Interaction in the CLIL classroom
Comparing English interaction in two 7th grade classes in Sweden

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Abstract

Titel: Interaction in the CLIL classroom – A comparison between two Swedish 7th grade classes

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to study the extent to which English as a target language is used by CLIL students, compared to an all Swedish class, in classroom interaction. Another aim is to find out if boys and girls interact to the same degree and whether their physical position in the classroom can be related to their oral participation. This was investigated by making classroom observations in two classes in the seventh grade: one CLIL class where English was the medium of instruction in a number of subjects 50% of the time and one traditional class which was taught all subjects through Swedish. The results show that the CLIL students used English to a much larger extent in classroom interaction than did the students in the all Swedish class. Furthermore, the amount of interaction revealed no gender differences. The study of the students' physical position in the classroom showed that the boys who sat in the front of the classroom tended to speak more English compared to the ones who sat in the back. For the girls the opposite pattern was found, since it was the girls in the back who spoke more English than the girls in the front.

Nyckelord: CLIL, interaction in English, classroom position.
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1. Introduction and aim

When teaching English as a foreign language, many teachers might find it easier to use the students' first language as the medium of instruction (Cook, 2008:4). The amount of foreign language input is therefore likely to be rather low, and, as a consequence, students might be less likely to use the target language themselves. One way of making students use the target language to a greater extent is to use the target language as the medium of instruction. For instance, it has been argued that the majority of an English lesson should be conducted in English because it is important to have the students speak the target language as much as possible (see e.g. Cook, 2008:4). In accordance with this view, there are schools that use a foreign language as the medium of instruction not only in the foreign language classroom but in other subjects as well. The method is called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (språk- och innehållsintegrerad införning och undervisning (SPRINT) in Swedish) and it is used in approximately 4% of Sweden's secondary schools (Nixon, 2000:3). However, CLIL is not an entirely new phenomenon; the method now referred to as CLIL was used in European schools as long ago as medieval times, when Latin was the language of instruction (Dalton-Puffer, 2007:2). CLIL takes many different forms; it can for example be used in a three-day-long thematic project in year 6 at compulsory school or during three years of studies at upper secondary school (Nixon, 2000:4). However, in compulsory school no more than 50% of each subject is allowed to be conducted in English (Sveriges Riksdag, 2003). By teaching subjects through the medium of a foreign language, the time during which students come in contact with the language is extended without taking time from the teaching of the subject. This way of teaching has shown consistent success over many years (Nixon, 2000:7).

A survey completed by Nixon shows studies where the students' ability to use the target language has improved as have their attitudes towards language and language learning and the culture and values associated with the target language (Nixon, 2000:44).

The importance of extending students' use of English in the classroom becomes evident when studying the differences between student and teacher talk. Teacher talk takes up 70% of the utterances made in class, leaving only 30% to students (Cook, 2008:156). Studies made on classroom interaction have shown that conversations between student and teacher is the best way for students to exercise their skills in the target language and therefore the interaction between teacher and student is an important part of language learning and an interesting point to study (Chaudron, 1988:118).
The aim of this paper is to study the extent to which English as a target language is used by CLIL students in classroom interaction. Secondary aims are to find out if boys and girls interact to the same degree in English, and whether students' physical position in the classroom can be related to their oral participation. An all Swedish class will also be studied and used as a comparison to the CLIL class.

2. Background

In this section I will discuss the use of the mother tongue in the English classroom and also look closer at CLIL. Furthermore, there will be a section about classroom interaction, gender differences and the importance of students' position in the classroom.

2.1 Second language learning

In the 20th century, the mother tongue was rejected as a tool for the classroom when learning a new language (Cook, 2008:180), and most of the teaching methods that were popular in the 20th century also tried to avoid relying on the students' first language in the classroom. Furthermore, researchers argued that the use of the mother tongue during lessons should be kept to a minimum, and, at best, it should become completely invisible in the classroom, both when writing and speaking. Nevertheless, many teachers find it natural to start their lessons in the students' mother tongue, for example when taking the register. The first language might also slip in during the lessons when the teacher tries to explain something difficult (Cook, 2008:179).

