Acquisition of English in and out of school

Comparing bilingual and trilingual student's acquisition of the English language

English for Students in Teacher Training, 30 Credits

Halmstad 2019-11-28
Robin Mills
Abstract

The English language has a great influence on Swedish culture. Swedish students learn English in school, listen to music in English and watch movies where English is spoken. As the importance of English increases the number of students who already speak a second language also increases. Therefore, the objective of this essay is to compare bilingual and trilingual students in their English acquisition and establish which differences that can be found between these two groups of students. The results showed that even if the students media consumption did not differ, the bilingual students were exposed to English in a greater degree. Even though the bilingual students were exposed to English to a greater degree, the bilingual and trilingual students showed similar results in the English subject. The results also showed that the trilingual students who were exposed to English in the same extent as the bilingual students showed better results in the English subject.

Keywords:
Second language acquisition
Third language acquisition
Bilingualism
Trilingualism
English
Swedish
# Contents

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................... 1

1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 3
  1.1 Hypothesis ......................................................................................................................... 3
  1.2 Research Questions .......................................................................................................... 4

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY ......................................................................................... 5
  2.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 5
  2.2 Learning L2 ....................................................................................................................... 5
    2.2.1 Monitor model ............................................................................................................. 6
    2.2.2 The interaction hypothesis ......................................................................................... 7
    2.2.3 Motivation .................................................................................................................. 7
    2.2.4 Out of class strategies ............................................................................................... 8
  2.3 English on Swedish television .......................................................................................... 9
    2.3.1 Channel profile .......................................................................................................... 9
    2.3.2 Production origin ....................................................................................................... 10

3. METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................................... 12
  3.1 Population and Sample ..................................................................................................... 12
  3.2 Questions and Questionnaire Design .............................................................................. 13
    3.2.1 Language .................................................................................................................... 13
    3.2.2 Pop culture ................................................................................................................. 14
    3.2.3 English and Language in School .............................................................................. 15
    3.2.4 Favorite movies/websites/music ................................................................................ 17
  3.3 Analyzing the Data ........................................................................................................... 18
  3.4 Additional Considerations and Ethics ............................................................................. 19

4. RESULT AND ANALYSIS .................................................................................................... 20
  4.1 English and Language in School ..................................................................................... 21
  4.2 Media Consumption ........................................................................................................ 25

5. DISCUSSION ....................................................................................................................... 28

6. CONCLUSION ....................................................................................................................... 30

INDEX ......................................................................................................................................... 31

APPENDIX .................................................................................................................................. 33
1. Introduction

English has been a part of Swedish society since even before the second world war (Hult, 2003). The importance of speaking English in a more an international society is also something that has been recognized in Sweden. Social learning is a major part of why the English proficiency is so high in Sweden (Kenning, 2007) through the importance of English in school. The Swedish national curriculum states that students should be taught English in order to develop a well-rounded communicative ability (Skolverket, 2018). The culture of anglophone countries, such as the United States and Great Britain, are well known to the Swedish people and the culture of English-speaking countries are also included in the national curriculum (Skolverket, 2018).

As the importance of English in Swedish schools is growing, the number of students who already speak a second language is also increasing. 28.1% of Swedish students qualify for native language classes (Skolverket, 2019). The comparison between the two groups ability to learn English is a necessary and interesting study.

1.1 Hypothesis

The students that are learning English as their second language (bilingual students) and students learning English as their third language (trilingual students) could be learning the same language under very different conditions. English is a large part of society which also means that the students can learn much outside of school. For many Swedish people English is a regular part of life. Whether English is used at work, whilst watching television shows or YouTube or in school or other forms of education. This might not be the case for the trilingual students who speak yet another language. This means that the trilingual students communicate in a third language which takes time from communicating in Swedish, but also in English. On the other hand, speaking another language can provide tools that bilingual students might not have. These hypotheses are what inspired this study. The study will aim to ascertain which type of students learn more through social learning than in a classroom environment.
1.2 Research Questions

The study will be conducted by the students completing a questionnaire. To establish how bilingual and trilingual student differ in their acquisition of English outside of school, the study will analyze the results of the different students. The questionnaire will mostly consist of questions regarding the students’ out-of-school activities since the English the students learn in school does not differ since they attend the same school. There will also be questions about the students’ family members. The reasoning behind this is that the family members can be an influence on the students and can also, if knowledgeable enough, help the students with the homework. The aim is to find the difference between the bilingual and trilingual students. The differences between the students will then be compared to their grades to see if there is any clear correlation between the differences in English outside of school and grades. Therefore, the research questions will be as follows:

- **How does having two first languages affect the learning of English?**
- **What differences can be found between Swedish trilingual and bilingual student’s English learning?**
- **What differences can be detected between the parents/family members of the bilingual students and the parents/family members of the trilingual students?**

The following essay examine relevant research that can be applied to the topic at hand. A questionnaire will then be designed and applied to a population of Swedish students in upper secondary school. The answers that the students give will be analyzed and concluded.
2. Background to the study

