inspected, do not meet the pupils’ need for adequate training in target language communication (Skolinspektionen, 2011:7, p. 23).

Communication is important in the English subject. The Swedish National Agency for Education declares that the syllabus for the English subject is based on the view of language learning as functional and communicative, with a focus on communicative abilities (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 6). This is shown in the syllabus for the English subject, which includes abilities such as “all-round communicative skills”, “understanding spoken and written English” and to “formulate one’s thinking and interact with others” (Skolverket, 2011b, p. 32). Pupils should not only develop communicative skills, but also confidence in communication, as well as use strategies to comprehend or deliver a message when their own knowledge is inadequate (Skolverket, 2011b, p. 32). Such a strategy could be, for example, asking questions, or using body language. Furthermore, the core content for all grades, from year 1 to 9, includes instructions and descriptions, conversations and dialogues, which means both listening to and producing English language (Skolverket, 2011b, p. 33-35). Starting in year 4, pronunciation, intonation and grammatical structures are added to the core content (Skolverket, 2011b, p. 33-35). These skills and abilities are closely connected to oral communication, and, just as the Swedish National Agency for Education prescribes in the curriculum, communication and function is where the emphasis of the EFL teaching should lie (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 6). Although the knowledge of the structure of the English language is important for the pupils to learn, the Swedish National Agency for Education refers to research results pointing to a communicative approach to teaching as the most efficient way to learn a language (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 6).

While communicative abilities make up such a large part of the English curriculum (Skolverket, 2011b, pp. 32-34), my experience during my teacher training is that it is not uncommon to hear English teachers say: “You cannot speak English to the pupils, because they will not understand you”. I have also heard pupils say: “We never have to speak English in English class”. This indicates that oral communication is not as emphasised in the EFL classroom, as the Swedish National Agency for Education (2011a) intended it to be.

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate conducted a review in 2011 on the quality of EFL classes in year 6-9 at 22 different schools (Skolinspektionen, 2011:7, p. 5). The Swedish Schools Inspectorate found that communicative abilities were not given sufficient time in nearly half of the reviewed lessons (Skolinspektionen, 2011:7, p. 6). 15 out of the 22 inspected schools fell short on practicing communicative skills, according to the report (Skolinspektionen, 2011:7, p. 7). In addition, the report from the Swedish Schools Inspectorate discusses teachers’ awareness of the importance of target language communication, as well as pupils’ willingness to learn how to express themselves and communicate in English (Skolinspektionen, 2011:7, p. 23). Despite both teachers and pupils agreeing on its importance, only 20% of the inspected lessons are considered to provide enough possibilities for practicing communication (Skolinspektionen, 2011:7, p. 23).

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1 EFL = English as a foreign language
In fact, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate found some classes in year 6-9 where there was no use of the target language at all (Skolinspektionen, 2011:7, pp. 6-7).

1.1. Aim and research questions
How should EFL teachers in year 4-6 in Sweden use the target language in order for it to be as beneficial as possible for their students? There seems to be a gap between what is intended in the Swedish curriculum, and how practicing teachers conduct their English lessons. In this thesis I will investigate what research has found regarding target language use in the EFL classroom. I will also explore what different views there might be on communicating in English during English lessons – who is expected to speak, when are they expected to speak, and what consequences can it have on pupils’ language abilities? The aim of this thesis is to examine what previous research says about to what extent teachers should use the target language, in this case English, in the EFL classroom.

Research questions:
1) What does previous research say about the advantages or disadvantages of target language instruction in the EFL classroom?
2) What are teachers’ motives for using the first language in the EFL classroom?

2. Background
In this section, a definition of the language terms will be presented, and different views on instructional language in the EFL classroom will be accounted for. This section covers reasons and arguments for using the target language use, and presents Krashen’s (2004) comprehensible input hypothesis, which is a part of Krashen’s (1982) Second Language Acquisition Theory (see section 3.). This section also presents criticism of the Second Language Acquisition Theory as well as research on the benefits of first language use.

2.1. Definition of language terms
There are different terms for pupils’ first language, as well as for target language. For example, Hall and Cook use ‘own’ language, to emphasize that the pupils’ first language is intended, and not the teachers’, or that of the country or region (2012, p. 274). In the same way, the word ‘new’ is used on the notion that ‘second’ or ‘L2’ might not always be accurate, since there is a possibility that pupils know more than one language. Other common terms are ‘L1’ and ‘L2’, which are short terms for ‘First language’ and ‘Second language’. This thesis will continuously use ‘first language’ and ‘target language’, where ‘first language’ refers to pupils’ first or own language, and ‘target language’ intends either English or Japanese, as one of the reviewed studies (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2014) is partly conducted in EFL classrooms in Japan, and partly in Japanese as a foreign language classrooms in North America.