The reason for students to switch to their mother tongue during their foreign language lessons could be that they feel insecure about their own knowledge of the target language. When students know one language better than the other, it is natural that they switch to the language they feel more confident speaking. Since their mother tongue is often shared with most of their classmates, they know that it is possible to use that language if necessary, even though they know they are supposed to speak the target language (Simon, 2001:336). This kind of switching between two or more languages within the same conversation is called code-switching (Halmari, 2004:115). It can consist of single word switches, phrases or clauses. When one only switches one word it is called a single word switch and when one switches whole phrases it is a phrase switch. When an entire clause is changed into the L1 it is a clause
switch. The most common switch, according to Cook, is the single word switch with 84%. Then there are 10% phrase switches and 6% clause switches (Cook, 2008:180).

Some researchers see code-switching as a sign of target language shortcomings (Halmari, 2004:139; Krashen, 1981:67). On the other hand, code-switching can be seen as providing an opportunity for the second language learner to practice the target language in a safe environment with other equals, meaning that code-switching can be used when one needs to explain something or ask a question. The possibility to use their first language sometimes, might make second language learners feel safer (Halmari, 2004:118).

There are different opinions as to how a second language can best be acquired. Some claim that it is enough with only classroom instruction while others say that more natural acquisition, with exposure to the language in natural settings, is required (Chaudron, 1988:4). Many scholars claim that languages are best learnt in a natural setting, with exposure to the language outside the classroom, but since most second language learners never get many opportunities to engage in a natural target language environment, the instructions and the interaction in the language classroom are of great importance. It has actually been argued that a formal exposure, i.e. in the classroom context, favours language learning more than a natural exposure to L2, the reason for that being that the classroom instructions can be controlled in a different way (Chaudron, 1988:4). Krashen claims that the classroom should provide the learners with comprehensible target language input in a safe and supportive environment. As long as the instructions and the input are comprehensible and at an appropriate level just above the learners' stage, the learners should be able to progress in their acquisition of a second language (Chaudron, 1988:6).

2.2 CLIL

Second language instructions generally occur in two contexts: the “foreign language context” and the “second language context” (Chaudron, 1988:5). The former one is relevant to the majority of language learners and means that the learner acquires the target language without much natural use of it in the surrounding society. This would mean that the language is usually treated as any other school subject, like mathematics or history, in which terminology and rules are taught, tests are taken and homework is given. The second one, the “second language context” means that the target language does not have to be the content of instruction but it is the medium of instruction. In this case, the target language is supposed to
be the only one used for communication. This is an additional challenge to the teachers who have to predict the learners’ needs for additional instructions and explanations. Predicting the learners’ needs may involve modifying the language used for instructions and social relations as well as problems concerning material and other tasks (Chaudron, 1988:5).

There are schools that practice the second language concept and even though any second or foreign language can be used, English is the language that is used most commonly (Dalton-Puffer, 2007:2). This way of teaching, i.e. CLIL, became more and more popular in Europe during the 1990s (Dalton-Puffer, 2007:2). One of the reasons is that the world has become more and more globalized and that puts pressure on the education systems to provide students with the needed skills to survive in the new globalized world (Dalton-Puffer, 2007:1). A problem with many language classrooms today, Dalton-Puffer points out, is that there are few opportunities to practice the target language in natural settings, since the language is taught in a classroom in an environment with only second or foreign language learners. What CLIL is trying to change is the environment for learning, by exposing the students to the target language in more than one subject. Over the last decades, several researchers have, according to Dalton-Puffer, addressed the concern that classrooms are often considered places where languages cannot be learnt. Therefore, CLIL might be one way of learning a language in more natural settings (Dalton-Puffer, 2007:2). CLIL classrooms are not typical language classrooms since the language is not the subject to be learnt, it is just the medium used to learn another subject, such as biology or history. Subjects like these involve an extensive vocabulary that you might not learn during English classes. This can lead to thrilling discussions and an excellent chance to practice the target language in a more natural way (Dalton-Puffer, 2007:3).