2.1 Introduction
There have been numerous studies and much research on language learning. However, in order not to make this part of the essay repetitive, the focus will be on second language acquisition. The acquisition of languages i.e., how one learns a language, has been studied far longer than second language acquisition, how one learns a second language when one already knows another language. Ellis (1997) describes why the study of second language acquisition is such a recent topic of research he states: “The systematic study of how people acquire a second language (often referred to as an L2) is a fairly recent phenomenon, belonging to the second half of the twentieth century. Its emergence at this time is perhaps no accident. This has been a time of the 'global village' and the 'world wide web', when communication between people has expanded way beyond their local speech communities. As never before, people have had to learn a second language, not only as a pleasing pastime, but often as a means of obtaining an education or securing employment. At such a time, there is an obvious need to discover more about how second languages are learned.” (Ellis, 1997, p. 3)

2.2 Learning L2
The studies conduct on language accusation have changed over the years. At first, the theory that a language learner took what they knew from their first language (L1) and transferred it to the target language (L2) was taken for granted. This meant that difficulties learning an L2 lay in the difference between the two languages. If the L1 did not share similarities with the L2, the language would be harder to learn (Spada & Lightbown, 2006). These beliefs were heavily influenced by the behaviourist theories which were dominant at the time. However, later research revealed that this was not the case. Even though some patterns in errors could be traced back to the learners L1, it was found that learners tend to construct to their own system for learning a new language where both their L1 and other factors were considered to learn their L2 (Wilhelm, Jochen, & S Çiğdem, 2006).
2.2.1 Monitor model

In the beginning of the 1980’s, the “monitor model” became widely adopted when those working in language education began to question the language teaching models of the time, which were, mostly, based on behaviorist theories. The monitor model was created by Stephen Krashen and is based on five different hypotheses; acquisition-learning hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis (Spada & Lightbown, 2006).

The acquisition-learning hypothesis displays the difference between acquiring and learning. When acquiring a language, information is collected unconsciously, without thinking about form or other language rules. When learning, the information is retained consciously which is used to learn a language (Spada & Lightbown, 2006).

The monitor hypothesis was based on the claim that when the learner has all the rules necessary and is concentrated on the task of producing language, the monitor helps correct and check, so that the acquired language rules are followed and correctly pronounced (Spada & Lightbown, 2006).

The input hypothesis is based on the +1 theory which states that a learner acquires the subject in question better if the input is just above the level which the learner, currently, has reached. If the information is too basic or too advanced, the information will not be attainable to the learner. Krashen claimed that this theory was just as applicable to language learning as to other subjects (Spada & Lightbown, 2006).

The natural order hypothesis suggests that learners of language follow a specific sequence when learning a new language. It does not matter if the person is a first or second language learner; they generally follow the same patterns. This can seem strange since one would expect the second language learners who, generally, have a deeper understanding of language learning, to be able to grasp the more basic rules of a language first. Nevertheless, most know the different “easy” rules, they cannot apply them in other orders than the natural learning hypothesis suggests (Spada & Lightbown, 2006).
The last hypothesis is called the "affective filter hypothesis". This hypothesis outlines what can prevent the learner from learning, even though the information provided is comprehensible. Feelings, motives, needs and emotional states can be reasons that the affective filter blocks information (Spada & Lightbown, 2006).

2.2.2 The interaction hypothesis

The key in the interaction hypothesis is, as the name suggests, the interaction with other speakers of the target language. Just like the monitor model, the advocates of the interaction hypothesis claim that a learner needs modified information to be able to comprehend and assimilate the input (Spada & Lightbown, 2006). However, the interaction hypothesis is based on modifying the communication more than the level of language. This means that the person communicating with the learner might have to speak slowly, use sign language or over pronounce, in order to make the communication easier for the learner (Spada & Lightbown, 2006).

2.2.3 Motivation

The individual differences among learners constitute factors which contribute to the understanding of what makes an effective learner of an L2. The personality of the learner can affect the process in many ways. If a person is more prone to anxiety or very easily bored, the affective filter of this person will quickly take effect, making the intake of an L2 harder (Ellis, 1997). The different traits which make language learning easy are hard to pinpoint. Therefore, the focus will be on motivation because of the research that has been undertaken on the subject.

Motivation is a key factor in earning language. If a learner needs the L2 to thrive in the community or exploit a job opportunity, the learner will value the ability to communicate in the L2 and thereby be motivated by this. This type of learning is called “instrumental motivation” (Spada & Lightbown, 2006). However, the learner can also find motivation in passion. If the learner identifies with a culture or country where the L2 is spoken, he or she might find it crucial to be able to communicate with these people; this displays an “integrative motivation” (Spada & Lightbown, 2006). Of the two, instrumental motivation seems to be the most effective and even crucial to the process of learning an L2 (Spada & Lightbown, 2006). Integrative motivation, although very common, has been shown not to be as effective as one
might think. A study conducted on Mexican women in California showed that the women who had less favorable attitude towards the target language learned the language better than the women who had a more favorable attitude (Ellis, 1997).

If a learner experiences success in his progress to learn a language, this can either give the learner more motivation or a sense of satisfaction. This phenomenon is known as "resultative motivation" and can be both positive and negative. The motivation does not only change depending on the learner’s perception of his or her achievement; it can also change depending on the feedback the new-found knowledge had given the learner (Ellis, 1997). If the learner is an immigrant in a new country and, by learning the language, is exposed to abuse or racism, the motivation to learn will most likely decrease. However, if the learner finds a new appreciation of the country and is able to appreciate the culture better, motivation will most likely increase substantially.

