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Swedish immersion in the early years in Finland

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Immersion education in Finland is a one-way (monolingual) early total Swedish programme for Finnish-speaking students. This immersion provision is offered at kindergarten level (ages 3–5), at preschool (age 6) and at primary levels (grades 1–9). Here, a brief synthesis of Finnish research studies on the early years in Swedish immersion is first provided, reviewing results from a number of quantitative and qualitative research studies. In order to present a comprehensive view of the Finnish context, both the kindergarten and preschool environments are analysed as contexts for early second-language learning and teaching. The second part of this article presents results from a recent Finnish study of immersion in kindergarten, where analyses of dialogue sequences make it possible to examine in depth how immersion children in Finland learn their new language in everyday situations within immersion settings. Examples illustrate the importance of the educator's explicit verbalisations of every joint activity and shared context. When the educator continuously puts into words the actions jointly focused upon by child and adult, she provides meaningful L2 input and, at the same time, promotes children's understanding of daily activities. The excerpts also show developments in children's emerging L2 utterances, from recycled Swedish language items to spontaneous L2 use.

Keywords: one-way immersion; immersion pedagogy; kindergarten; ethnography; learning in interaction; parental expectations

Introduction

Finland has two national languages: Finnish and Swedish. The position of Swedish as a national language is explained by history, since the Swedish language and culture were deeply rooted when Finland formed the eastern part of the Swedish empire (1249–1809). Today, Finnish is registered as the mother tongue of about 92% of Finland's inhabitants, Swedish for about 5%, and other languages for the rest. These figures indicate that changes in society over time have actually led to a minority position for the Swedish language, despite its unique position in Finland's history and society. The diminishing presence of the Swedish language in Finnish society has, in turn, impacted on Finnish-speaking students' motivation and opportunities to learn Swedish. One consequence of the decline in the number of mother-tongue speakers is that the proficiency of Swedish among Finnish-speaking students does not reach the level required for professional bilingualism in Finnish society. To meet these expectations, the national school system has included programmes which aim at developing bilingual competence. One of these programmes is Swedish immersion, which is an early total immersion model for Finnish-speaking children, comprising early childhood education and care (ECEC) (day care and preschool) and basic education (grade levels 1–9).

The focus here is on Swedish immersion in early years' education in Finland. The first aim of this article is to present an overview of a body of research in early years' Swedish immersion (not all of which has been accessible in English to date) drawing on survey, test-based and qualitative research conducted within this field in Finland. The second aim is to present the findings of a recent study that conducted a fine-grained analysis of children's L2 acquisition in Swedish immersion in an early years' settings, drawing on the data on children's L1 and L2 use in interaction. We begin with some necessary information on the background context of ECEC in Finland and early total immersion in Finland.

ECEC in Finland

In Finland, the municipalities are obliged to provide ECEC for all children under school age, i.e. those under seven years (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2004).Voluntary ECEC consists of day care for children under the age of seven and preschool for six-year-olds. About two-thirds of Finnish children under school age attend day care (about 70% in 2009, Statistical Yearbook on Social Welfare and Health Care 2010) and virtually all six-year-olds participate in preschool (99.4% in 2009) (FNBE 2012).

ECEC in Finland is divided into Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking sections that, according to national steering documents target monolingual Finnish- and Swedish-speaking children, respectively, although children from Finnish–Swedish bilingual homes can be found in both sections. The aims of educational policy and the curriculum for both sections are identical, with the only difference being the language of instruction. Swedish immersion ECEC falls within the administrative remit of the Finnish-speaking ECEC section because it targets Finnish-speaking children. Immersion ECEC is given either in immersion centres consisting only of immersion groups or in dual-track kindergartens which comprise both Finnish-speaking groups and Swedish immersion groups.

ECEC and preschool curriculum

ECEC in Finland is guided by the National Curriculum Guidelines on ECEC (ECEC 2004). The curriculum is divided into six content orientations: Mathematical, Natural Sciences, Historical-Societal, Aesthetic, Ethical and Religious-Philosophical orientation. The aim is that, through these content orientations, children are helped to develop tools and abilities to increase gradually their capacity to examine, understand and experience different phenomena in the world. Language and language learning are not viewed as a separate orientation within the ECEC curriculum. Instead, language is identified as having a vital role in each orientation in supporting cognitive processes and the ability to learn.

Preschool education for six-year-olds is guided by a separate national curriculum, the Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education (CCPE 2000). This consists of seven core subject fields: Language and Interaction, Mathematics, Ethics and Philosophy, Environmental and Natural Studies, Health, Physical/Motor development, and Arts and Culture. Preschools in Finland are expected to work with thematic modules in which the objectives for the core subject fields are integrated. In this context, the learning process is viewed as being more important than the individual core contents. The objectives for the core subject field of Language and Interaction are to support the development of children's thinking, sociability, emotions, interaction skills and learning processes through different types of language activities that will create a foundation for literacy development.