The target languages that are most often associated with CLIL in Sweden are English (75.5%), German (8%) and French (6%). The major subjects incorporated with these languages are history, social science, mathematics and music, but as many as 18 other subjects from the national curriculums are also included (Nixon, 2000:3). There are probably no subjects that cannot be integrated with the teaching of a foreign language but some subjects are apparently used to a larger extent than others. In Germany, for example, subjects like biology, history, geography and politics are frequently taught through English, while subjects like mathematics, sports and music are considered less appropriate to integrate. However, which subjects that are integrated depend a great deal on the purpose of the
integration (Nixon, 2000:24). If the purpose is to make students fluent in the target language as quickly as possible, then a subject with a limited technical vocabulary is best, such as mathematics. If the purpose is to help students become less self-conscious, then it might be best to integrate music, art or sports. Such subjects give students the opportunity to speak the target language in more relaxed settings, where using correct grammar is not the most important thing. If, on the other hand, the purpose is to find volumes of material and opportunities to use the target language in contexts of discussion, conversation and presentation, subjects such as biology, chemistry and religion might be more appropriate (Nixon, 2000:24).

At compulsory school level, about 75% of the teachers working with CLIL are qualified to teach the target language and about half of the teachers involved have qualifications to teach the target language as well as one more school subject (Nixon, 2000:3). However, at present there is no formal qualification required to work with CLIL in Sweden. The little in-service training available for teachers who work with CLIL are courses that only last for two to three weeks. Many of these courses have concentrated on improving the teachers’ command of the target language instead of considering aspects of CLIL pedagogy. It is, of course, important to improve the teachers’ command of the target language, but there are other issues that need to be considered as well. For example, the language teachers’ qualifications to teach the subjects in question and the practicalities of teaching in teams when working across subject boarders, such as when integrating social science with English (Nixon, 2000:33).

This is not the only criticism against CLIL; two of the most serious accusations against CLIL are that it only benefits the spread of English, and that it does not give the students’ first language the space it requires. This has been criticized in more countries than Sweden (Nixon, 2000:20). In compulsory school, one of the reasons for offering CLIL is to increase student motivation in the subjects. In a survey done by Nixon (2000:39), the three main reasons for schools to offer CLIL were

- to make languages as well as subjects more interesting to study and by doing so improving the standard of education.
- to attract new students.
- to introduce students to the study of foreign languages and increase the students’ command and communicative competence (Nixon, 2000:39).
Studie made on classroom interaction have shown that conversation and instructional exchanges between students and teachers provide the learners with the best opportunities to exercise their skills in the target language and to get useful feedback (Chaudron, 1988:118). Nevertheless, according to Cook (2008), approximately 70% of the utterances in most classrooms come from the teacher (Cook, 2008:156) and Tsui (1995:91) agrees when she claims that teacher talk takes up more than two-thirds of classroom talk in a teacher-fronted classroom (Tsui, 1995:91). Something that teachers everywhere struggle with is how to get students to participate more during lessons. The difficulty is to get students to answer and ask questions and to make comments and offer ideas. When students ask questions they learn more about the language and advance their knowledge, but unfortunately studies have shown that when the children start school, the amount of questions they ask is considerably reduced. Studies on classroom interaction have shown that student talk takes up on average less than 30% of the lesson in a teacher-fronted classroom (Tsui, 1995:81).