2.2.4 Out of class strategies

Out of class strategies are often mentioned in research regarding language learning strategies. Although research on out of class strategies exists, it is far from extensive (Pickard, 1996). Pearson (2004) explains out of class strategies as “any kind of learning that takes place outside the classroom and involves self-instruction, naturalistic learning or self-directed naturalistic learning” (Benson, 2001 p 62). Pickard (1996) offers some further insights into out of class strategies. The study was conducted with German students at a business school who all were English speakers. Pickard (1996) found that the out of class strategies that were used by students were mostly connected to reading and listening. The reason for this was that there were limited opportunities to write or converse in English with someone else. Of course, teachers always suggested different out of class strategies to help students with this problem. Pickard (1996) also found that these were given less consideration than the strategies the subjects used for their own needs. The subjects found that their comprehension of the language was better than their linguistic abilities.
2.3 English on Swedish television

The Swedish broadcasting authority annually publishes a report on the content of the major Swedish television channels. The channels included in the report are SVT1, SVT2, SVT24, SVTB, Kunskapskanalen, TV4, Sjuan, TV3, Kanal 5, TV6 and TV8. SVT1, SVT2, SVT24, SVTB and Kunskapskanalen are all part of Swedish public service television and therefore have responsibilities, which the other channels do not have, to show all kinds of material. These responsibilities are outlined in the broadcasting authorization given to the Swedish public service television by the parliament (Kulturdepartementet, 2013). The channels that operate outside of the of Swedish public service television are all funded through commercials.

2.3.1 Channel profile

SVT1 and SVT2 are the two channels that display the most diversity in their program selection. The programs on these channels range from entertainment to news and documentaries. On primetime, SVT1 shows more entertainment while SVT2’s primetime predominantly broadcasts news and different quiz shows (Asp, 2013). SVT24 works, primarily, as a rerun channel where news programs from SVT1 and SVT2 are broadcasted after they have aired on their respective channels. SVTB only broadcasts programs directed towards children and “Kunskapskanalen”, which translated means the knowledge channel\(^1\), primarily transmits documentaries. Kunskapskanalen also broadcasts various conferences, seminars and the Swedish parliament (Asp, 2013). TV4 focuses on entertainment. However, news programs are also a major part of the channel’s package. TV4’s news broadcast ranges from local to global news. TV3, Kanal 5, TV6 and TV8, are all purely dedicated to entertainment (Asp, 2013).

\(^1\) The translation is the author’s own
2.3.2 Production origin

Since the report does not contain any statistical information on what languages the different channels use on their different programs. Instead, the countries in which the programs broadcasted are produced has been taken into consideration. The figures below describe the production origin of the programs that are broadcasted on the named channels. This gives an indication to what languages dominate Swedish television.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Scandinavia</th>
<th>GB</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Western World</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SVT1</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVT2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVT24</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVTB</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunskapskanalen</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV4</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sjuan</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanal 5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Rest of the World</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SVT1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVT2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVT24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVTB</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunskapskanalen</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sjuan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanal 5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The figure displays the name of the country in which the broadcasted programs are produced, but not what languages that are spoken. Swedish television tends to use subtitles rather than dubbing the programs into Swedish, but this also means that it will not be possible to establish whether a program is English-speaking and produced in places other than the United States or Great Britain. Consequently, it would not be safe to assume that the programs that fall under the headings of “Western world”, “rest of the world” and “unknown” are English-speaking although programs from Ireland, Australia and other English-speaking countries fall under these categories. For the purpose of this study, data relating to SVBT will be disregarded because most of the shows on this channel are translated for children.

On the channels that are included in the Swedish public service television, Swedish, understandably, dominates the production origins of the programs. None of the Swedish public service channels broadcast less than 50% Swedish produced programs. The American and British produced programs are well represented on these channels as well. None of the channels broadcast less than 10% English-speaking productions.

However, the rest of the channels included in the report lean heavily towards the English-speaking, especially American produced, programs. The only channel outside of the Swedish public service television that broadcast more Swedish produced programs than English is TV4. The margin between the two is only 9% (50% Swedish versus 41% British/American). The rest of the commercial channels all broadcast at least 50% English-speaking programs. The Channels TV6 and Kanal 5 are extremes, where Kanal 5 broadcasts over 80% English-speaking programs and 96% of the material on TV6 is produced in America.
3. Methodology

The data was gathered by constructing a questionnaire. The data consists of two different parts. One part relates to the social learning of the students and the other to the conditions of the school-based learning. The main data relates to the social learning of English. Social learning refers to the learning of English that the students consciously, or subconsciously, obtain through the English in their social lives. This can be through music, television, other media etc. However, it will also include the media that people in their closest social sphere tend to consume. The languages the students already speak fluently will also be considered. The number of students that speak more than one language fluently and the number of students that only speak one language fluently are almost equal.

In order to determine which students learn English through education and which students are more open to the input given to them socially, the educational backgrounds of the students who participate in the questionnaire will also be compared. This part of the questionnaire is designed to ascertain the number of teachers/tutors they have had in English and what schools they attended (se appendix). This is to gain an overview of their education to date and compare the extent to which students with similar educational backgrounds learn differently and whether there are any patterns between learning and social differences.

