Estetisk-filosofiska fakulteten

Ingela Bolander

Code-switching in the classroom
A sign of deficiency or a part of the learning process?

Engelska
C-uppsats

Termin: Höstterminen 2008
Handledare: Marika Kjellén Simes
Abstract:

Titel: Code-switching in the classroom: A sign of deficiency or a part of the learning process?

Författare: Ingela Bolander
Engelska C, 2008

Antal sidor: 30

Abstract: The aim of this study was to investigate how code-switching operates and what impact it has on the interaction in the EFL classroom. The study was conducted at a Swedish secondary school by means of observations, interviews, and a questionnaire. The participants of the study were 79 students and two teachers. Both teachers and students were observed and, in addition to this, the students answered the questionnaire and the teachers were interviewed.

The results showed that there were several factors that triggered the students' use of the native language and the ultimate reason for switching to the native language was often to facilitate the learning process. Typical situations in which the students switched to Swedish were when they communicated with their peers or when they encountered unfamiliar words. Moreover, the results suggest that the teacher plays an important role for the choice of code in the classroom through his/her own language use and attitude towards code-switching. Neither of the interviewed teachers nor the majority of the students thought that there were any positive aspects to code-switching.

Nyckelord: Code-switching, target language, native language, bilinguals, teaching, EFL
Table of contents

1. Introduction........................................................................................................1
2. Background........................................................................................................2
2. 1 When does code-switching occur?..................................................................3
2. 2 Code-switching in the classroom.................................................................4
2. 2. 1 Code-switching and the role of the teacher............................................7
2. 2. 2 What can we learn from code-switching in a natural setting?...............8
3. Methods............................................................................................................10
3. 1 Participants....................................................................................................10
3. 2 Classroom observations..............................................................................10
3. 3 Questionnaire...............................................................................................11
3. 4 Interviews....................................................................................................11
4. Results..............................................................................................................11
4. 1 Classroom observations..............................................................................11
4. 1. 1 Conditions under which code-switching occurs.................................12
4. 1. 2 General impressions and teacher influence.........................................15
4. 2 Questionnaire...............................................................................................16
4. 2. 1 The students’ use of English/Swedish....................................................16
4. 2. 2 The teachers’ use of English/Swedish....................................................18
4. 3 Interviews with teachers.............................................................................21
4. 3. 1 Teacher 1.................................................................................................21
4. 3. 2 Teacher 2.................................................................................................22
5. Discussion.......................................................................................................23
6. Conclusion.......................................................................................................24
List of references...............................................................................................26
Appendix 1..........................................................................................................27
Appendix 2..........................................................................................................30
1. Introduction

Bilingualism, or multilingualism, has come to be a widespread phenomenon in today's society. Bilingualism occurs for several different reasons, e. g. in the numerous bilingual societies in the world where speakers of the minority language have to learn the majority language, when people move to an area where a different language is spoken or when a new language is learned in an academic setting. In some contexts bilinguals make use of more than one language in their conversation, a phenomenon that is referred to as code-switching, which is formally defined as the mixing of two or more languages within the same conversational episode. The following example, in which the speaker switches between Italian and Swiss-German, illustrates what code-switching can be like. The words in bold are the Swiss-German ones incorporated into the Italian sentence.

*Jä che fa dire la messa tutte le mattine goots no.*  
*(Yes who each morning has the Mass celebrated it's crazy)*  
*(Franceschini, 1998: 56)*

The first language is mixed with the second language in what might appear to be a completely random way. This switching between languages can be seen in academic bilinguals as well as natural bilinguals. Switching languages within the same conversational episode, or even within the same sentence, is often looked upon as a sign of deficiency and the speaker using it tends to be seen as a less proficient speaker (Valdés-Fallis, 1978).

The phenomenon of code-switching is consequently also present in second language classrooms. For instance, during an English lesson in a Swedish school, English and Swedish are frequently mixed. Many teachers of English see code-switching as a communicative strategy for learners with insufficient vocabulary resources, and thus as a source of concern. Consequently, these teachers may become intolerant of switching to the native language (Simon, 2001). At the same time, recent studies suggest that code-switching is a part of the process of acquiring a second language and that it may be an important competence in itself in the way the speaker is able to alternate between the two languages and employ each language for specific purposes (Halmari, 2004; Simon, 2001).
This paper is an investigation of the role of code-switching in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom at secondary level in Swedish schools. My aims were to examine the proportionate use of Swedish and English in the classroom, when the switches took place, and if there were any apparent reasons for them. Another aim was to examine the teachers' use of code-switching, and how it affected the students' acquisition of English. Also, the attitudes towards code-switching among teachers and students were investigated. By looking into these questions, my hope was to be able to contribute to the understanding of how code-switching operates and the impact it has on the interaction in the classroom. The results were compared with the findings of previous research in the field.

2. Background

In conversation people normally keep their utterances in one and the same language. Among bilinguals, however, this is not always the case. Bilinguals may mix their languages in the same sentence, or conversational episode, and this phenomenon is referred to as code-switching. An example of code-switching can be seen in the following sentence: *Yo lo logran, they continue helping their own family, tienen su señora y familia* (Jacobson, 2001:59), where the speaker's two languages, English and Spanish, are mixed together in the same sentence. Code-switching has been defined as “the mixing of two or more languages within the same conversational episode” (Halmari, 2004:115), and it can occur at word, phrase, clause or sentence level (Valdés-Fallis, 1978:1). The general opinion is that in code-switching, one of the languages is predominant while the other language is embedded in the first, the matrix language. Counter to this, other ways of viewing code-switching are emerging. According to these, there may for some bilinguals be an equal relationship between the two languages, where they are mixed and used to about the same extent (Jacobson, 2001:63).