Tsui continues in the study by saying that there are several factors that contribute to students’ reluctance to speak up in class. One of the factors she found was low proficiency in English. In fact, students often knew the right answer, they just did not know how to express it in English (Tsui, 1995:82). Another reason for not participating was the fear of making mistakes and being laughed at by one’s classmates. There is often a pressure to give the right answer and that pressure rises since the students do not only have to give the right answer but they have to give it in the target language. Many students, when they feel their proficiency in English is too low, prefer to stay quiet rather than risking making a mistake. This kind of pressure can be self-imposed but it may also come from the teacher (Tsui, 1995:84). The teacher might not even know that he or she is pressuring the students to answer. Some reasons as to why the teacher demands quick answers without much silence between the question and answer is the pressure on the teacher to get through the curriculum and to stop the students from chatting and getting noisy. Teachers might be afraid that a long period of silence leads to boredom and distractions in the classroom. Another factor that keeps students from participating in class is the teacher tendency to subconsciously decide who should speak. Many teachers have a tendency to select the brighter students to answer questions since they are more likely to give the right answer and therefore saving time (Tsui, 1995:86).
However, this is not the case at all times; sometimes the student may put unrealistic pressure on her/himself. It is not surprising that students’ reluctance to speak in the classroom has to do with fear, nervousness and anxiety, since the classroom is a place with a very uneven power relationship between the students and their teacher (Tsui, 1995: 87). One way of reducing students’ anxiety is to produce an environment where they feel more confident speaking and where they are not afraid of being assessed or making mistakes. One effective way of doing this is by working in small groups. The importance of group work is well documented and it has been observed that students are much more ready to interact with their fellow classmates than with their teachers. The responses that students produce when working in groups also tend to be more complex than when they interact with their teachers (Tsui, 1995:90). This contradicts with what Chaudron (1988:118) says about conversation and instructional exchanges between students and teachers being the best way to learn.

2.4 Gender differences while interacting with the teacher

Several studies have shown that boys are the dominant gender in the classroom; they are the ones who most often interact with the teacher. Therefore it is interesting to see how much attention girls and boys get in classrooms when interacting with the teacher (Einarsson, 2003:12). Other studies have also shown that boys get more opportunities to speak and that, overall, they are more dominant in the classroom (Öhrn, 1993:11f).

In a combined study from Canada, Sweden and several other countries the results showed that girls were underrepresented in classroom interaction between student and teacher. They participated in 44 percent of the total interaction and the result was the same whether the interaction was initiated by the student or the teacher (Einarsson, 2003:19). Another observation made in 1996 showed the same result (Einarsson, 2003:21).

There are however cases where the girls are more dominant in interaction or where there are no differences between genders and typically so in social science, languages or child studies (Einarsson, 2003:21). In studies where the results have shown that boys are more dominant in classroom interaction it is often just a few boys that are dominating (Einarsson, 2003:23).

2.5 Classroom position while interacting with the teacher

Studies on classroom position have shown that students sitting in front of the classroom are selected more often by the teacher to do different tasks and, therefore, they participate more orally (Bailey & Nunan, 1996:135f). As a consequence of the extra attention students get
when sitting in the front, those students often work harder and participate more because they are closely monitored (Bailey & Nunan, 1996:135f). However, this does not mean that they have a higher level of ability, just that they get more output through interaction (Bailey & Nunan, 1996:131f).

The students in the back of the classroom are often perceived differently from the ones in the front. While the students in the front are perceived as being hard working, active and more positive to school work, the ones in the back are often described as being less motivated and less interested in school work (Bailey & Nunan, 1996:128f). They often complain that they cannot hear what the teacher says which leads to fewer opportunities for learning. The fact that the back students have a harder time being heard is not the only problem, but the back of the classroom can also be a place for students to hide, e.g. students who do not want to participate or have failed to do their homework (Bailey & Nunan, 1996:131f).

When it comes the students’ position in the classroom, studies have revealed a schematic pattern where the three first rows are defined as the front of the classroom while the two back rows are often defined as the back of the classroom (Bailey & Nunan, 1996:127f). Mostly, the front and the back are the only two places defined by students. Studies have shown that girls, when they are allowed to choose their own position in the classroom, tend to place themselves in the back of the classroom because of shyness or fear of answering questions. Boys on the other hand place themselves in the front of the room, because there they are more likely to get the teacher’s attention (Bailey & Nunan, 1996:126f).