3.1 Population and Sample

The population consists of students attending Swedish secondary school who currently have English classes at a standard level. This means that students who are outside of the standard class, this might be students who need special attention or students who study at an advanced level, are not included. The population also consists of students of both sexes. The sample will consist of seventh grade students in a Swedish school. The two groups that will be compared are the students learning English as their second language (bilingual students) and students learning English as their third language (trilingual students). If there are any students that have fluency in more than two languages before they have learned English, these students will also be referred to as “trilingual students”. As previously mentioned, the mix between bilingual students and trilingual students is very even.
3.2 Questions and Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire will attempt to establish what language the students use in the different aspects of their everyday lives. To obtain this information, questions to establish the language they use with their family and friends have been included. The different inputs they receive from popular culture, such as music, podcasts, movies etc. have also been included. The questionnaire contains different groups of questions that have distinct purposes, as can be seen in the Appendix.

3.2.1 Language

This set of questions asks which languages the students use with different people and will attempt to gauge the students’ language proficiency. This will help identify which languages the students are proficient in and the extent of their fluency in these languages. The questionnaire will pose the following questions which are in Swedish. The translation of the question has been produced by the author and is shown after in parentheses:

Vilka språk kan du? (which languages do you speak?)

Vilket/vilka språk pratar du med dina syskon? (which language/languages do you speak with your siblings?)

Vilket/vilka språk brukar du prata med dina kompisar? (which language/languages do you speak with your friends?)

Vilket/vilka språk brukar du prata med din mamma? (which language/languages do you speak with your mother?)

Vilket/vilka språk brukar du prata med din pappa? (which language/languages do you speak with your father?)

Vilka språk kan din mamma? (which languages does your mother speak?)

Vilka språk kan din pappa? (which languages does your father speak?)
The first questions ask about the language competences the students have. By answering the questions above, the students indicate which languages they communicate in and which languages they are most likely influenced by, when they communicate with others. This will also show which students are trilingual and which are bilingual. Since some new students have arrived and what languages the students speak is of the upmost importance for the study, these questions are relevant.

The language abilities of the students’ parents might seem like a redundant question. However, the question is intended to establish whether the parents have linguistic competence in English and/or Swedish. If the two languages are spoken at home, support and help with learning English becomes easier. Ladberg (1996) writes that foreign languages become harder for trilingual students if they do not fully understand Swedish. If the student is not fluent in Swedish, two translations are needed to ensure understanding of the English spoken in class. Ladberg (1996) also states that the parents’ attitude towards school affects the students. A positive attitude towards school could lead to a more motivated student in class.

3.2.2 Pop culture

The next set of questions serves, mainly, two purposes. The first one is to establish what languages the students might acquire by means other than through personal interaction. The second is to determine how much other members of their family contribute to the English that the students hear. The questionnaire will pose the following questions which are in Swedish. The translation of the question is shown after in parentheses:

När du kollar på TV/film eller lyssnar på musik/radio/podcast vilket språk brukar det då vara på? (When you watch TV/movies or listen to music/radio/podcast which language do you usually do this in?)

Vilket språk brukar du läsa på? (which language do you read in?)

När din mamma kollar på TV/film eller lyssnar på musik/radio/podcast vilket språk brukar det då vara på? (When your mother watches TV/movies or listens to music/radio/podcast which language does she usually do this in?)

När din mamma läser, vilket språk brukar det då vara på? (when your mother reads, in what language does she do this?)
När din pappa kollar på TV/film eller lyssnar på musik/radio/podcast vilket språk brukar det då vara på? (When your father watches TV/movies or listens to music/radio/podcast, in which language does he usually do this?)

När din pappa läser, vilket språk brukar det då vara på? (When your father reads, in what language does he do this?)

När dina syskon kollar på TV/film eller lyssnar på musik/radio/podcast vilket språk brukar det då vara på? (When your siblings watch TV/movies or listen to music/radio/podcast in which language does he or she usually do this?)

När dina syskon läser, vilket språk brukar det då vara på? (When your siblings read, in what language do they do this?)

The first questions ask about the students’ personal media consumption. These questions will indicate how much English is in the student’s media consumption. There will be more specific questions about the media consumption of the students later in the questionnaire.

The questions regarding the rest of the family’s media consumption is appropriate. The students’ knowledge of what their respective families consume shows that they have been subjected to it. The reason that the questionnaire only asks for the languages in which the families consume media and not what they are watching or listening to is because only a broad understanding of the use of mass media by the other family members is needed. The questions regarding the family members’ media consumption aims to uncover which languages have affected the students and to what extent this includes English.

3.2.3 English and Language in School

These questions consider the students’ thoughts on English as a subject in school. Investigating the students’ thoughts on the subject is something that is crucial in order to discover which of the students are highly motivated and thereby engaged with their schooling, and which are the students who might be learning outside of school. The questionnaire will pose the following questions which are in Swedish, and the translation of the question is shown after in a parentheses:
Hur många Engelskalärare har du haft under din tid i skolan? (how many English teachers have you had throughout your time in school?)

Vilka skolor har du gått på? (how many schools have you gone to?)

Har du hemspråksundervisning? Om ja, i vilket språk? Om nej, gå vidare till nästa fråga (Do you have native language education? If yes, in what language? If no, proceed to the next question)

Vad tycker du om engelska som ett ämne i skolan? (What do you think of English as a subject in school?)

Vad tycker du är det bästa med engelskan i skolan? (What do you think is the best thing about English in school?)

Vad tycker du minst om med engelskan i skolan? (What do you like least about English in school?)