There are, however, other situations in which the native language can be mixed with the target language. These are sometimes confused with code-switching. One such example is linguistic interference, where there is no clear break between linguistic systems, as is normally the case with code-switching (Valdés-Fallis, 1978:1). In linguistic interference, the two languages involved undergo significant changes due to the close contact between them, while in code-
switching they remain intact (Sánchez, 2003:4). For instance, grammatical order may be affected by linguistic interference, as is the case in the sentence *Goes the class to the library*, where Spanish grammar interferes with English (Valdés-Fallis, 1978:6). Code-switching can also be distinguished from borrowing in the sense that borrowed words can be changed in order to fit into the matrix language. Valdés-Fallis (1978:2) exemplifies this with the following sentence in Spanish, where the English words *push* and *truck* are borrowed: *Están puchando la troca* (*They are pushing the truck*). The English words have been changed to *puchando* and *troca*. This does not occur in code-switching, where the items are used in their original form. Moreover, in code-switching the words are pronounced the way a native speaker would pronounce them, which is not the case with borrowings (Valdés-Fallis, 1978:1f). To sum up, code-switching is not synonymous with language mixing in general.

2.1 When does code-switching occur?

Code-switching is a language universal in the sense that it is not a phenomenon originating in a linguistic center and then spreading to other groups, but rather one emerging simultaneously in different areas among bilinguals (Franceschini, 1998:53). It occurs in environments where the situation favors the co-existence of two or more languages in the individual speaker. For instance, in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, where there is a large population of Italian code-switching immigrants, a clear change has been observed in the code-switching patterns of these speakers. The code-switching speakers born in the 50's are few, due to the fact that they grew up in a time of xenophobic social climate and political pressure to assimilate. These circumstances did by no means favor the co-existence of two or more languages within the individual speaker. The consequences of this were that only one language was considered appropriate for each situation, if both languages were used at all. The language of origin was used only within the family or ethnic group, while the local language was used outside the house or apartment. This was referred to as “threshold bilingualism” (Franceschini, 1998:54) When the political climate changed, the number of code-switching speakers increased. The new situation with a growing acceptance of immigrants, goals of integration rather than assimilation, and a new focus on cultivation of the mother tongue, strongly favored the use of both languages within the bilingual speaker (Franceschini, 1998:54).
Code-switching can take place in different situations. There are, however, some circumstances that seem to be similar when it occurs. First of all, there has to be a multilingual context, while a second criterion presupposes group awareness. In addition to this, a “permeability of cultural and linguistic norms” (Franceschini, 1998:54) is required. This third criterion means that there are several available sets of norms that members of the group can choose between (Franceschini, 1998:54). All of these criteria can be said to apply to foreign language students, leading to the conclusion that code-switching is likely to occur in the classroom.

The type of code-switching that takes place in the foreign language classroom differs in several respects from the kind that occurs e.g. between natural bilinguals in a conversation. Natural bilinguals are often members of bilingual communities where code-switching is a natural part of communication. In these bilingual communities code-switching is used as a means of giving cultural emphasis to certain words and signaling switches in role-relationships (Valdés-Fallis, 1978:8). In social code-switching the speaker switches his/her code to increase the verbal register and it can be compared to the way monolinguals switch register depending on who they talk to, where the conversation takes place and the nature of the message that is being conveyed (Halmari, 2004:115).

2. 2 Code-switching in the classroom
The functions of code-switching are often difficult to interpret since they are closely connected to the speech situations and interpersonal relationships affecting them (Halmari, 2004:141). Compared to code-switching among bilinguals in a social setting, code-switching in the foreign language classroom is more complex to deal with, because of the fact that it works on several levels (Simon, 2001:314). The student's role in the classroom is associated with the implicit obligation to use the target language. However, for different reasons this obligation is sometimes disregarded (Simon, 2001:317).

One apparent reason for switching to the native language is the fact that foreign language students generally have a relatively unequal mastery of their first and their second language (Simon, 2001:316). If the students know one language better than the other, it is natural and likely that they will switch to the language that they know and feel secure in using. Furthermore, the mastery of the target language is not evenly distributed between teacher and students. As a rule, the teacher is much more proficient in the target language than the
students are. The native language is (in most cases) a common code of communication which makes it possible to level off the linguistic advantage held by the teacher. Thus, in spite of the existing but unwritten pedagogical rule to speak the target language, the L2 learners are aware of the possibility to retreat to the native language if necessary (Simon, 2001:336).

As mentioned earlier, communication in the foreign language classroom is more complex than social communication in general (Simon, 2001:314). Perhaps the most important reason for this is that in the classroom there is a double level of communication. The foreign language is not merely used to exchange ideas and to communicate, but also to talk about the language itself. In other words, we are communicating about communicating, and both communication and meta-communication take place (Simon, 2001:317). When the teacher conveys information in the foreign language, the learners commonly intervene in the native language in order to clarify and assimilate the information. A situation where this type of learner intervention is likely to occur is when grammar is being taught. Another typical situation would be when the learners use their native language in order to check their understanding of lexical items. Consequently, as pointed out by Simon (2001:327), the choice of code is closely related to the type of task or activity being performed in the classroom. Oral production tasks and comprehension are examples of activities associated with the foreign language. Hence, meta-communication, for instance, is a trigger for the native language to come into effect and the ultimate reason for this is the learners' need to negotiate meaning in order to help the learning process (Simon, 2001:332).

Closely related to the sort of code-switching accounted for above, is help-switching (Simon, 2001:333). Help-switching is what occurs when a learner switches to his/her native language in order to obtain information from a fellow student, or to make him/her clarify information previously given by the teacher. This type of switching codes helps the learner to construct a response in the foreign language.