2.2. Reasons for using the target language
There are different reasons for using, or not using, the target language in the classroom. A common misunderstanding among pupils in the EFL classroom, is that they have to understand every single word in order to comprehend what is being said (Lundberg 2010, p. 24). This may lead to a situation where the pupils demand a direct translation, which in its turn, will lead to pupils neglecting the English message, because they expect to hear everything in Swedish anyway (Lundberg, 2010, p. 24; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002, p. 206). Therefore, Lundberg suggests that it is counterproductive to put too much emphasis on translation (2010, p. 24). Translating texts from English to Swedish instead of focusing on understanding the message
can hinder pupils from developing their communicative abilities (Lundberg, 2010, p. 24). Lundberg argues that learning English via English is the goal of communicative language teaching, and that pupils should not get used to learning English via their first language (2010, p. 24). If the teacher uses the target language, pupils will be motivated to learn, as they will notice the immediate use of the target language (Turnbull & Arnett, 2002, p. 206).

Lundberg describes guessing competence as a competence pupils should have the opportunity to develop in the EFL classroom (2010, p. 24-25). Guessing competence means that the language learner is able to use clues of different kinds in order to understand the message in what is being said or written (Lundberg, 2010, p. 25). Pupils with a developed guessing competence will use their established language skills to learn more, and they will be able to think in English, a skill that is very useful in further studies (Lundberg, 2010, p. 25).

In order for the pupils to feel comfortable expressing themselves in a language they do not fully master, it is important that the teacher leads by example (Lundberg, 2010, p. 26). By listening to their teacher, the pupils will learn the language (Lundberg, 2010, p. 26). Therefore, it is important that the teacher has both the linguistic competence, and is comfortable using body language and facial expressions to aid the pupils in perceiving the message in what is being communicated (Lundberg, 2010, p. 26). How the teacher signals his or her feelings regarding the English language affects pupils’ motivation to learn, and the attitudes towards the English language that pupils encounter in the early school years, will affect how they develop their English language skills in the future (Lundberg, 2010, p. 26).

2.3. Comprehensible input

Krashen suggests that pupils acquire language when they receive comprehensible input (2004, p. 12). Comprehensible input, according to Krashen, is a spoken or written message whose meaning the pupil understands, even if not every word in the message is familiar to them (2004, p. 1). The Comprehension hypothesis (Krashen, 2004, p. 1) is based on Krashen’s input hypothesis, one of five hypotheses building the Second Language Acquisition theory (1982, pp. 10-32), which will be further explained in section 3 in this thesis. Krashen argues that when pupils receive comprehensible input, they will also acquire grammatical knowledge, as well as increase their vocabulary (2004, p. 1). Krashen puts comprehensible input in contrast with traditional skill-building English teaching (2004, p. 1).

Traditional skill-building English teaching, according to Krashen, assumes that pupils first have to learn vocabulary, spelling and grammatical structures, before they can make any use of it and actually produce language (2004, p. 1). Krashen describes this as a “delayed gratification approach to language education”, meaning that the right to actually use and enjoy the language can only be earned through hard work (2004, p. 1). The problem with this way of working with language teaching is that the grammatical, vocabulary and spelling systems are too complicated to be learned consciously (Krashen, 2004, p. 2). Therefore, Krashen advocates “acquisition without learning”, which is obtaining language skills without consciously trying to learn them (2004, p. 2). He points at cases showing people attaining great competence without receiving instructions on language skills, while studies on skill-building based teaching has shown that targeting for example only grammatical structures has a limited effect on language competence (Krashen 2004, p. 2). Krashen concludes that there are no cases known that show high language proficiency without comprehensible input (2004, p. 2). In addition, he argues that the skill-

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2 As the pages on the PDF were unnumbered, I will refer to pages in the order they were showed in the PDF and when printed on paper.
building perspective require pupils’ output for language to be acquired, but that the amount of output that pupils produce is too small to make a difference (Krashen, 2004, p. 2).

In order to receive enough comprehensible input to draw from, pupils need to be exposed to the language they are supposed to learn. The lack of real world exposure to the target language can be one reason teachers choose to work with skill-building instruction instead of with comprehensible input (Krashen, 2004, p. 7). Time is another issue; teachers may feel that there is not enough time in class to provide the input needed (Krashen, 2004, p. 7). Krashen suggests that pupils should be given better access to comprehensible material, both for listening and reading, and that language teaching should be based on pupils’ interests and themes that are, or are made, familiar to them (2004, p. 4; p. 7). Pupils who are provided with comprehensible input will achieve higher results on traditional language tests (grammar, spelling, vocabulary) than pupils who are subjected to traditional skill-building language teaching, according to Krashen (2004, p. 6).