The first question asks the students how many teachers they have had in English throughout their time in school. This question will help ascertain whether there is any sort of pattern in learning between the students who have had few teachers and the students who have had a larger number of teachers. The other questions are open questions where the students are asked what they think about English as a subject, what they think are their primary incentives and what they think are their main demotivators. The reason these questions are asked is to examine the motivations the students have to learning English. Ellis writes the following about instrumental motivation: “In some learning contexts, an instrumental motivation seems to be the major force determining success in L2 learning. For example, in settings where learners are motivated to learn an L2 because it opens up educational and economic opportunities for them.” (Ellis, 1997, p. 75). It is also necessary to establish whether there are any patterns in their answers as to what is positive and what is negative.

For the trilingual students, there is a question regarding native language teaching. It is not known how many of the trilingual students have chosen to study their native language, but it will be relevant to this study to establish the extent to which it affects the students’ learning of a new language and how this affects their learning of a new language.
This part of the questionnaire also asks which schools the students attended before they started at the school they are currently attending. The students being investigated for this essay come, mainly, from two different parts of the city. One part, neighborhood A, is middle class, where many of the bilingual students live. The other, neighborhood B, is a minority dominated area, but with a large number of bilingual students living there as well. It will be pertinent to discover whether the bilingual students living in neighborhood A differ from the bilingual students who live in neighborhood B.

3.2.4 Favorite movies/websites/music

The last set of questions will investigate the students’ intake of popular culture through movies, websites and music. The previous questions posed about popular culture asked only for the language that the students used while these set of questions will probe for more specific information. The questionnaire will pose the following questions which are in Swedish, and my translation of the question is shown after in a parentheses:

Lista Dina favorithemsidor (list your favorite websites)

Lista dina favoritmusiker (list your favorite music)

Lista dina favoritfilmer (list your favorite movies)

As stated above, these questions do not ask for any specific language. There are a couple of reasons as to why the questions are asked in this way. The first reason is so that the students are to be discouraged from generalizing: it is preferable for students to write what they listen to so that it is possible to ascertain whether there are similarities and differences between the bilingual students and the trilingual students. Another reason is simply to keep the students interested. This stems from the belief that, if the students are given the opportunity to write about something they find interesting, they will be far more open and receptive to the questionnaire. Hopefully, this will therefore give an indication as to what languages the students use outside of school. It will also help establish if there are any patterns which correspond to whether the students were bilingual or trilingual.

These questions will also help reveal what kind of English the students are influenced by. If they are listening to American music or reading about their favorite British soccer team, the language used could differ considerably.
3.3 Analyzing the Data

The questionnaire considers all the languages the students use in their everyday life; however, the language that will be analyzed is English. The languages of the trilingual students are, of course, also of importance. The trilingual students’ use of the third language will be compared to the languages the bilingual students’ use in the same situation to ascertain whether the English is in any way affected by the use of a third language.

At the top of the questionnaire, student’s name will be requested. This is so that, at a later stage, the level of their English can be discussed with their respective teacher. The schools attended and the number of teachers under which the students have studied will be compared to their grades to determine whether there is any kind of pattern to be detected. The number of teachers the students have had will compare, and which school the students have attended to their grade. This is a clear indicator that will establish if one school is more effective then another. If all the students from one of the schools, generally, have lower grades than all the students from the other school, this could be attributed to factors peculiar to the school they attended rather than the more general language acquisition factors that are of relevance to this research. The same applies to the number of teachers the students have had. This distinction is harder to make with the other questions by only analyzing the students’ grades.

The popular culture questions will be analyzed mostly by considering the language used in the websites visited, the movies watched, and the music enjoyed by the students. The students will give general answers as to what languages these media use, but there are also more open questions, where the students are required to list their favorite movies, music, and websites. Since most music and movies are in English, it will dominate these lists. However, patterns between genres in music and movies will be further investigated. As stated previously in the text, there are differences in the language used in different English-speaking countries and regions. This means that the experience will be different, depending on the nature of the media the students consume, even if it all falls under the category English.
The questions regarding English as a subject are open questions. The questions were intended to show how motivated the students are when it comes to the English they are taught in school. However, these questions are probably the ones that will be the hardest from which to discern any hard data; however, there will be an attempt to compare them to each other in order to discover whether the students who provide similar answers can be divided into any subgroups.

Comparing the students to one another is the method that will be used the most. Relying too much on the students’ grades can be problematic (as explained above in the text) and, therefore, the use of grades will be limited.

3.4 Additional Considerations and Ethics

The number of students to whom the questionnaire will be distributed is entirely dependent upon how many students that will be attending class the day the questionnaire is used. There are 51 students in the three classes. The students will be given a brief explanation as to why the questionnaire has been constructed as well as an explain to some of the questions in order to minimize the risk of misunderstanding. The students will be able to ask questions during the completing of the questionnaire as well.

The questionnaire will be anonymous with regard to information which could reveal the identities of students. The name of the school and the locations of the students will be withheld, and the reason for this is that the students will be asked personal questions which will be compared to the grades of the students that take part in the questionnaire. It could be viewed as unethical to publish this kind of information if the students’ identities are not completely obscured.

The questions included in the questionnaire will be in Swedish in order to enable students to express themselves as accurately as possible. The answers from the students who might not be able to express themselves in English are just as important as all the other answers.