Moreover, code-switching is to a considerable degree connected to changes in roles and role relationships (Simon, 2001:326f). The student has a sort of double identity - one as a learner and one as a social interlocutor. Similarly, the relationship between the teacher and the students has two aspects – one institutional and one interpersonal. In other words, they do not merely interact as teacher and student, but also as social beings. When either of the interlocutors switches code, there is a shift in social and institutional roles. A switch from the
target language to the native language places the learner on more equal social grounds with the teacher (Simon, 2001:321). When switching from the foreign language to the native language, the student denies his/her identity as a learner and instead assumes a social role. From the students' perspective, the teacher now becomes more of an equal and less of a teacher. Similarly, Halmari (2004:138ff) describes the bilingual teenage daughter who speaks English most of the time, but switches to her native language Finnish when she wants to persuade her Finnish father into extending her curfew. When she feels that the battle is lost, she switches back to English, which is her language of authority and can be seen as a symbol of protest. Consequently, code-switching functions as an indicator of alignment/disalignment, bonding or persuasion; when the girl wants to align with her father and persuade him, she speaks Finnish, and when she wants to protest and disaffiliate herself from her father she speaks English.

Another element that plays an important part in influencing the students to switch codes is related to the content of what is said. In today's school, the language used in foreign language education has become synonymous with instruction and is often solely related to school. This is a result of the fact that the learners rarely say what they feel and think in the foreign language class (Simon, 2001:336). An example of this is the French learner of English (Lightbown & Spada, 2006:139), who answers his teacher's questions (which are very general and asked without any real interest in the content and which have their focus more on the linguistic dimension) in his L2 English, but, as soon as he switches to talking about things that matter to him and about his personal life, switches to his native French. Hence, the prevailing pedagogical frame might be too restrictive when the students are to express themselves in a more affective dimension. The students might feel a need to violate the existing pedagogical frames by switching to their L1, which is generally the language in which they feel most comfortable in expressing their feelings and opinions. In such cases it is content that is important, and when this is the case, the students are likely to feel frustration over not being able to express themselves freely (Simon, 2001:335f). This phenomenon affects most bilinguals since their use of language is tied to certain domains and settings (Valdés-Fallis, 1978:8). For different reasons, the two languages become associated not only with different sets of topics, but also with different people and settings. This type of code-switching, in contrast to those discussed above, does not serve the purpose of developing the target language, but from a pedagogical point of view it is a good indicator of the students' desire to take part in the interaction. For example, when the learner switches to the native language in
order to understand a grammatical feature, the ultimate reason for this is to be able to make sense of the language and learn. Here, the learner switches to the native language because s/he finds it more important to be able to convey a message, regardless of the language in which s/he does it, than to adhere to the code rules in the classroom. This in its turn reflects the student's willingness to participate in the interaction (Simon, 2001:336).

2. 2. 1 Code-switching and the role of the teacher

It is a common mistake for the teacher to automatically make assumptions about the students' proficiency from the way they switch codes in the classroom. A student that frequently switches between the target language and the native language will in many cases be considered less proficient than one who uses the target language throughout. In reality, these assumptions are rather fallacious since various studies show that it is very hard to make assumptions about the proficiency of a speaker from the use of different code-switching patterns (Valdés-Fallis, 1978:13; Halmari, 2004:143).

It is, however, not only the students that are involved in the code-switching occurring in the classroom. The teacher plays a crucial and many times quite complex role in this process (Ur, 1996). While the learner is interested in leveling out the social boundaries in the classroom by code-switching, the teacher many times strives for quite the opposite - namely to maintain those boundaries and consequently his/her formal function that is signaled by the foreign language. In spite of this, the teacher also switches codes. The motives for code-switching, however, differ between the teacher and the students. While the learners switch to the native language in order to make the classroom discourse available as input for learning, the teacher does so in order to obtain cooperation on part of the students and through this get them to speak the target language. Considering the different motives and aims of teachers and students, it is evident that there is a tight and complex process of negotiation going on in the classroom (Simon, 2001:333).

One important contributor to achievement in language learning is motivation, and studies show that the teacher's role in this area is central (Ur, 1996:274). Recent studies tend to be somewhat learner-centered, seeing the teacher's role merely as providing materials and conditions for learning. However, this learner-centered approach is not implemented very often since the reality is that most teachers see motivation as their task (Ur, 1996:277). The
learner-centered approach could be valid for some learners, but not for all. It is, for example, likely that there is a rather big difference in motivation between schoolchildren and adult learners who make an explicit choice to learn a new language. Integrative motivation is especially important when talking about code-switching. Integrative motivation reflects “the desire to identify with and integrate into the target culture” (Ur, 1996:276). The teacher can to a great extent contribute to this by setting an example through his/her own application of the target language. The enthusiasm and eagerness of EFL teachers is very important in the way that they communicate their motivation to the students (Ur, 1996:276). Mother tongue use is a problem that most teachers experience when speaking activities are performed in the classroom. To make the students motivated in keeping to the target language, it is important to set up activities on an appropriate level. For the same group of students, the language required for an oral exercise should be on a lower level than that used in other language learning activities. Furthermore, the language employed should be easy to recall and reproduce by the learners so that they can do the task as fluently and with as little hesitance as possible (Ur, 1996:121).

2.2.2 What can we learn from code-switching in a natural setting?

We have already established that there is a difference between learning a foreign language in natural and instructional settings (see 2.1). Despite this, there are possibilities for classroom teachers and others to learn from the code-switching occurring in a natural setting. In a natural setting the learner is exposed to the foreign language in social interaction. In most EFL classrooms today, the setting is instructional, which means that a target language is taught to a group of learners, with the focus on language itself rather than on the messages it conveys (Lightbown & Spada, 2006:109f). There are some alternatives to this approach, such as simulating a social setting, but these are not very common in school. The rare use of these methods and a focus on language itself instead of on communication is inconsistent with the fact that many teachers agree that the language learned in the classroom is to be used as a communicative tool outside of it. (Simon, 2001:312). Halmari (2004:143) stresses the importance of simulating a naturalistic environment, which she considers to be fundamental for producing language. We can learn how to create this naturalistic environment from bilinguals’ use of code-switching in a natural setting.