3. Methods

My study was conducted in a Swedish secondary school of medium size and the school was situated in a medium-sized university town. Two classes in the seventh grade took part and the students were 13-14 years old. One of the classes was a CLIL class where English was the medium of instruction in all subjects 50% of the time and the other one was a traditional class which was taught through Swedish only. There were 25 students in the CLIL class and 24 students in the all Swedish class. The distribution according to gender was approximately the same in both classes, namely 12 boys and 13 girls in the CLIL class and 13 boys and 11 girls in the all Swedish class. The subjects taught in English varied, but were for example social sciences and natural science. During these lessons, when English was the medium of
instruction, they were never allowed to speak Swedish during lessons. The results of the all Swedish class served as a comparison to the results of the CLIL class.

My study was conducted with the help of classroom observations and I observed each of the two classes twice, during their English classes. Both classes had female teachers, both in their thirties. Both teachers and students were informed that I was going to observe their classroom situation, but I did not reveal the exact aim of my observations since I did not want them to be too affected by my presence. I wanted the classroom situation to be as natural as possible.

I sat at the back of the classroom during my observations and took notes. I focused on situations where the teacher and the students interacted, i.e. the activity of talking to other people or working with them (Longman), and not on how the students participated and interacted in group work. The reason for that was that it is impossible to listen to all the groups without recording them and to focus on student-teacher interaction was therefore the only possible thing to do. I also measured the occurrence of student-teacher interaction, categorizing it according to language (Swedish or English), gender (male and female students), and position in the classroom (front, middle, back).

Most of the time, the interaction took place when the teacher asked a question or if the students had any questions. I included all kinds of interaction except yes and no answers.

The students' position in the classroom was written down at the beginning of the lesson and I chose to divide the classroom into three sections: front, middle and back. When counting the utterances, i.e. the action of saying something (Longman) or the words uttered between teacher and student in their interaction. I simply noted where they were positioned in the classroom at the same time by writing F (front), M (middle) or B (back) instead of just a cross. I wrote B for boys and G for girls and then added their position by writing for example BM for a boy positioned in the middle of the classroom. I had different columns for Swedish and English utterances.

In the CLIL class there were 4 boys and 3 girls in the front of the classroom, 4 boys and 6 girls in the middle and 4 boys and 4 girls in the back. In the all Swedish class there were 3 boys and 4 girls in the front of the classroom, 6 boys and 4 girls in the middle and 4 boys and 3 girls in the back.

The students had arranged seating; the teacher changed their seating once a month and then they had to remain in that seat for the coming month. Therefore, the students had the same
seats both times I were there and it was not by their own choice they sat in the front, middle or back.

3.1 The content of the lessons
In order to outline the kind of activities the teacher had planned during my visits, a short description of each lesson will follow in subsections 3.2.1 – 3.2.4.

3.1.1 First lesson with CLIL class
The teacher started the lesson by introducing me without letting the students know why I was there. After that they had a discussion about a movie they had seen, first in groups and then in the whole class. The students spoke only English during the discussion and when speaking in front of the whole class they elaborated their answers and spoke for approximately 10-15 seconds each. After the discussion they got a quiz to work with in pairs and when they were done they talked about the answers with the whole class. The teacher asked the questions and chose a student to answer. The last exercise was a reading task that did not include much talking. To finish the lesson the teacher spoke for a while, all in English.

3.1.2 Second lesson with the CLIL class
The second lesson I attended started with a song. The students got a paper with the lyrics, but some words were missing and their task was to fill in the missing words. When they had listened to it twice they talked about it together in class and the students raised their hands when they knew the missing word. They spoke English during the entire exercise. After that they had some group work and then a reading comprehension task with questions to go through in class. The teacher asked them questions and they answered in English.

3.1.3 First lesson with the all Swedish class
The teacher started the lesson by introducing me in Swedish without letting the students know what I was doing there. Then she continued the lesson with a listening comprehension task and she explained the exercise in English, but then had to clarify it in Swedish. They went through the sentences in the exercise in class and the teacher asked questions that were answered mostly in Swedish. After that they did a reading exercise in pairs and their assignment was to understand the text and to read it to each other. To finish off the lesson she gave them an oral exercise that included both group work and a run-through in class.