The students’ grades are not to be specified by the letter so, for example, instead of saying that a particular student has been awarded an A and another has received a B, the students will be divided into three different categories: the low scoring students, the high scoring students, and the average scoring students.
Since asking the students questions, not only about themselves, but also about their families, it is appropriate to send letter to the parents informing them of what the intentions of the questionnaire. The letter will explain that the identities of the students and the school will not be published and that, if someone does not wish their child to be a part of the questionnaire, they can contact me via email or telephone and they will be excluded from the research.

It will not be a problem if the students state they do not know what language their parents speak. The focus will be placed on the languages the students know that their parents speak. The reason for this is simply that the most likely reason for this is that the languages are not spoken frequently if the students have no knowledge of it. This renders them irrelevant to the study, since these languages do not affect the students if they are not exposed to them.

4. Result and Analysis

The first aspect that was established from the results of the questionnaire was the number of students who were bilingual and the number of students who were trilingual. In order to confirm which students were trilingual, consideration was taken to what languages the students said that they comprehended and were fluent in. What languages the students said that they communicate in was also examined. In the results, all the students who were classified as being trilingual showed that the languages they were fluent in were also the languages they routinely communicate in on an everyday basis. Out of the 37 students, 19 met the criteria for being considered a trilingual student. The other 18 students were considered bilingual students. The students were divided into three different categories, depending on their performance in school this far, and these categories were (I) high performing, (II) average performing and (III) low performing. The bilingual students comprised three low performing, nine average performing and six high performing students. The trilingual students had seven low performing, nine average performing, and three high performing students.²

² The performance levels of the students are solely based on the grade which the student, at the time of the questionnaire had achieved. Since the students had grades from the old grading system, these have been the model for the categories which the students are divided into.
4.1 English and Language in School

Figure 1 displays which schools the students previously attended. The students predominantly came from two different schools: NB B stands for the school in “neighborhood B” and NB A the school “neighborhood A”. Neighborhood A had a couple of students more than neighborhood B. The students included in “multi” were the students who have attended more than one school. All of these students had gone to schools in either neighborhood A or neighborhood B and were, therefore, included in their headings as well. None of the bilingual students had attended the school in neighborhood B and only one of the trilingual students attended the school in neighborhood A. Two of the trilingual students attended other schools, while three of the bilingual students did not attend the school’s neighborhood A or neighborhood B.

![Schools chart]

Figure 1

---

3 The number of teachers under which the students have studied is not dependent upon which school they had attended. The average for both the schools in neighborhood A and B stands at 3.5 teachers.
Figure 2 displays the number of trilingual students that confirmed that they were attending native language education. Vietnamese, Albanian and Kurdish were the languages which the students that attended native language in which they were educated. All of the trilingual students who were considered high performing reported that they attended native language classes. However, only one third of the average performing students attended native language classes and almost 50% of the low performing students attended native language education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>low</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2**

Figure 3 displays the proficiency level of the trilingual students’ parents. All the bilingual students claimed that their parents were fluent in Swedish. Likewise, all the trilingual students stated that their parents were fluent in one or more languages other than Swedish and English. As figure three displays, the trilingual students reported that their parents’ knowledge in Swedish was high. Only one parent had no proficiency in Swedish. However, only about, 50% of the students considered their parents to be fluent in Swedish and almost one in six considered that their parents were unable to speak much Swedish.
The English proficiency of the students’ parents is displayed in figure 5 and 6. Figure 5 displays the trilingual parents and figure 6 displays the bilingual parents. The English proficiency of the bilingual and trilingual parents differed greatly. The bilingual parents’ proficiency was almost absolute. Only four of the parents were said to have no ability to use English and more than half of the parents were said to be fluent English speakers. The trilingual students’ parents displayed the reverse in terms of their level of proficiency in English. Out of the 37 parents, 23 had no knowledge in English. However, all the parents of the high performing students were claimed to be able to speak English to some extent.
Figure 4

Trilingual mother's English proficiency

- Little: 2
- Well: 2
- Fluently: 1
- No knowledge: 11

Trilingual father's English proficiency

- Little: 3
- Well: 3
- Fluently: 1
- No knowledge: 1

Figure 5

Bilingual mother's English proficiency

- Little: 2
- Well: 2
- Fluently: 4
- No knowledge: 10

Bilingual father's English proficiency

- Little: 3
- Well: 3
- Fluently: 1
- No knowledge: 10

Figure 6 displays the language in which the trilingual students communicate. The figure displays the communication between the students and their friends and closest family. The bilingual students all stated that they communicate in Swedish. The trilingual students’ results showed a clear pattern, where most of the students spoke a language other than English or Swedish with their parents. The trilingual students who claimed that they spoke Swedish with
their parents often stated that this was not the most common way of communicating with their parents. The trilingual students’ communication with their siblings was split between Swedish, and a language other than Swedish, and English. However, the students who declared that they communicated with their siblings in Swedish mostly did this as their preferred language. Swedish was the most common language with which they were found to communicate with friends. Since their friends might not speak the same languages that they do, this is understandable. None of the students, bilingual and trilingual, stated that they routinely communicated with anyone in English.