An example that suggests how we can learn from code-switching in a natural setting is Halmari's description of the linguistic development of two Finnish girls, ages of eight and
nine, now living in the USA. Especially interesting is what happens when they are playing with dolls. When they get into character and play the part of the dolls, they use English exclusively. Here they can practice the new language in an environment of reduced stress. However, the girls switch to their native Finnish when they are setting up the stage of the play and when they are talking about the play (Halmari, 2004:122). This can be compared to the classroom situation where code-switching comes into play when the learner is talking about the language (Simon, 2001:332). This can be seen as evidence of the fact that certain speech activities and situations are likely to evoke the use of the target language. It also suggests that code-switching is a creative phenomenon rather than a compensatory strategy. Moreover, the possibility of switching to the native language reduces stress, which creates a more relaxed learning environment (Halmari, 2004:122).

To sum up, through code-switching bilinguals obtain advantages ranging from the possibility of conveying subtle pragmatic messages to the development of a competence to alternate between several languages. The studies of Halmari (2004) show that bilingual children in a bilingual setting are able to employ their two languages for specific purposes (by code-switching, in other words) and that they can become competent users of both languages. It is thus plausible to think that there might be a reason to learn from code-switching in a social setting in order to embrace and apply the positive features of code-switching in the foreign language classroom (Halmari, 2004: 142f). This does not mean that the native language should be used to any greater extent in the classroom, considering the importance of practicing the target language, but only that there may be some aspects to it that can be useful. The role of practicing the target language is highlighted by Halmari (2004:143) who suggests that genuinely meaningful communication tasks are necessary to avoid excessive switching to the native language in the classroom, in order to motivate the students to speak the target language rather than just imposing the mandatory use of it. Practicing by means of genuinely meaningful communication tasks may also reduce the tendency of switching to the native language when expressing feelings and one’s own opinions that Simon (2001) highlights (see 2. 2).
3. Methods

The following sections will account for how my study was conducted and who participated in it. My investigation was carried out on a Swedish secondary school of medium size. The school was situated in a small town close to a medium-sized university town. The study was carried out as follows: First, classroom observations were made in order to investigate to what extent code-switching was present in the classroom and how it affected the classroom interaction; secondly, a questionnaire was distributed to the students in order to acquire additional information about their language use and their attitudes towards code-switching; and thirdly, teacher interviews were conducted with the purpose of gaining insight into their attitudes towards code-switching.

3. 1. Participants
There were 79 students who participated in this study, enrolled in four different classes at a Swedish secondary school (one class in grade 7, one class in grade 8 and two classes in grade 9). The number of students in each class varied from 17 to 22. The students were observed during the English classes and, in addition to this, were asked to answer a questionnaire. Moreover, the two teachers who taught in the classes concerned were observed in the classroom and later interviewed.

3. 2. Classroom observations
The main part of the study consisted of classroom observations where four classes and two teachers were observed. Each of the four classes were observed during one lesson. Unfortunately, Teacher 2 had planned to watch a movie with the class during half of the lesson that I was there to observe, which means that I had slightly less time to observe her than I had with Teacher 1. I wanted to observe whole classes in authentic classroom situations rather than in small groups. Thus, I chose to take notes rather than make recordings since it might be a problem to get the required parental consent for every student. Neither the students nor the teachers were informed of the focus of my investigation prior to the observations, since I wanted the interaction in the classroom to be as natural as possible.
3. 3. Questionnaire
When the observations were completed, the students were asked to answer a questionnaire (see Appendix 1). The questions regarded the students’ views on their own language use in the classroom and their attitudes towards code-switching, as well as the language use and attitude towards code-switching of their teacher. The questions were of the multiple-choice type, where the participants could choose one or several alternatives. The purpose with the questionnaire was to get additional information to complement the observations and to include the students’ perspective on the language use in the classroom.

3. 4. Interviews
In addition to classroom observations and the student questionnaire, the two teachers concerned were interviewed. The interviews were carried out in order to gain insight into their attitudes towards code-switching. Moreover, it was a way of complementing the information obtained during the classroom observations. This way I hoped to see whether there was a connection between the attitudes of the teachers and the prevailing situation in the classroom. The interviews also made a comparison possible between the teachers’ answers and the answers given by the students in the questionnaires. The questions that the teachers were asked in the interviews concerned their view on code-switching and their own language use (see Appendix 2).

4. Results
This section will examine the findings of the classroom observations and the results of both the student questionnaires and the teacher interviews.

4. 1 Classroom observations
In this section I will present the results of the classroom observations. I have chosen to group the four different classes into one. The reason for this is that the goal was to find situations when code-switching occurred, and not to compare the different groups.
4. 1. 1 Conditions under which code-switching occurs

During my observations I found that the conditions under which code-switching occurred in the classroom could be classified into nine separate categories, some of which are distinguished by Simon (see 2.2). Sometimes these categories overlapped.

One category of code-switching that was rather common during the lessons that I observed related to the content of what was said. The students commonly switched to Swedish when they were talking about matters not having to do with school or the work in the classroom. This happened when they spoke among themselves as well as when they spoke with the teacher. One example of this occurred in the case of a student coming in late and discussing the reasons for this with the teacher. The teacher persistently tried to get the student’s explanation in English, but the student consistently gave his explanations in Swedish.

Another situation in which code-switching occurs is student-student interaction. This type of code-switching is closely related to the content related type discussed above. When the students were talking among themselves, either about the task they were working with at the moment or about other subjects, code-switching was highly likely to occur.

Code-switching due to insufficient vocabulary resources is a third category. The lack of vocabulary resources is often seen as the only reason for code-switching, but during my observations the majority of the cases where code-switching took place had to do with other factors. There were, however, some cases of code-switching due to insufficient vocabulary resources. This type of switching is exemplified in (1).