3.1.4 Second lesson with the all Swedish class
The second lesson started with the teacher explaining a listening comprehension task to the students in English. Then she gave them six questions to answer while listening. They listened twice and then went over the answers in class. The teacher asked them the questions in
English and the students answered in English. Then they got a reading exercise to do in pairs that they went over in class and then the teacher finished off the lesson by giving them another oral exercise to work with in groups. She did most of her talking in English.

4. Analysis and results
In this section I will present the results from my classroom observations. Comparisons will be made between the CLIL class and the all Swedish class in order to see if the amount of target language interaction is similar or not and also to see whether the amount of interaction varies according to gender and classroom position. Since I attended two lessons each with the classes I have combined the utterances from both lessons in my comparisons leading to one combined result from the CLIL class and another one for the all Swedish class.

4.1 Overall comparison between the CLIL class and the all Swedish class
In this section I will make an overall comparison of interaction in the classroom, the total amount of utterances as well as divided into Swedish on the one hand and English on the other.

![Total number of interaction in both classes](image)

Figure 1: total amount of student utterances (Swedish + English) in student – teacher interaction.

Figure 1 clearly shows a larger amount of utterances in the CLIL class than in the all Swedish class. The reason for the discrepancy can be speculated on, since the results could have been influenced by the students reacting in different ways to my presence; the students might have felt shy to speak in front of me or spoke English in order to try to impress me.
When the utterances are divided into Swedish and English utterances it becomes clear that the CLIL class used English a great deal more than the all Swedish class.

![Number of student interactions in English and Swedish](image)

Figure 2: Total number of student interactions divided up in Swedish and English.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the all Swedish class spoke more Swedish than English. When looking at the CLIL class it is evident that they kept their Swedish to a minimum; Swedish was only uttered 17 times during two lessons. Of course, this is because they were not allowed to speak Swedish during lessons at all. Their total amount of English, however, was 102 utterances in two lessons and that is more than three times the amount of English utterances in the all Swedish class. Consequently, the all Swedish class did not speak much at all during the two lessons compared to the CLIL class. Moreover, the all English class made better use of the opportunities to speak English than the all Swedish class.

4.2 Comparison of gender and interaction
This section contains a comparison on gender and interaction between the all Swedish class and the CLIL class when it comes to interacting with the teacher in a classroom situation.
Figure 3: total amount of utterances in English, produced by boys and girls respectively.

Figure 3 clearly shows that there was no big difference between the genders, both boys and girls tended to interact with the teacher to more or less the same extent. There is only one more girl than boy in the CLIL class and two more boys than girls in the all Swedish class which means that the numbers above cannot be correlated to an uneven number of students.

When it comes to the total amount of interaction in Swedish per gender, there were bigger differences.

Figure 4: total amount of utterances in Swedish, produced by boys and girls respectively. CLIL: 12 boys, 13 girls, all Swedish: 13 boys and 11 girls.

Figure 4 shows rather inconclusive results in the two classes. In the CLIL class, the girls spoke approximately 3 times as much Swedish as the boys. In the all Swedish class on the
other hand, the boys spoke twice as much Swedish as the girls. One can only speculate on the reasons for these results, and the question will be dealt with in the discussion.

4.3 Comparison of classroom position and interaction
This section will compare results from my classroom observations in order to see if the students’ placement in the classroom correlates with their oral interaction with the teacher. As mentioned above, studies have shown that students in the front of the classroom tend to be perceived as active and hard working while students in the back tend to be seen as less motivated and less interested in school work (Bailey & Nunan, 1996:128f). The results will be analyzed depending on both class and language, i.e. Swedish or English.

All figures include the combined results from both lessons.

4.3.1 Interaction in English and position in the classroom
The results when combining the students’ interaction with their position agree with the results from previous studies on the matter.

![Number of utterances from the three classroom positions, regardless of gender](image)

Figure 5: Total amount of utterances from the three classroom positions.

