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## Vocabulary learning under three different language conditions in six multilingual L2 English classrooms in Sweden

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### **Abstract**

Research has indicated social benefits of drawing on students' full language repertoires (Cummins, 2017), and lab-based studies have shown that background languages cannot be "turned off" during target language processing (Sunderman and Kroll, 2006). Furthermore, vocabulary experts recommend using first languages (L1s) to establish initial form-meaning mapping for new foreign/second language (L2) words (Schmitt, 2008). However, classroom-based research on which teaching/learning practices may be effective in multilingual classrooms is scarce. Studies on bilingual classrooms exist, and Laufer and Schmueli (1997) found that high school learners of English did better on a vocabulary test following a short learning-session when the meaning of English target words were in the L1 compared to L2 English glossings. In fact, Shin, Dixon and Choi (2019) report that intervention studies published in the last decade suggest that L2 learners benefit more from L1 translations than from L2-only explanations. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, there are no studies comparing conditions involving more than two languages.

In our talk, we present results from an intervention study comparing the effects on vocabulary learning of three week-long teaching/learning conditions in multilingual L2 English classrooms in Sweden. Multilingual classrooms were defined as classrooms where  $\geq 5$  learners have another L1 than the majority language (Swedish). The three learning conditions were: **English Only** (EO); **English and Swedish** (E&S); **English, Swedish and any Other language(s)** (E&S&O) known by the learners. Learners were instructed to follow the imposed condition that applied each week.

Participants were learners (age 15-16) in six intact classes. At present, results have been analysed for three classes ( $N = 62$ ), but in our presentation, results for all six participating classes ( $N = c. 120$ ) will be presented.

Teaching materials for each of the three treatment conditions comprised (1) a text, including 20 controlled and carefully piloted English target words in context, (2) vocabulary exercises, and (3) vocabulary lists covering the target words, the latter being either EO, E&S, or E&S&O. We used a counter-balanced, repeated-measures design, featuring a proficiency test – a pretest (60 words) – 3 x treatment – an immediate posttest (3 x 20 words) – a delayed posttest (60 words). The vocabulary test format targeted meaning recall (expressed in any of the participants' languages or even drawings).

ANOVAs of gain scores comparing pretests with immediate and delayed posttests showed that all three classes performed the best in the E&S condition, irrespective which week this treatment/condition took place. Thus, the condition in which English vocabulary was presented with Swedish translation equivalents (E&S) yielded higher gain scores. Also, strong correlations (at .70 - .80) between English proficiency scores and gain scores were observed, indicating that gain scores increased as a function of proficiency. In our presentation, in addition to gain scores, the potential

influence of factors such as age of onset of acquisition, language dominance, preferred learning approach and perceived learning will be incorporated as covariates in the analysis.

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