2.4. Criticism of the Second Language Acquisition Theory

The Second Language Acquisition Theory does not go un-criticized. Hall and Cook argue that within the Second Language Acquisition Theory, there is a lack of research on possible positive outcomes from using pupils’ first language (2012, p. 289). They point to results showing that language learners who received translations of unfamiliar vocabulary items had better test results than learners who were instructed in the target language only, arguing that this is an under-investigated area of language acquisition (Hall & Cook, 2012, p. 289). Thus, Hall and Cook challenge the notion that English should be taught in English alone, and suggest that using pupils’ first language can in fact aid them in learning the target language (2012, pp. 271-299). Turnbull and Arnett also acknowledge that pupils’ target language acquisition may actually benefit from first language use (2002, p. 206). Using the first language can help sustain the ongoing target language activity and scaffold the target language learning, instead of hindering it (Turnbull & Arnett, 2002, p. 206).

2.5. Previous research on first language use

The quantity of teachers’ first language use in the EFL classroom varies widely (Hall & Cook, 2012, p. 285). The amount of first language use differs between countries and institutions, as well as between teachers within the same institution (Hall & Cook, 2012, p. 285). Although there are such differences in how much teachers use the first language in the EFL classroom, there are similarities in the reasons why it is used (Hall & Cook, 2012, pp. 285-286). Hall and Cook show that there are basically three categories of situations in the EFL classroom where teachers choose to use the first language: for instructing and aiding in target language learning, to manage the classroom, and for social reasons (2012, p. 286). In spite of the evident use of first language in the EFL classroom, Hall and Cook explain that many teachers consider first language use as necessary but regrettable, and that they feel guilty about resorting to pupils’ first language (2012, pp. 294-295). However, it appears that most teachers believe that the first language has its place in the EFL classroom, but that the target language should be the prevalent one in classroom interaction (Hall & Cook, 2012, p. 295).

Since the first language apparently is used in the common EFL classroom, Hall and Cook argue that it should be considered a useful resource, as it “fulfils a number of clear pedagogic functions” both linguistic, managerial and social (2012, p. 285-287). Furthermore, Hall and Cook refer to psycholinguistic, cognitive and sociocultural theories, that support the idea of using pupils’ first language to teach the target language (2012, pp. 289-292). For example, Hall
and Cook posit that using pupils’ first language in the EFL classroom is a form of scaffolding (2012, p. 291). Even so, Hall and Cook do not propose that the first language is appropriate to use at all times and in all situations in the EFL classroom, but that it is to be used judiciously; “for specific linguistic or communicative functions in the classroom” (2012, p. 292). Turnbull and Arnett agree that the first language can be used as a pedagogical tool, and that it should be used intentionally (2002, p. 207). This means that the first language should be used in a structured manner, with clear motivation for when and why it is used (Hall & Cook, 2012, p. 292-293).

3. Theoretical perspective

In this section, the theoretical perspective will be presented. This literature review has its theoretical base in Stephen Krashen’s theory of Second Language Acquisition, which is based on five hypotheses (Krashen, 1982, pp. 10-32; Krashen, 2004, pp. 3-7):

1) **The acquisition-learning distinction** means that there is a distinction between acquiring a language and learning it (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). Krashen explains acquisition as “implicit learning, informal learning, and natural learning. In non-technical language, acquisition is ‘picking-up’ a language” (1982, p. 10). This means that a person acquires language by hearing and reading it rather than by studying its structures and rules or translating vocabulary (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). The process of acquiring a language and language competence is subconscious, as the language acquirer is focused on the communicative function of the language and not on its structure. The language acquirer develops a ‘feel’ for the language and can sense when errors are made, even if the particular rule that was waived cannot be pointed out (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). Learning (as opposed to acquiring) is to study the grammatical structures of the language, and getting to know it by learning its rules. This is a conscious way to learn a language, which Krashen argues is more like knowing about the language, instead of actually acquiring it. Adult learners can use both these ways to learn a new language (Krashen, 1982, p. 10).

2) **The natural order hypothesis** holds that there is a natural order in which language learners acquire certain grammatical rules. For example, morphemes that are typically acquired early are the progressive marker -ing (for example “she is running”) and plural marker -s (as in two birds). Krashen argues that this is true for both first- and second language acquisition (1982, p. 12).

3) **The monitor hypothesis** suggests that when a language acquirer uses his/her second language to communicate, he/she can use what is learned about the language to monitor and self-correct what he/she is saying. Krashen posits that “formal rules, or conscious learning, play only a limited role in second language performance”, as there are several conditions that need to be met in order for the language user to monitor his/her speech (Krashen, 1982, p. 16).