(1) T: What did they use? Why did it resemble a car factory?
S: Rullband.
T: Yes, assembly line.

In example (1) the student did not know the English word for a specific concept and thus he switched codes to Swedish. Insufficient vocabulary resources could also result in other types of code-switching. An encounter with an unknown English word could trigger the use of Swedish also to words that they actually did know as in example (2).
(2) T: *What is a car hop?*
   
   S: *Jag vet inte.*
   
   T: *There is one on the picture*
   
   S: *A waitress.*

We can assume that the student knew how to say *I don’t know* in English, but since he did not know the English word the teacher was after, the student’s native language came into play.

Similarly, there were occasions where students switched to Swedish in order to *check their understanding* of lexical items and their pronunciation. During my observations there were several occurrences of code-switching as a result of the students wanting to check their understanding of words, as for instance in (3a). (3b) illustrates the code-switching that occurs when a student needs information about how to pronounce a word.

(3 a) S: *Heter det comedian?*

(3 b) S: *GM motors, owner of...säger man Saab? Jag kan inte uttala...*

A situation where code-switching is likely to occur is when *grammar* is being taught (Simon, 2001). The results of my classroom observations support this idea. When the students asked questions about grammar, they switched to Swedish without exception. This is in some degree also valid for the teacher. Sometimes the teacher explained grammatical features in English, but she often switched to Swedish in order to clarify the information.

Another category of code-switching that occurred on several occasions in the classroom was *help-switching* (see 2. 2). On several occasions the students turned to the person sitting next to them to ask them for information and afterwards they could produce an answer in English. This is what happens in (4).

(4) T: *How many of you scored above 8?*
   
   S: (To a fellow student) *Är above over?*

*Code-switching by mistake* is another category of types of code-switching that was present in the classroom. Code-switching by mistake is how I have chosen to label the type of code-
switching that occurs when the speaker starts to say something in Swedish, but then remembers that they should speak English and correct themselves. During my observations this happened to the teachers as well as the students. This type of switching is not due to insufficient vocabulary resources or the alike.

(5) S: Det var guldrushen…eller jag menar, it was the gold rush.

Furthermore, I observed that code-switching occurred when the students were “setting up the stage”, or in other words, when they were talking about how the tasks in the classroom were to be performed. The particular tasks, on the other hand, were more commonly performed in the target language. In (6) this is exemplified when a girl is asked to read a passage from the textbook:

(6) T: Will you read please?
    S: Ska jag bara börja läsa?
    T: Yes, please.

The student then started to read in English, after having set the stage for that act in Swedish. This can be compared to what Halmari found in the play of the two Finnish girls (see 2.2.2).

Yet another type of code-switching that was found in this study was switching to the native language initiated by the teacher. The reasons for teacher initiated code-switches can usually be found among one or more of the categories discussed above. For instance, the teacher can initiate code-switching when talking about grammar, explaining grammatical features, or by switching to the native language by mistake. My observations showed that when the teacher switched to the native language, the students generally followed the teacher’s example. During the four lessons that I observed there was not one occasion where the students did not switch to Swedish when the teacher did, something that agrees with what Ur states about the importance of the teacher’s language use (see 2.2.1).

In addition to the nine categories of code-switching accounted for above, there were of course other occurrences of code-switching. However, since code-switching is an irregular and unpredictable phenomenon, it is not possible to point out particular reasons for all of the occurrences. To sum up, the type of code-switching that seemed to be the most common was
when students were talking to fellow students. Encounters with unfamiliar words also frequently triggered a switch to Swedish. Furthermore, my observations showed that the majority of the occurrences of code-switching took place on either the sentence- or clause level. Code-switching within the same sentence was not that common in the classroom. I only observed a few cases of this type of word level code-switching, which is exemplified in (7).

(7) S1: Jag hade sixty-point-five. Vad hade du?
S2: I had sixty-two.

4. 1. 2 General impressions and teacher influence
My observations also provided some general impressions of the use of the different codes in the classroom. Not surprisingly, there was an evident difference between the classes due to age. The younger students in grade seven had not come as far in the process of acquiring the English language as the older students in grades eight and nine, and thus they were more likely to switch to Swedish. There was also a difference in the teacher’s language when talking to the younger and the older students respectively. The teacher was more likely to speak Swedish to the younger students and was also more tolerant towards the younger students’ code-switching to Swedish. I did not notice any marked difference between the code-switching patterns of the eight graders and those of the ninth graders. Again, this may have had to do with the teacher. One of the two observed teachers, Teacher 2, taught one class in grade 7 and one in grade 9. This teacher appeared to be less consistent in her use of English, compared to her colleague and consequently this affected her students, who were more likely to speak their native language than the students in the classes taught by Teacher 1. Teacher 1 taught one class in grade 8 and one in grade 9. She was quite rigid in her use of English and did not accept students switching to their native Swedish on a regular basis. In fact, this teacher repeatedly reminded the students that if they did not speak English, there was no chance of obtaining higher grades. Both these classes were rather consistent in their use of English.

Another thing that I observed regarding the teachers’ choice of language was the importance of how the lessons were initiated. Teacher 1 started up the lesson in English exclusively, while Teacher 2 switched between English and Swedish. This seemed to set the tone for the rest of the lesson and exemplify what sort of language use was expected from the students. Moreover, English appeared to be more common during the teacher-led parts of the lessons.
Both the teacher and the students were less consistent in their use of English during the parts of the lessons where the students worked individually and the teacher walked around to help them.