In the curriculum reform in 2000, immersion education became nationally regulated when it was included for the first time in national curriculum documents. Before that, some municipalities offering immersion had only a local immersion curriculum. Following the reform, the national curriculum documents (ECEC 2004 and CCPE 2000) stress that immersion children are expected to meet the same objectives as children in any ECEC and preschool programme. Kindergartens and preschools with immersion are also expected at the ECEC level 'to ensure – in cooperation with the parents – that the child's mother-tongue skills development is appropriate to his age' (ECEC 2004) and at preschool level 'to create capabilities for children to function in a bilingual environment and to learn in another language' (CCPE 2000).

Municipalities implementing immersion are now expected to have more detailed immersion objectives in local curricula documents, and a school-based curriculum that is based on, and in tune with, the national and the local curricula. Regarding the thematic modules, for example, each kindergarten and preschool may work with themes that they find interesting and useful, as long as they cover the content orientations of ECEC or the core subject fields of preschool education (as appropriate) and meet the immersion specific language-learning objectives.

Finnish ECEC and preschool as learning environment

A typical ECEC group in Finland has 20–25 children and 3–4 educators (kindergarten teachers, social educators, practical children's nurses, day care assistants, etc.). Children are either grouped by age, or placed in mixed age groups, e.g. 1- to 3-year-olds and 3- to 5-year-olds. The ECEC programme for under 6-year-olds is scheduled with non-structured, semi-structured and structured indoor and outdoor activities and with home-like daily routines. Typical structured activities are circle time with routines relating to the calendar, weather, who is present/absent, as well as songs, rhymes and stories, and various structured craft, art, movement, music, maths and literacy activities in large or small groups. The Finnish ECEC system is play-based and thus, free play indoors and outdoors is strongly emphasised and central to the schedule. Free play is typically unstructured time for the children with some semi-structured elements, e.g. when the play is organised through play-centres. In particular, structured activities (e.g. songs, stories, arts activities, etc.) tend to be related to a chosen theme like 'me and my family'.

The ECEC activities offered to six-year-old children are labelled 'Preschool' and are to a greater extent structured or semi-structured than for younger children. Nevertheless, preschool also includes and values free play, both indoors and outdoors. A typical ECEC and preschool day also includes numerous home-like daily routines: breakfast, lunch, snack, dressing and undressing, washing of hands, moving from one activity/routine to another. These routines are natural contexts that offer more individual communication than many of the structured activities in large or small groups. The variation in activities and routines that occur naturally in Finnish ECEC and preschool environments contributes to making these ideal environments for immersion education where an L2 is acquired in communication, given that teachers and educators are fully aware of how to use these for optimal L2 learning/teaching.

Early immersion in Finland

Immersion was first introduced in 1987 in Finland with 25 children in one preschool. A national survey conducted in schools in 1999 showed that immersion spread fairly slowly during the first five years, but experienced explosive growth in the mid-1990s (Buss and Mård 2001). During the 2000s, immersion grew steadily and the number of students in Swedish immersion from ECEC to secondary school in 2012 was estimated to have reached 4500–5000, but no official national statistics are available. While at a national level, Swedish immersion remains a small educational option comprising only about 0.5% of the total school population in Finland, in some municipalities immersion students make up 10–50% of the school population. Geographically, immersion is concentrated along Finland's bilingual southern and western coastal areas. Today, the demand for immersion in many municipalities is greater than the supply of places available in existing programmes.

While some kindergartens offer immersion for children who are 3 years of age, children are typically enrolled in Swedish immersion at the age of 4 or 5, two or three years before compulsory basic education[i] begins at age 7. During immersion ECEC, all instructions are given only in Swedish. A

major characteristic of how Swedish immersion works in the early total programme in Finland is its multilingual orientation: while only the main immersion language, Swedish (L2), is used in ECEC (Figure 1), in immersion primary schools from age 7 the children's L1 Finnish and a third language (L3), most often English, are integrated in grades 1 or 2, and an optional fourth language (L4), e.g. German, is added in grades 4 or 5. At that point, Finnish and Swedish (the L1 and L2) are used as the medium for teaching subject content, while the L3 and L4 are taught as foreign languages (see Björklund and Mård-Miettinen 2010 for more details on the multilingual orientation in immersion primary schools).

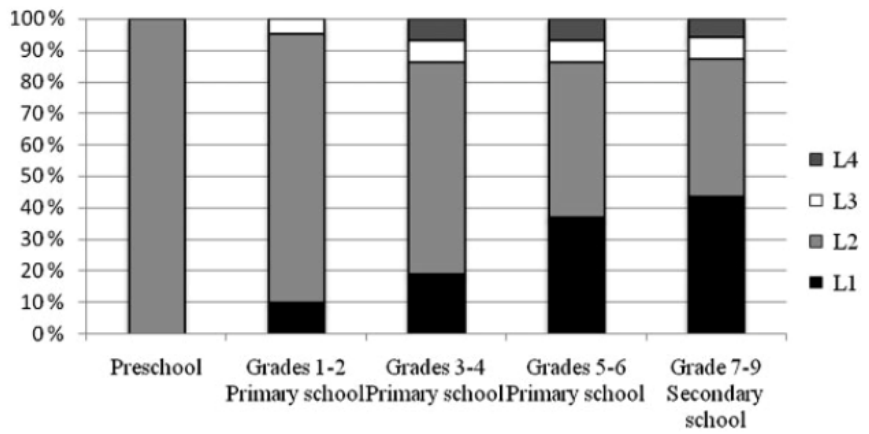

Figure 1. Allocation of instructional time according to language of instruction in early total Swedish immersion programme in Finland.