These results, where both genders have been combined, show that the students in the front tended to speak more English than the students in the back. This goes for both the CLIL class and the all Swedish class. As pointed out in section 3, the division of boys and girls in the CLIL classroom was the following: front: 4 boys, 3 girls, middle: 4 boys, 6 girls, back: 4 boys, 4 girls. In the all Swedish class, the division was as follows: 3 boys, 4 girls, middle: 6 boys, 4 girls, back: 4 boys, 3 girls.
4.3.2 Boys and girls’ position in the classroom while speaking English

Figure 5 shows the number of utterances produced by the students in the CLIL class categorized according to the students’ position in the classroom and their gender.

Figure 6: Total amount of utterances in English from the three classroom positions.

Figure 6 shows that the boys in the front of the classroom tended to speak more English than the boys in the back. Among the girls the tendency was the opposite one; they spoke more when in the back of the classroom. The reason for this can be speculated on and might have to do with the fact that they feel more secure in the back and not as visible. The boys might feel more confident so they can speak when being in the front of the classroom. All this has to do with the class dynamics and might differ according to group.

The same pattern could be seen in the all Swedish class, as shown in figure 7.
Figure 7: All Swedish class students’ position in the classroom while speaking English.

The all Swedish class followed the same pattern as the CLIL class when it comes to position in the classroom while speaking English even though the number of utterances is smaller in this class. The boys spoke more in the front of the classroom and less in the back and the girls spoke more when sitting in the back of the classroom.

4.3.3 Position in classroom while speaking Swedish

As the interaction in English showed that the boys spoke more sitting in the front, the interaction in Swedish supported that result as the utterances were fewer in Swedish.

![Bar chart showing CLIL class: position in classroom while interacting with the teacher in Swedish.](chart.png)

Figure 8: CLIL students’ position in the classroom while speaking Swedish.

As can be seen in Figure 8, there are few instances of utterances in Swedish which makes it difficult to draw any conclusions when it comes to overall classroom position. It was clear that the girls in the back spoke more Swedish than the girls in the front, but speaking more overall, they also spoke more English. The boys in the back, who also produced very few utterances in English, did not utter a single word in Swedish when interacting with the teacher. In the front, the boys only uttered one Swedish phrase or word in two lessons so the conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the boys did not speak much Swedish at all. The girls spoke much more Swedish than the boys.

The results of the all Swedish class differed from those of the CLIL class when it comes to position in the classroom and the number of utterances in Swedish.
As can be seen in Figure 9, which shows the number of utterances in Swedish produced in the different classroom positions, there is a much clearer pattern in the all Swedish class than in the CLIL class and the students in the all Swedish class produced more utterances in Swedish than the other class did. Here it was evident that the boys spoke more Swedish when sitting in the front of the classroom and the girls spoke more Swedish when sitting in the back of the classroom. Consequently, the same pattern can be seen when the all Swedish class made utterances in English as well. However, the numbers are relatively small, so no big conclusions can be drawn from these results.
5. Discussion
The aim of this paper was to study the extent to which English as a target language is used in classroom interaction by CLIL students, who are taught some of their subjects partly through English, and by students who only come across English in the English language classroom. Further aims are to find out if boys and girls interact to the same degree and whether their physical position in the classroom can be related to their oral participation. My own hypothesis at the outset of the study was that girls interact more with the teacher in English than boys do and that students in the front, regardless of their gender, interact more with the teacher during lessons than students in the back. Interestingly, I had to reevaluate these ideas during the course of my study.

Starting with the first aim of the paper, to see if CLIL students use more English in the classroom than all Swedish students do, the results showed that the students from the CLIL class definitely spoke more English than the students from the all Swedish class. During the two lessons that were observed, they spoke almost three times as much English. There are several possible explanations for these results. One is that the students in the CLIL class were not allowed to speak Swedish at all during lessons. Another is that the students in the CLIL class might also have been more motivated to speak English since they (or their parents in some cases) choose to be in a CLIL class. It could also be that the CLIL students had become used to speaking English all the time, more than the all Swedish class, and the CLIL students were therefore not intimidated by doing so. Finally, the results may partly be due to the fact that the two classes did not do the same exercises and may therefore not have had equal opportunities to interact with the teacher. However, both the CLIL class and the all Swedish class had two exercises each lesson that required them to answer questions by interacting with the teacher.