4. 2 Questionnaire
In the following paragraphs I will deal with the results of the student questionnaire (see Appendix 1), which served the purpose of clarifying student attitudes towards code-switching and the way students perceived the interaction in the classroom. Some of the questions were on the students’ own language use in the classroom, while others concerned the teachers’ use of the available codes (English and Swedish) and their attitudes towards it. I have chosen to deal with the results of the four different classes by dividing them into two groups based on their teacher. Group 1, which was taught by Teacher 1, consisted of 37 students in grades 8 and 9. Group 2, which totaled 42 students, was formed by one class in grade 7 and one in grade 9, and was taught by Teacher 2, the teacher who used English less frequently. I will begin by examining the results of the questions regarding the language use of the students, and then I will continue to the language use of the teachers.

4. 2. 1 The students’ use of English/Swedish
Regarding the results of question 1, which was about the students’ proportionate use of English and Swedish, there was a clear difference between the two groups. The largest number of students in Group 1, which was taught by the teacher who used English more frequently, reported that they used mostly English, while the largest number of students in Group 2, which was taught by the teacher who was more likely to speak Swedish, chose the alternative “mostly Swedish”. As can be seen in Figure 1, about half of the students in Group 1 (54%) claimed that they used English most of the time, but sometimes Swedish. In Group 2 this claim was made only by 29 percent of the students. Instead, half of the students (50%) in Group 2 reported that they used Swedish most of the time, but sometimes English. In Group 1, on the other hand, only 27 percent of the students claimed to use mostly Swedish. The remaining 19 percent of the same group said that they used the two languages to an equal extent. About the same number of students in Group 2 (21%) chose this alternative. No student in either group chose alternatives1 or 5, which were the exclusive use of Swedish or English.
Question 2 concerned different situations in which the students switched codes into Swedish. Here the students could choose one or several alternatives. There was quite a big spread between the chosen alternatives, but there were, however, some alternatives that seemed to be more common. Figure 2 shows that the alternative chosen by most students in both groups was “When I talk to fellow students about things other than schoolwork”. Such a situation would result in a switch into Swedish among 76 percent of the students in Group 1 and 71 percent of the students in Group 2. Conversations with fellow students about the task (43% in Group 1 and 71% in Group 2) and encounters with unfamiliar words (54% in Group 1 and 64% in Group 2) were also likely to trigger a switch into Swedish. Speaking to the teacher about the task (35% in Group 1 and 57% in Group 2) as well as speaking to the teacher about other things (30% in Group 1 and 50% in Group 2) were other popular alternatives. Working with grammar (14% in Group 1 and 12% in Group 2), stressful situations (16% in Group 1 and 24% in Group 2), and expressing feelings and own opinions (8% in Group 1 and 29% in Group 2), were the least chosen alternatives. Two students in Group 1 chose the alternative “other” and gave “when I forget that I should speak English” and “when I get frustrated” as situations in which they would switch to Swedish.
Furthermore, in question 4 the students were asked what they thought about the language use in the classroom. Only one student out of 79 reported that he/she thought that they should have the opportunity to speak more Swedish in the English classroom. Many of the students thought that they should be more encouraged to speak English (51% in Group 1 and 45% in Group 2) or were satisfied with the current situation (49% in Group 1 and 52% in Group 2).

Question 5 concerned student views regarding the effect of code-switching on their language acquisition. In Group 1, 78 percent responded that they learned more if they always had to speak English, while 19 percent responded that it was beneficial to their acquisition of English if they could switch to Swedish sometimes (3% did not know/give an answer). In Group 2 there was also a majority that thought they would learn more if they always had to speak English (50%), but as many as 40 percent answered that they would learn more if they could switch to Swedish sometimes (10% did not know/give an answer). This could be related to the fact that the teacher of Group 2 was more likely to switch to Swedish than the teacher of Group 1.

4.2.2 The teachers’ use of English/Swedish

In addition to answering questions about their own language use, the students were asked questions about their teacher’s use of English and Swedish respectively, in order to complement the classroom observations. Question 3 concerns the students’ view on the teachers’ opinions about the use of English and Swedish in the classroom. As Figure 3 demonstrates, the answers to this question differ considerably between the groups. While more than half of the students in both groups reported that they were required to speak English, but that Swedish was acceptable in some situations (54% in Group 1 and 64% in
Group 2), there was a considerable difference regarding the other alternatives. As regards whether Swedish was completely accepted by the teacher, none of the students in Group 1 stated that it was, whereas 24 percent in Group 2 said that it was. At the same time, only 7 percent of the students in Group 2 reported that they had to speak English all the time, while almost half of Group 1 chose this alternative (46%). These numbers correspond quite well to the findings of my observations that Teacher 1 was a more frequent user of English than Teacher 2. There were 2 students in group 2 that did not answer this question.

![Figure 3. The teachers’ attitudes towards code-switching (numbers given in %)](image)

Regarding the teachers’ use of English and Swedish (question 6), Figure 4 shows that a majority in both groups claimed that their teachers spoke English most of the time, but that they sometimes used Swedish (76% in Group 1 and 64% in Group 2). In Group 2, 29 percent of the students responded that their teacher used the two languages to about the same extent. None of the students in Group 1 chose this alternative. Only one student in Group 1 reported that the teacher was using mostly Swedish, but sometimes English. The last alternative – exclusively English – was chosen by 22 percent of the students in Group 1 and only 7 percent in Group 2. None of the students in either group reported that their teacher used only Swedish. Again, the students’ answers can be connected to the language use of their teachers, as Teacher 2 tended to be more tolerant towards switching to Swedish than Teacher 1.
In question 7 the participants were asked to specify the situations in which their teacher switched to Swedish. As can be seen in Figure 5, a large number of students (65% in Group 1 and 74% in Group 2) reported that their teacher switched to Swedish when she explained something that the students did not understand. According to a smaller number of students (22% in Group 1 and 19% in Group 2), their teacher would switch to Swedish when talking about grammar. Only 3 percent in Group 1 and 14 percent in Group 2 reported that their teacher switched to Swedish when she gave them the task of the day. When it came to the alternative “when she is trying to obtain order in the classroom”, there was quite a spread between the two groups. This alternative was chosen by 5 percent in Group 1 and 45 percent in Group 2.
4. 3 Interviews with teachers

The third part of my investigation consists of interviews with the two teachers who taught in the four observed classes. The interviews aimed at ascertaining the teachers’ attitudes towards code-switching; the results were compared with those obtained from the student questionnaires and my own observations. This section will present the results of these interviews. The questions I asked them regarded their view on code-switching in the classroom (see Appendix 2). First, I will give an account of the results of the interview with Teacher 1, who was the teacher of Group 1, and then I will account for the interview with Teacher 2, who was the teacher of Group 2.