4) **The input hypothesis** posits that in order to acquire a language, the learner must receive input in that language. Said input needs to be on a level that the language acquirer understands, but also contain something new (Krashen, 1982, pp. 20-21). In later work, Krashen (2004) explains that mere input does not suffice, but that the input needs to be comprehensible for the language acquirer, and therefore, the term comprehensible input is more fitting (Krashen, 2004, p. 1). Context and extra-linguistic information such as facial expression and gestures will aid the language acquirer in understanding the additional, unknown information (Krashen, 1982 p. 21).
5) **The affective filter hypothesis** states that there are attitude-related factors, which affect language acquisition abilities (Krashen, 1982, pp. 30-31). Krashen argues that there are three categories in which these factors would fit in: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. High motivation, self-confidence and low anxiety in a language acquirer will result in a low or weak affective filter, according to Krashen. A language acquirer with a low or weak affective filter is open towards acquiring new language, and will also retain the new knowledge easier than a language acquirer with a high affective filter (Krashen, 1982, p. 31).

As hypothesis (1) and (3) mostly concern adult language acquirers, this thesis will mainly draw on the input/comprehension hypothesis (4), and the affective filter hypothesis (5). The natural order hypothesis (2) is interesting, but since Krashen (1982, p. 14) does not recommend planning language teaching according to the hypothesis, it will not be used in the analysis of this thesis.

Krashen and Terrell put emphasis on the fact that according to the Second Language Acquisition theory, “comprehension precedes production” (1983, p. 20). This means that understanding a message is something you learn before being able to communicate one yourself (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 20). Furthermore, language production develops in stages, which means that the language acquirer will start off at a very basic level of communication, sometimes not even using any words at all (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 20). Later on, the language acquirer will acquire more language and will be able to communicate with more words and eventually produce full sentences (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 20). Krashen and Terrell stress the importance of not trying to force pupils to speak if they do not feel ready to do so (1983, p. 20). Neither should pupils be corrected if they make errors that do not affect the communication (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 20). This is because language is acquired through comprehensible input, and not by correction of errors, which may help learning, but not acquisition (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 20). Communication is always the goal in language teaching, according to Krashen and Terrell, and it is important that the teacher creates and upholds an environment in the classroom where language acquirers have a low affective filter (1983, pp. 20-21). This is achieved by focusing on the pupils’ interests, and by good relationships between teacher and pupils, as well as a friendly atmosphere amongst the pupils (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 21).

### 4. Method and materials

The method for this thesis will be presented in this section. Design and selection strategies, as well as ethical considerations, will be accounted for.

#### 4.1. Design

This thesis is a systematic literature review of research articles that are relevant to the aim of the thesis. The reviewed articles have been read and analyzed, and relevant findings have been categorized and then compiled to answer the research questions of this thesis (Eriksson Barajas, Forsberg & Wengstrom, 2013, p. 31).

#### 4.2. Search and selection strategies

Searches were carried out in ERIC, Google Scholar, MLA International Bibliography, Libris, and LLBA (Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts), as well as in the university library and in previous theses. Search words used in the databases were: target language use, elementary school, English (second language), English medium instruction, young learners,
EFL, English as a medium of instruction, and elementary school. No Swedish search words were used. A search table is presented in Appendix 1.

The articles have been chosen by criteria of relevance, age of the pupils in question in the studies, and when the article was written (2006 and forward). 110 titles were read in total, and 13 abstracts out of those titles. After ruling out seven articles due to said criteria, six articles were chosen for further analysis. These six articles were read, and after that, one article was discarded since it was not relevant for the research questions of this thesis. After this, no further searches were carried out.

It is possible that a different use or combination of the search words in the different databases would have generated another result. For example, no Swedish article on target language use was found, which would have been interesting to include, considering this thesis’ country of origin. Nevertheless, due to a limited time frame to complete the thesis, the search was ended after finding five relevant articles.

4.3. Analysis
The results of the studies reviewed have been categorized, and relevant findings have been structured and compiled to answer the research questions. The sources have been read multiple times, and have been mirrored continuously in the aim of the thesis as well as in the background literature and the theoretical perspective (Ériksson Barajas et al., 2013, p. 164).

4.4. Ethical aspects
When writing a literature review, there is always the risk of one’s own opinion or beliefs affecting the result. To avoid that, background literature and the analyzed sources have been selected for their varying perspectives on target language and/or first language use in the EFL classroom, in order to present an as objective result as possible (Ériksson Barajas et al., 2013, p. 70). The optimal way to conduct this review would have been to use all sources available that could be of relevance for the thesis (Ériksson Barajas et al., 2013, p. 31). However, since time is an issue, the focus has been to find diverse sources that are relevant for the aim of the thesis, rather than to find as many sources as possible.