It is not surprising that the all Swedish class spoke less English since they, first of all, were not forbidden to speak Swedish and secondly, since even the teacher spoke Swedish, it would likely come across as an acceptable thing to do. When regarding these specifics, the results of the students’ interaction in Swedish are not surprising. The all Swedish class spoke more than twice as much Swedish than the CLIL class during the two lessons I attended. As Tsui (1995:81) says, a low proficiency in English might be one of the reasons why students do not speak up in class. The fear of making a mistake prevents students from even trying to answer in English and this could very well be the case in the all Swedish class.
A secondary aim of the paper was to find out if boys and girls interact to the same degree and the results showed a difference between utterances in Swedish and in English. When interacting in English the results between the boys and girls were close to the same. However, the even results were far more even than I had hypothesized. Nevertheless, the results are in accordance with those of Einarsson (2003:21), saying that gender differences in interaction tend to be smaller in language learning.

The interaction in Swedish, on the other hand, showed no uniform results. In the CLIL class, the girls spoke more Swedish but in the all Swedish class it was the boys who spoke more Swedish. There is no research to fully explain these results. There are studies that have shown that boys tend to be dominant in classroom interaction in general, supporting the results from the all Swedish class (Einarsson, 2003:12). However, girls have also proven to be dominant in language classrooms (Einarsson, 2003:21), supporting the results from the CLIL class.

The third aim was to see if the students’ physical position in the classroom could somehow be related to their degree of oral participation. The results showed that students overall tended to speak more when sitting in the front of the classroom and less when sitting in the back. My classroom observations showed somewhat surprising results when gender was considered. In the CLIL class the observations revealed that the boys talked more when they sat in the front of the classroom and less when sitting in the back. The number of boys and girls in each position were practically the same so that did not influence the results. In my own experience, boys tend to demand more attention during lessons and this result might be an example of that. The boys who are more motivated to get high grades might place themselves in the front of the classroom. My experience is that it is quieter in the front than in the back and that it is easier to follow the teacher when sitting in the front, something that is supported by Bailey and Nunan (1996). The reason that they do not speak when sitting in the back might be because the boys in the back do not want to participate. This would be in line with the claim made by Bailey and Nunan (1996:131f) that students who do not want to participate in interaction place themselves in the back. This theory does not hold true, however, when it comes to the results for the girls. The girls in the CLIL class spoke more when sitting in the back than in the front. The results for this can only be speculated on, but my personal experiences tell me that students of that age (13-14 years old) can be a bit shy when speaking in front of new people and perhaps these girls felt more secure in the back of the classroom. Or maybe the girls had been placed in the back of the classroom by the teacher who thought they behaved better than the boys.
6. Conclusion

My conclusion is that the CLIL students in my study used English to a much larger extent in classroom interaction than the students in the all Swedish class did. In fact, the CLIL students spoke English almost all the time, both my observations showing the same results. These findings could be a natural consequence of the rule that the students in the CLIL class were not allowed to speak Swedish and, therefore, had more pressure to speak the target language at all times.

My observations showed that there were no gender differences with regard to the extent to which English was spoken. The results between the boys and girls were close to the same; the girls’ numbers were just slightly higher when it came to interacting in English. The aim to find out if the students’ physical position in the classroom could be related to their oral participation showed interesting results. The boys who sat in the front of the classroom tended to speak more English compared to ones that sat in the back. The girls who sat in the back, however, spoke more English than the girls in the front.

A suggestion for further research might be to continue studying CLIL since it is a very interesting method for teaching and not many studies have been done in Sweden on the subject. A part of the CLIL field that I find interesting is the students’ motivation; why do they choose CLIL? Furthermore, I think the effects of CLIL should be studied further; what impact does CLIL have on the other subjects that are taught through the medium of another language?
References