4. 3. 1 Teacher 1

From my observations I already knew that Teacher 1 was rather rigid in her use of English, and that she consistently encouraged her students to speak English. The interview confirmed my conclusion that the opinion of Teacher 1 was that the students should speak English exclusively. Teacher 1 stressed that it was important for the students to try to express themselves in English rather than switching to Swedish. In order to motivate her students to communicate in English, she used grades; if the students did not speak the target language it was not possible for them to get a higher grade. Teacher 1 was of the opinion that her own use of the target language was important for that of the students. She claimed that there had been a change in the speaking patterns of her students since she had taken over the class and had started to use English more consistently as the means of communication. When it came to situations in which the students switched to Swedish, Teacher 1 pointed to situations where grammatical features were treated. Since the students were not familiar with the grammatical terminology, Teacher 1 found it necessary to switch to Swedish when grammar was discussed. This view was not quite shared by the students. Only 14 percent of her students said that grammar was discussed in Swedish. Instead, they emphasized other reasons for code-switching, such as when they were speaking to fellow students, when they encountered unfamiliar words or when they were to express feelings and their own opinions. Teacher 1 agreed that expressing feelings and own opinions could trigger the use of the native language on part of the students. Since, however, the students had spent a great deal of time practicing this, such was not, according to her, a problem in her classes. In conclusion, Teacher 1 tried to prevent the students from switching to the native language and did not see any positive aspects of code-switching in the classroom.
4.3.2 Teacher 2

Unfortunately, I did not have as much time to observe Teacher 2 as I had with Teacher 1. However, when going into the interview with Teacher 2, I had quite a clear idea of her language use in the classroom. Teacher 2 was less consistent in her use of English than Teacher 1, something that was confirmed by the questionnaire answered by her students (see 4.2.2). However, she stated that she used English as much as possible in the classroom and did not see that there could be any positive aspects to code-switching. Like Teacher 1 she emphasized the importance of the students speaking only English in the classroom, and that they should be encouraged to try to explain themselves in English, even if they lacked the specific vocabulary required. Teacher 2 claimed that she tried to motivate the students to avoid code-switching by reminding them that a native speaker of English has to be able to understand them, which according to her is the goal of the EFL education. Furthermore, she claimed that it was not acceptable to switch to Swedish in e.g. an essay, and therefore the students should get used to not doing so when they spoke either. Teacher 2 also saw her own language use as significant for the outcome of that of the students. Teacher 2 agreed with Teacher 1 that grammar instruction was likely to trigger a switch into the native language, both for herself and for the students. However, only 12 percent of her students gave grammar instruction as a reason for switching to Swedish, and, in conformity with Group 1, they ranked other alternatives as being more important.

To sum up, the interviews with the teachers showed that both teachers considered it important to keep to the target language exclusively. Moreover, both maintained that there are no aspects of code-switching that can be beneficial to the students’ acquisition of English. Both teachers agreed on the role of grammar instruction as a trigger for code-switching, due to the fact that the students were not familiar with the terminology required. Moreover, the teachers saw their own language use as crucial for the students’ acquisition of English. The results of the interviews did not quite correspond to the findings of my observations (see 4.1), since both teachers underlined the importance of keeping to the target language and claimed that they did in the interviews, despite the fact that the observations suggested that Teacher 1 was a more frequent user of English than Teacher 2.
5. Discussion

My aim with this study has been to contribute to the understanding of how code-switching works and the impact it has on the interaction in the classroom. I have tried to accomplish this through examining the proportionate use of English and Swedish in Swedish secondary school classes, and I have also looked at the circumstances in which the switches take place and for what reasons. Moreover, I have aimed at finding out what effect the teacher's use of code-switching has on students' language acquisition.

Due to the limited scope of this study, it is difficult to point to any exclusionary results. However, the study showed some tendencies about the role of code-switching in the classroom.

An important finding is that the teacher's use of code-switching has a clear impact on the students. Even though the two teachers gave rather similar information about their language use in the interviews, they differed notably in their use of English and Swedish in the classroom during my observations. Their language use seemed to be reflected in their students' reported choice of language. The teachers’ use of English clearly served as motivation for the students to speak the target language.

Furthermore, judging from the differences in the results obtained from the observations, interviews and questionnaires, the teachers did not seem to be fully aware of their own language use in the classroom. In addition to this, the teachers and the students gave very different answers regarding the situations in which the students switched to Swedish. The teachers gave grammatical explanations as the only particular situation in which the students switched codes, while the students gave answers ranging from speaking to fellow students to explaining lexical items. This could of course be a sign of the students, rather than the teachers, not being aware of their language use.

Regarding the situations in which the students switch to Swedish, my results in some degree correspond to previous research. Simon (2001) highlights some factors that trigger code-switching (see section 2.2). Most of these are present in my results, but in varying degree. An example of this is grammar, which is an important factor according to Simon, but in my study
it is a relatively infrequent reason for code-switching. The same thing is valid in the case of content based code-switching. Other factors, such as code-switching as an indicator of changes in roles and role relationships, are rather difficult to evaluate and it is hard to determine whether they were present in the classroom or not. Halmari (2004) points out “setting the stage” as a reason for code-switching, something that I noticed was present in my observations.