Ethical aspects have been taken into consideration in the reviewed articles as well. For example, there is teacher and pupil anonymity, participation is voluntary, and parental approval is asked for when needed. The authors of these sources also discuss different factors that may affect the outcome of the studies. For instance, the presence of researchers may influence how participants behave, and participants who are interviewed might over- or underestimate the amount of target language or first language they use in the EFL classroom. Several of the analyzed articles use multiple methods to avoid these factors making too big of an impact on the results (see Table 1, Section 5.).

5. Results
Five studies have been reviewed and analysed. Table 1 shows a brief presentation of the studies, the focus of the studies and what has been found. In order to keep the table easy to survey, TL and L1 is used for target language and first language respectively. Population refers to the participants in focus of the study, which in four of the studies are primary or elementary school teachers. In the fifth study (Lee & Macaro, 2013), although teachers took
part in the study, pupils’ and students’ results were in focus. Therefore, pupils and students are listed as the population of the study.

**Table 1. Presentation of reviewed articles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author (year)</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inbar-Lourie (2010)</td>
<td>Collecting data on teachers’ L1 use in YLL(^2) classrooms.</td>
<td>Classroom observations, self-report questionnaire, semi-structured interviews.</td>
<td>6 teachers from 4 schools in Israel (2 Hebrew, 2 Arabic), teaching 6-8-year-olds.</td>
<td>Varying amount of L1 use. L1 is used for instruction, classroom management and for affective purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krulatz, Neokleous and Vik Henningsen (2016)</td>
<td>Investigating extent of teachers’ TL use and teachers’ beliefs about TL use in a country where teachers are not required by the curriculum to use TL as the medium of instruction.</td>
<td>Online survey</td>
<td>55 primary school teachers in Norway.</td>
<td>Varying amount of TL use. No evidence on difference between regulated TL use or not. TL mostly used for everyday conversation and praise, as well as some instructions and activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oga-Baldwin and Nakata (2014)</td>
<td>Finding out how teachers manage the use of pupils’ L1 to support use of TL in the successful foreign language classroom.</td>
<td>Observations, field notes, audio and/or video recordings.</td>
<td>3 teachers at 2 North American schools, teaching Japanese as a foreign language to 5-11-year-olds, and 3 teachers at 2 Japanese schools, teaching English as a foreign language to 10-12-year-olds.(^4)</td>
<td>L1 is used mainly to signal language use, tight transitions between activities, using the new language sound system for L1 words, and TL routines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbidge and Chappell (2014)</td>
<td>Investigate how and for what reasons language teachers use TL and L1 in the elementary EFL classroom.</td>
<td>Interviews, observations, video recordings, notes and recall sessions.</td>
<td>4 teachers in grades 3-6, in 4 elementary schools in South Korea.</td>
<td>L1 was mainly used to maintain pupil motivation, to scaffold learning and to create a comfortable learning environment. TL was used mostly to practice communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee and Macaro (2013)</td>
<td>Examining the impact of using pupils L1 versus English only, in instructing vocabulary learning in an activity that is meaning-focused, and whether learners’ age is a factor.</td>
<td>Using standardized material, target words, and instructional sessions in code-switching(^3) and English-only condition respectively. Testing participants on target vocabulary.</td>
<td>443 6th-graders at 2 elementary schools, and 286 college students at 4 colleges in South Korea.</td>
<td>In the vocabulary acquisition tests, code-switching was found to be more efficient for young learners, than English-only instruction. Both age groups benefited from code-switching, and young learners more so than adult learners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that observation is the most common method. All studies show interest in teachers’ choices of language use in the EFL classrooms, and the effect it may have on pupils’ language proficiency. The main findings reveal similarities in teachers’ language preferences in the EFL classroom.

### 5.1. Teachers’ language use in the EFL classroom

In the reviewed research articles, the teachers' language use was measured by observations in three, and in the study conducted by Krulatz, Neokleous and Vik Henningsen (2016), teachers themselves estimated their own use of the target language in the EFL classroom (p. 143). All

\(^3\) YLL = Young language learner

\(^4\) These schools’ programme goal was “to promote positive affect for the foreign language”, English and Japanese respectively (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata 2014, p. 419).

\(^5\) Code-switching means alternating first- and target language.
four of these studies compiled the results in percentage use of teachers’ either first- or target language use in the EFL classroom. In the following table, only percentage use of target language is presented.