**figure 6**

### 4.2 Media consumption

The students’ own media intake declared that the most popular websites were “Facebook”, “YouTube”, “Instagram” and “Google”. Although all the websites are American owned, the content depends on the user. This means that the languages on these websites are most likely languages with which the students are comfortable. Other popular websites were “Swefilmer.com” and different blogs. *Swefilmer* provided movies with Swedish subtitles. Most of the movies were in English; however, the websites also had movies in other languages. The most popular of the blogs was “devote.se”. *Devote* was a Swedish blog.
website with a focus on fashion. On the website, there were a number of different blogs by different Swedish writers.

The most popular nationality of the musicians that the students listened to was American (i.e. from the United States). However, the origins of the musicians differed substantially. With this said, the language in which most of the musicians expressed themselves was, almost invariably, English. The bilingual students only mentioned three artists who performed in other languages and all were Swedish (Kapten Röd, Norllie & KKV and Ansiktet). Trilingual students did not mention many musicians that preformed in languages other than English. However, the four musicians that the trilingual students listened to all preformed in languages other than Swedish.

The result regarding the students’ favorite movies resembled the results of their favorite music. However, the movies were even more dominated by the United States and by the English language. Only two movies were in a language other than English (one Swedish movie and one Albanian).

Table 1 illustrates which languages the students’ family members use when utilizing different media. The parents’ and siblings’ media intake yielded the following results. The trilingual students’ parents consumed much less English through media than the bilingual students’ parents. For the trilingual parents, the third language was the dominant one in their media intake. All of the trilingual students stated that their parents consumed, or were habitually exposed to, language other than Swedish or English through the media. Swedish was also a major influence on the parents. Most parents both read Swedish and watched Swedish television. However, the other language was the most dominant in both categories and the English on television and text eluded most of them. Only one of the trilingual students declared that one of his or her parents read in English and only eight of the trilingual parents were stated to watch television in English.
The bilingual parents did not read as much English as they watched. The bilingual students stated that all parents, except one father, regularly watched English language television. Reading in English was, as previously stated, not as usual. However, more than one third of the bilingual parents read in English according to the bilingual students. Only five of the bilingual parents were reported to have consumed media other than in English or Swedish. All of these were television broadcasts where the language was one of the other Scandinavian languages closely related to Swedish. Swedish was the most popular language among the bilingual parents. Most of the parents both read in Swedish and watched television in Swedish.

The trilingual siblings viewed Swedish, English and other languages almost to the same extent. The trilingual siblings read mostly Swedish books and newspapers etc. English and other languages were also read by about one third of the siblings. The bilingual siblings’ results resembled those of the bilingual parents. They had no contact with languages other than English and Swedish. When watching television, the two languages were evenly divided. However, Swedish was the preferred reading language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family media intake</th>
<th>Trilingual</th>
<th>Bilingual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother TV</td>
<td>Father TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>9/19</td>
<td>9/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>2/19</td>
<td>6/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16/19</td>
<td>17/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>17/17</td>
<td>16/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>17/17</td>
<td>17/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3/17</td>
<td>2/18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
5. Discussion

The bilingual students tend to have parents who can comprehend English and that regularly expose their children to English by listening to English music or watching TV-shows where the spoken language is English. The parents of the trilingual students tended to favor their native language. Very few of the parents were fluent or understood English; however, the high performing trilingual students all had parents who understood or were fluent in English. Bilinguals that have an even comprehension of their L1 and L2 tend to make fewer errors than bilinguals whom have a more uneven comprehension of their previous languages (Cenoz, 2003). There was no difference between the bilingual or trilingual students’ media consumption. This was also the case when it came to websites and movies where both groups had very similar interests. The Internet usage was largely confined to social networks like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Besides social networking, the students also liked to visit YouTube. Even though the bilingual students had a greater exposure to English, the level of English did not differ as much as one would assume.

The Swedish proficiency of the trilingual students’ parents revealed that most of the parents Swedish to some extent. However, only about half of the parents were fluent in Swedish. Cunningham (2011) asserts that parents who speak a different language to the language spoken where they live have to give more thought to the language they use with their children in order to develop both the native language and the majority language where they live. Many of the trilingual students’ parents did not have the basic competence Swedish to be able to speak both languages with their children. This means that the trilingual students are learning a new language and using Swedish to do so. The Swedish language is a language they do not fully comprehend which makes the process harder for the trilingual students. Even if there is one parent in the household who is fluent in Swedish, the language spoken at home is commonly the language that all parties understand. The reason for this is that the parent who does not understand the third or second language often feels left out if the other parent and child communicates in this language (Cunningham, 2011). Studies show that bilingual immigrant students in Sweden score better than Swedish monolingual students when the students spoke Swedish at home. The bilingual students who spoke their native language at

4 The English television programs that are broadcasted in Sweden are more often than not subtitled and therefore viewable for most people.
home generally achieved lower scores than the monolingual Swedish students (Mägiste, 1984).

The native language education which the trilingual students received produced different results. All the high performing trilingual students attended native language education; three out of seven low performing trilingual students attended native language education and three out of six average performing trilingual students attended native language education. In terms of percentage, this shows that the high performing students are the students who attended native language education the most. A possible interpretation of this finding suggests that the average preforming students would have the second highest attendance. This is not, however, the case. The low performing students were the second highest attending group where almost half of the students attended, and in contrast to the average performing students where only one third received native language education. If, however, only the number of students is considered, all the three groups had the same number of students attending native language education.