The interviews with the teachers and the questionnaires answered by the students suggested that neither teachers nor students were of the opinion that there can be positive aspects to code-switching. Previous research, however, suggests that code-switching can sometimes be useful in the process of language acquisition and that it should be seen as a creative phenomenon rather than a sign of deficiency (Valdés-Fallis, 1978; Simon, 2001; Halmari, 2004). I think that my results might reflect the teachers’ fear of letting the students switch freely to their native language. The tendency that I noticed during my investigation was that it was difficult for the teachers to find a compromise between, on the one hand, no use of the target language at all and too much of it on the other. One of the teachers was very rigid in the use of the target language and did not accept code-switching, while the other did not encourage her students to speak English to any great extent. In my opinion, teachers should learn more about how code-switching works and allow it in some cases. This would help to create a learning environment in which there is reduced stress and where the students can take use of their native language in the learning process.

6. Conclusion

The results indicate that code-switching to the native language takes place first and foremost when students speak to their peers. It also occurs when the students speak to their teacher, when they encounter unfamiliar lexical items, when they talk about grammar, when they get stressed, when they are to express their own feelings and opinions, when they get frustrated and when they forget that they should speak the target language. Some of these reasons for code-switching (grammar, unfamiliar lexical items and expression of own feelings and opinions) can be found in previous research (Simon, 2001, see 2.2). The teachers claimed they switched to Swedish only when explaining grammatical features, whereas the students
gave the more general reason for their teacher’s code-switching: to explain things they did not understand. Both teachers and the majority of the students believed that not being allowed to switch to Swedish at all was more beneficial to the students’ acquisition of English than being allowed on occasions.

Concerning the proportionate use of English and Swedish, the results show that there was a difference between the classes, in that one of them tended to switch to Swedish more often than the other. There was an indication of a connection between this variation and the language use of the teacher. The classes that proved to be more consistent in their use of English, and that reported a more extensive use of English in the questionnaires, were taught by a teacher who herself used English to a greater degree than the other teacher, whose students were less consistent in their use of English as shown in both my observations and the questionnaire. Previous research carried out by Simon (2001) and Ur, (2005) also point to this connection between the language use of the teacher and that of the students.

In conclusion, the results of my study correspond rather well to the previous research on the subject. One thing that I did not see much of in the classroom, however, was code-switching on the word level as described in previous studies. In my investigation, code-switching tended to be more on the sentence or clause level, while code-switching on the word level only occurred at a few occasions.

I think the area of code-switching in the classroom deserves to be studied further. The bulk of the research on code-switching is based on natural bilinguals in a natural setting, and not on learners in the foreign language classroom. Consequently, it would be meaningful to study how code-switching can be used in order to create a naturalistic environment, where the use of the target language can be evoked rather than imposing the mandatory use of it on the students. It would also be of interest to investigate whether code-switching can be employed in the classroom as a way of helping the learning process of the students. An example of this is Halmari’s (2004) studies of the two Finnish girls, who seemed to use code-switching as a way of acquiring the target language (see 2. 2. 2). In order to obtain more accurate results, it would be a good idea to make more extensive studies of how students use code-switching in the classroom, using a larger number of students and devoting more time to observation.
List of references


Appendix 1

1. Under lektionerna i engelska använder jag:

□ Endast svenska

□ Mest svenska, ibland engelska

□ Lika mycket svenska som engelska

□ Mest engelska, ibland svenska

□ Endast engelska

2. Om du använder både engelska och svenska på engelsklektionerna, när är det du använder svenska? (Välj ett eller flera alternativ)

□ När jag pratar med klasskamrater om uppgiften vi håller på med

□ När jag pratar med klasskamrater om annat

□ När jag pratar med läraren om uppgiften vi håller på med

□ När jag pratar med läraren om annat

□ När det är ett engelskt ord som jag inte kan/förstår

□ När vi håller på med grammatik

□ När jag blir stressad

□ När jag vill uttrycka egna åsikter eller känslor
□ Annat tillfälle, ange vilket/vilka:
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
____________

3. Vad tycker din engelsklärare om språkvalet i klassrummet?
□ Vi måste prata engelska hela tiden

□ Vi ska helst prata engelska men det är ok om vi pratar svenska ibland (t. ex om vi inte förstår eller kan uttrycka oss på engelska)

□ Det är helt ok om vi pratar svenska

4. Vad tycker du om språkanvändandet i klassrummet?
□ Vi borde uppmanas att prata mer engelska

□ Vi borde få prata svenska oftare

□ Det är bra som det är

5. Genom vilket av följande sätt tror du att du lär dig mest?
□ Om jag får växla till svenska ibland

□ Om jag alltid måste prata engelska

6. Under lektionerna i engelska använder min lärare:
□ Endast svenska

□ Mest svenska, ibland engelska

□ Ungefär lika mycket engelska som svenska
□Mest engelska, ibland svenska

□Endast engelska

7. Om din lärare använder både svenska och engelska på lektionerna, när är det han/hon använder svenska? (Välj ett eller flera alternativ)
□När han/hon ger oss dagens uppgift

□När han/hon förklarar något vi inte förstår

□När han/hon vill få ordning i klassrummet

□När han/hon pratar om grammatik

□Annat tillfälle, ange vilket/vilka:
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

8. Övriga synpunkter på användandet av engelska och svenska i klassrummet:
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Tack för din medverkan!
Appendix 2

Questions for the teacher interviews:

*How important is it to keep to the target language?*

*What is the teacher’s level of tolerance towards using the native language in the English classroom?*

*Should the students be encouraged or forced into speaking the target language?*

*Are there any specific situations in which the students switch to the native language?*

*Do the teachers think that their use of English and Swedish affects that of the students?*

*Do the teachers think that switching to the native language in some cases can be beneficial to the students’ language acquisition, or is it only a problem?*