**Table 2. Percentage use of teachers’ target language use**

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target language use ranges between 24.4-83.2% (p. 359).</td>
<td>3 participants estimated oral target language use to be below 15%. 38% of the participants claim to use more than 55% oral target language. The majority indicates that 15-75% of classroom communication is conducted in the target language (pp. 143-146).</td>
<td>86-100% target language use (p. 413).</td>
<td>Average target language use: 92%. Participants state a target language use from 50-80%. (p. 11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Lee and Macaro (2013), the amount of teacher language use was not measured. Instead, the focus of the study was to measure the effects of teacher language use on pupils’ vocabulary acquisition (p. 890).

### 5.1.1. Teachers’ target language use

Teachers in these studies mainly use the target language for everyday conversation, to give positive feedback, to give instructions, ask questions, and conduct class activities (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, pp. 361-362; Krulatz, Neokleous & Vik Henningsen, 2016, p. 145). One important reason for target language use in the EFL classroom is increasing the target language exposure to provide opportunities for the pupils to develop their language proficiency (Rabbidge & Chappell, 2014, p. 8). Teachers also express that they want to help pupils to enjoy learning, and present a positive outlook on the target language (Rabbidge & Chappell, 2014, p. 8). To avoid relating stress to the target language, teachers use target language activities focused on communication, rather than using it during “traditional grammar-based activities” (Rabbidge & Chappell, 2014, p. 8). While some teachers do not include age and/or level of pupil proficiency as a deciding factor in using first- or target language, others express that a young age and/or low proficiency will result in a lesser amount of target language use (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, p. 360-363; Krulatz, Neokleous & Vik Henningsen, 2016, p. 146; Rabbidge & Chappell, 2014, pp. 12-13).

Teachers use games and songs in the target language as an alternative to resorting to the first language, and in order to create familiarity in the pupils (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, pp. 361-363; Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2014, p. 417). The teachers in Oga-Baldwin and Nakata’s study use physical and/or musical routines in a warm-up session, before conducting activities and games with focus on repetition of the target language intended for the particular lesson (2014, pp. 417-418). As the pupils grow familiar with these routines, they will build confidence, and the teacher can expand the use of target language (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2014, p. 418). The teachers in Oga-Baldwin and Nakata’s (2014) study show the highest amount of target language use among the teachers observed or interviewed in the reviewed studies (see Table 2, Section 5.1.1.). Oga-Baldwin and Nakata attribute the high target language use to the teachers’ abilities to form a classroom culture that is positive, and to using the pupils’ first language to give prompt instruction and facilitate use of the target language (2014, p. 419). These teachers maintain a
quick pace in the classroom, with little time in-between activities, thus preventing pupils from being distracted and falling back into first language use, or talking to each other (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2014, p. 419).

5.1.2. Teachers’ first language use
Although the amount of first language use in the classroom differs, both between teachers in the same study (especially in Inbar-Lourie, 2010, p. 359 and Krulatz, Neokleous & Vik Henningsen, 2016, p. 143) and among the results in the different studies, the reasons for using first language in the EFL classroom appear to be the same for those who use it. The teachers in the studies use the pupils’ first language to instruct, translate, scaffold, explain, and facilitate and confirm learning, to discipline and criticize, and to give feedback and positive reinforcement (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, pp. 359-360; Krulatz, Neokleous & Vik Henningsen, 2016, p. 145; Rabbidge & Chappell, 2014, pp. 7-13).

In Oga-Baldwin and Nakata’s study, the amount of first language use is quite small, compared to the other studies (2014, p. 413). When the first language is used, it is used by the teachers to explain and confirm comprehension, and by pupils to explain what the teacher has said in English, as a way for the teacher to keep to the target language as much as possible (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2014, pp. 415-416). The teachers also use single words in the first language in otherwise English (or Japanese) sentences, to keep the pupils focused on the target language (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2014, p. 417). This is done mostly with words unrelated to the ongoing lesson, and that have not been introduced to the pupils earlier (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2014, p. 416).

One of the participants in Inbar-Lourie’s study expresses that there are really no options available, for, as she says; “…there is no choice but to use Arabic. How would the pupils learn the language if I don’t use Arabic?” (2010, p. 361). Further along in the interview, she explains the reason: the pupils’ parents do not know much English, and the pupils themselves are not exposed to English except for in school (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, p. 362). Similarly, but with more focus on the pupils’ preferences, the participants in Rabbidge and Chappell’s study believe that pupils need first language use in class in order to keep up motivation, and that it is required to aid low level pupils (2014, p. 8; p. 13). In opposition to the 2001 TETE policy6 these teachers declare that a total ban of first language in the EFL classroom is practically impossible (Rabbidge & Chappell, 2014, p. 7).