The results of the questionnaire show that being proficient in more than one language can prove difficult to some students. There does not seem to be a direct correlation between using a second language and a negative effect on learning English. The negative effect stems from the time and resources the second language takes from the social learning of English. For bilingual students, English has a much greater role in their everyday life. This natural social learning in combination with the family members' ability to comprehend English gave the bilingual students more time speaking and listening to English than the trilingual students had. However, the trilingual students that had family members who were fluent in English also showed better results than their bilingual counterparts. This indicates that the trilingual students might have tools that help them learn languages faster than bilingual students. Since the trilingual students seemingly lack the same amount of social learning as the bilingual students, the conclusion that the bilingual students learn more from social learning in general than the trilingual students do seems reasonable. Something that has to be taken in to account is that the bilingual students predominantly attended the same school previous to the school that they attended at this time. The same was true for the trilingual students. This means that their education, even though it followed the same syllabus, differed in many ways which also could influence their learning. The family members’ understanding of the English language was the largest differentiating factor between the two groups.
6. Conclusion

The objective of this essay was to compare bilingual and trilingual students’ knowledge of the English language. The study therefore contained the following research questions:

- How does already having two languages as a first language affect the learning of English?

- What differences can be found between trilingual and bilingual student’s English learning?

- What differences can be detected between the parents/family members of the bilingual students and the parents/family members of the trilingual students?

The study was conducted through questionnaires that focused on “social learning” and “school-based learning”. These two subjects were then compared in order to analyze where the students learned English, how much English they were exposed to and how their English studies differed from each other.

The bilingual students are more exposed to English than the trilingual students. The trilingual students did not receive the same exposure to English as the bilingual students did. The media and music that the students listened to was very similar for all students. However, the bilingual parents’ comprehension of English was greater than the trilingual parents. The trilingual students who had parents who comprehended English showed better results than their bilingual counterparts.

To further develop this area, follow-up research on how the different groups learn English should be conducted to determine what strategies the trilingual students apply to their learning. The correlation between native language studies and learning other languages is also a topic that should be subject to further research since the answers in this study yielded interesting answers. There are many factors that could potentially be a reason for the mixed results of the trilingual students who studied a native language which would be interesting to explore in order to further develop language education. Since the answers showed that the trilingual family members, to a great extent, did not have proficiency in English, the ability to help their children with the subject was limited. Further research should be conducted on how this affects the students’ learning.
Index

Asp, K. (2013). Svenskt Mediautbud 2012. From radioochtv.se:
http://www.radioochtv.se/Documents/Publikationer/Svenskt-medieutbud-2012-webb.pdf


Kulturdepartementet. (2013). Tillstånd att sända Televison. From www.svt.se:
http://www.svt.se/omsvt/fakta/public-service/article122887.svt/binary/S%C3%A4ndningstillst%C3%A5nd%20fr%C3%A5n%202010


http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/content/50/2/150.short?rss=1&ssource=mfr


Appendix


Namn__________

Vilka språk kan du *(skriv om du kan språket som modersmål, flytande, lite eller mycket lite)*?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Vilket/vilka språk pratar du med dina syskon *(om ni brukar prata mer än ett, skriv det ni pratar mest först)*?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Vilket/vilka språk brukar du prata med dina kompisar *(om ni brukar prata mer än ett, skriv det som ni pratar mest först)*?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Vilket/vilka språk brukar du prata med din mamma (om ni brukar prata mer än ett, skriv det som ni pratar mest först)?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Vilket/vilka språk brukar du prata med din pappa (om ni brukar prata mer än ett, skriv det som ni pratar mest först)?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Vilka språk kan din mamma (skriv om det är modersmål, flytande, mycket, lite eller mycket lite)?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Vilka språk kan din pappa (skriv om det är modersmål, flytande, mycket, lite eller mycket lite)?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________
När du kollar på TV/film eller lyssnar på music/radio/podcast vilket språk brukar det då vara på (Om ni har mer än ett, skriv det som ni har vanligast först)?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Vilket språk brukar du läsa på?(Om det är mer än ett, skriv det som är vanligast först)?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

När din mamma kollar på TV/film eller lyssnar på music/radio/podcast vilket språk brukar det då vara på (Om ni har mer än ett, skriv det som ni har vanligast först)?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Vilket språk brukar din mamma läsa på?(Om det är mer än ett, skriv det som är vanligast först)?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
När din pappa kollar på TV/film eller lyssnar på music/radio/podcast vilket språk brukar det då vara på (Om ni har mer än ett, skriv det som ni har vanligast först)?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Vilket språk brukar din pappaa läsa på?(Om det är mer än ett, skriv det som är vanligast först)?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

När dina syskon kollar på TV/film eller lyssnar på music/radio/podcast vilket språk brukar det då vara på (Om ni har mer än ett, skriv det som ni har vanligast först)?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Vilket språk brukar dina syskon läsa på?(Om det är mer än ett, skriv det som är vanligast först)?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Hur många engelsklämare har du haft under din tid i skolan?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Vilka skolor har du gått på?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Har du hemspråksundervisning? Om ja, vilket språk? Om nej, gå vidare till nästa fråga
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Lista dina favorithemsidor
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Vad tycker du är det bästa med engelskan i skolan?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Vad tycker du minst om med engelskan i skolan?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Lista dina favoritmusiker

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Lista dina favoritfilmer

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Vad tycker du om engelska som ämne i skolan?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Tack för att du svarade på frågorna!
Robin Mills is a proud father of two and works as a teacher in Gothenburg.