5.1.3. Teachers’ language use and pupils’ vocabulary acquisition
Lee and Macaro (2013) conducted a research study comparing different groups of pupils’ vocabulary acquisition after attending EFL classes with either an English-only condition, or a Code-switching condition. They found that in all aspects of their research, the classroom setting where the teacher used code-switching was more beneficial for vocabulary acquisition with young EFL learners (Lee & Macaro, 2013, p. 894). Based on these results, Lee and Macaro suggest that first language use has its place in EFL teaching, and that for young learners, a “gradual approach for young and beginner learners is preferable” (2013, p. 897). This is based on findings in their study, showing that young learners “not only learn vocabulary better by being presented with L1 equivalents”, but also indicate that pupils prefer first language use in the EFL classroom (Lee & Macaro, 2013, p. 897).

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6 The 2001 TETE policy = A ‘Teaching English Through English’ policy introduced in South Korea to increase pupils’ exposure to the English language.
6. Discussion
The aim of this thesis was to examine what research says about to what extent teachers should use the target language, English, in the EFL classroom, by answering these questions:

1) What does previous research say about the advantages or disadvantages of target language instruction in the EFL classroom?
2) What are teachers’ motives for using the first language in the EFL classroom?

6.1. Result discussion
6.1.1. Advantages and disadvantages of target language instruction
The major advantage of target language instruction in the EFL classroom is that it provides pupils with input and target language exposure (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2014, p. 418-419; Rabbidge & Chappell, 2014, p. 8). Whether or not the target language use is high or low, providing target language input is something all teachers in Inbar-Lourie’s (2010) study bring up as well. This is supported by Krashen’s (1982; 2004) comprehensible input hypothesis, and as the teachers express that mere exposure to the language is beneficial, regardless of pupils’ own production, this is in line with Krashen and Terrell (1983, p. 20), who posit that production follows comprehension.

The target language is mostly used for conversation and positive feedback, as well as giving instructions and conducting activities (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, pp. 361-362; Krulatz, Neokleous & Vik Henningsen, 2016, p. 145). Teachers in the studies express that they wish to help the pupils feel comfortable and confident in using the target language (Rabbidge & Chappell, 2014, p. 8). In order to achieve this, teachers rely on communication exercises, rhymes, musical and physical activities, as well as familiar routines (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2014, p. 417-419; Rabbidge & Chappell p. 8). According to Krashen and Terrell (1983) as well as Lundberg (2010), communication in the target language is essential, and as described by the Swedish National Agency for Education, communicative abilities are to be in focus in teaching English (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 20-21; Lundberg, 2010, p. 24; Skolverket 2011a, p. 6). Thus, using the target language in the EFL classroom seems inevitable if the curriculum goals are to be fulfilled. When teachers aim to create a comfortable learning environment, parallels to Krashens’ (1982, p. 31) affective filter hypothesis can also be drawn. This also echoes Lundberg, who states that the teacher’s attitude towards the target language will affect pupils’ future language development (201, p. 26).

The disadvantages of using target language as the main medium of instruction is, according to several of the participants in the studies, that less proficient pupils need scaffolding in form of first language use, in order to be able to participate and learn (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, pp. 361-362; Rabbidge & Chappell, 2014, p. 8; p. 13). Several teachers in the different studies also feel that keeping pupils focused and motivated is difficult using only target language. Lundberg (2010, p. 24) suggests that it would be the other way around; if pupils become used to having things explained in the first language, they will not be motivated to learn the target language, a perspective that is also brought up by Turnbull and Arnett (2002, p. 206). Furthermore, Lundberg posits that pupils’ communicative abilities would suffer from learning target language via the first language (2010, p. 24).

Lee and Macaro’s (2013) study on vocabulary acquisition revealed that there might be a disadvantage to using target language instruction when introducing new vocabulary items to young language learners. In all tests on vocabulary acquisition, results revealed that a code-
switching classroom environment was more beneficial than exclusive target language use (Lee & Macaro, 2013, p. 893). This speaks against Krashen, who suggests that pupils who are provided with comprehensible target language input do better on vocabulary tests than traditionally taught pupils (2004, p. 6), but is supported by Hall and Cook’s reference to tests on new vocabulary, where pupils who received first language instruction achieved better results than pupils who were instructed in the target language only (2012, p. 289).

6.1.2. Teachers’ motives for first language use
Teachers’ first language use varies widely in the studies, from a few teachers using mostly first language, to one teacher not using any first language at all (see Table 2, Section 5.1.). Many of the teachers report that they use the first language for affective reasons, to aid comprehension and instruct, and to discipline and manage classroom situations (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, pp. 359-360; Krulatz, Neokleous & Vik Henningsen, 2016, p. 145; Rabbidge & Chappell, 2014, pp. 7-13). The studies also show use of the first language as a way of scaffolding and aiding less proficient pupils (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, pp. 359-360; Krulatz, Neokleous & Vik Henningsen, 2016, p. 145; Rabbidge & Chappell, 2014, pp. 7-13). These results correspond with Hall and Cook’s description of teachers’ first language use (2012, p. 285). Apparently, many teachers feel that first language use is both unavoidable and necessary, and, like Hall and Cook (2012, pp. 285-287) describe, there seems to be several pedagogically grounded reasons for first language use in the EFL classroom. For instance, Oga-Baldwin and Nakata (2014), present some good examples of first language use that facilitate increased target language use. As Hall and Cook (2012, p. 292) as well as Turnbull and Arnett (2002, pp. 206-207) emphasize, the first language is to be used judiciously, specifically when it fulfills linguistic or communicative purposes.

The results in Inbar-Lourie’s (2010) study, as well as the answers collected in Krulatz, Neokleous and Vik Henningsen (2016), indicate that teachers’ language use is based on the individual teachers’ choice of language teaching strategies. As seen earlier, one teacher motivates her high percentage of first language use with pupils’ lack of input outside of school (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, pp. 361-362). However, another teacher also voices this concern, and motivates her high amount of target language use in the EFL classroom with the same reason; “I think it is important to expose the pupils to the English language and to use it as much as possible” (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, p. 363). Thus, two teachers with pupils in the same linguistic circumstances use different strategies for teaching language to pupils who are not exposed to the target language in a natural way outside of the classroom; one teacher chooses to decrease first language use in order for the pupils to understand, while the other makes the decision to increase target language use, to provide sufficient input (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, p. 364). Hall and Cook have also reached the conclusion that even though most teachers think the target language should be prevalent in the EFL classroom, the idea that the first language is of importance is also harbored by most teachers (2012, p. 295). However, teachers’ guilt connected to first language use, as described by Hall & Cook (2012, pp. 294-295) is not prominent in the studies reviewed in this thesis. As Rabbidge and Chappell’s (2014, p.12) study revealed, the participating teachers made individual choices based on what they felt that the pupils needed, even if it meant overriding a government policy.

6.2. Method discussion
The different studies reviewed in this thesis have been conducted in different ways, with varying methods, populations and ways of measuring results. That makes it difficult to compile the results in a satisfying way. Some similarities in teachers’ teaching methods and choices of
language use have been shown, but wide differences are also evident. This is not necessarily negative, but only mirrors the heterogeneous selection of research articles.

All the authors of the reviewed studies express that there are limitations in both methods and population. This thesis is admittedly a mere scratch on the surface. Time is the crucial factor, along with lack of experience in conducting searches for relevant studies. No article or study focusing on EFL classrooms in Sweden was found, although the study on Norway might be considered equivalent. When six relevant articles were selected, the search for articles was ended. After that, one article was discarded after reading, due to the fact that it had a different focus. This would have made the results difficult to compile with the already heterogeneous group of studies considering the amount of time given to complete the review and finish the thesis.

7. Conclusion
The results from the five reviewed studies imply that both target language and first language have their place in the EFL classroom. They also indicate that vocabulary acquisition and communicative skills call for different language approaches, and that different language theories apply to different teaching situations. If the curriculum for English in Swedish schools is to be followed, target language use and communication is a must. To address teachers who believe pupils will not understand if they are spoken to in English, there are clear examples showing that that is not necessarily the case. However, a total exclusion of first language use is not called for, since it is evident that it is pedagogically motivated to use first language in the EFL classroom. Nevertheless, the amount of first language and target language use respectively seems to vary widely between individual teachers, and further research on the consequences for pupils’ language proficiency would be needed. However interesting it is to find out how teachers conduct their EFL lessons, and how they motivate their choices, it is the outcome of those choices that truly matter.

Therefore, further investigations that focus more on the purposes for using either first- or target language would need to be conducted. Perhaps it is not as much a question of how much first- or target language is used, but when it is used, how, and by whom. Additionally, the pupils’ perspective would need more research, concerning both pupils’ preferences, and in what situations they benefit from target language and first language respectively. As an aspiring teacher in Sweden, I would welcome the opportunity to find out more about teachers’ choices of language of instruction in the EFL classroom, as well as the effects this choice has on pupils’ learning experience and language competence.
References


## Appendix 1 – Search Table

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Manual search:
Krulatz, Neokleous and Vik Henningsen (2016) was found as it was listed as citing Inbar-Lourie (2010). Oga-Baldwin and Nakata (2014) was found in a previous thesis.