Research on Swedish immersion in the early years in Finland

Major public interest in Finland has focused on the outcomes of immersion, since there was heated public debate about the radical share of instruction time in the immersion language when the first programme started. It therefore became important for immersion advocates to show that immersion was effective in terms of measurable outcomes. Due to the relatively recent implementation of immersion in Finland (the first internationally oriented evaluation report on the evolving first programme appeared in 1990; Laurén and Vesterbacka 1990), research studies conducted in Finland contain a range of progress reports of different age groups in immersion (see e.g. Björklund 1997; Björklund and Mård-Miettinen 2010) rather than final reports focused on student outcomes in the final years of the programme. The research has covered the ECEC level from the very beginning and the first years in immersion have received general attention both among researchers and other interest groups.

Results regarding the ECEC level are typically concerned with two major research fields: students' L1 and L2 learning and classroom processes in immersion. Most studies have a clear focus on language, even if many involve cross-disciplinary elements such as pedagogy. Thus, language learning and teaching often overlap within the same studies. This research orientation has resulted in several doctoral dissertations in the disciplines of modern languages and other dissertations in education in the 2000s. Furthermore, the close ties between research and in-service teacher training have led to several action-research projects completed by immersion ECEC staff.

The theoretical frameworks used in published research reports about early years in immersion in Finland typically reflect language-learning theories from the 1980 to 2010 period. As a consequence, while similar research objectives (e.g. L2 development) may be the focus within several studies, they

may be approached and analysed quite differently in the light of a dominant theory of a specific period. Thus, early immersion studies from the 1990s are generally based upon theories of communicative competence (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983; Lyster 1994) and Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis which stress the importance of getting students to produce immersion language in language-rich and varied contexts. During the same decade also, Cummins's (1984) more cognitively oriented theories about basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) dimensions were often used as theories of reference in Finnish immersion research. More recent studies have built upon Vygotskian perspectives (Vygotsky 1978), taking into account both the ecology of language (e.g. van Lier 2004) in immersion settings and sociocultural aspects of language learning. Whereas early studies tend to present results centred on learning processes and language development in individuals and in groups, recent studies revolve more around interaction-based discourse in different situations. A representative example can be seen in code-switching processes, which in early studies were more likely to be considered as the result of cognitive processes within the individual (see e.g. Vesterbacka 1991a, 1991b) while recent studies view code-switching as a dynamic process where both languages are used as resources to construct meaning (see e.g. Savijärvi 2011).

In order to present an overall picture of Swedish immersion in the early years in Finland, we will first present here a summary of information gathered in surveys of a significant research strand in immersion in Finland, regarding the families who choose immersion. After this, we briefly outline how Swedish immersion provides an environment for early L2 acquisition in preschool, and finally, we summarise the results available with regard to language outcomes from this immersion model.

Families choosing immersion in Finland

A number of research studies have been carried out on immersion families in Finland, generally in survey-based studies. Quantitative and qualitative data have been combined in order to get statistics both about issues such as the socioeconomic background of students as well as categorisations of parents' expectations via content analysis. Studies often involve comparative elements, where control groups are used to offer norms as references or typical values for the analysed data.

Mård (1994) conducted a comprehensive parental survey in all beginning immersion ECEC groups during the first six years of immersion in Finland. The data collected included 350 completed questionnaires, with a high response rate of 88.8%, and the results indicated that children attending Swedish immersion come from Finnish-speaking homes and enter immersion with very little or no knowledge of the immersion language, Swedish. These data were updated in a national survey of parents in 2004 in a study which included 14 municipalities with immersion, when a questionnaire was sent to all families with a child entering immersion kindergarten in that year. Bergroth's (2007) analysis of the 276 completed surveys (response rate 59.6%) showed that the language background of the immersion children in Finland remained very similar to that found in 1994. Thus, immigration had not changed the enrolment profile in immersion in Finland as it had been shown to do in Canada, where Swain and Lapkin (2005) reported an increase in the number of children entering immersion with first languages other than English.

The survey data revealed that Finnish parents' expectations for their children's skills in the immersion language also remained about the same in the 1994 and 2004 data: to 'learn to understand' the immersion language and 'to use simple Swedish utterances' during the ECEC years (Bergroth 2007; Mård 1994). Thus, the parents appear to have some knowledge about language acquisition processes in an immersion context, since they did not show unrealistic expectations such as children becoming fluent in the immersion language after their first years in immersion. The surveys also indicated that immersion parents in Finland appear committed to an ECEC partnership approach to support their

children's learning in immersion, in accordance with the curricula. Immersion is a recognised choice for a majority of the families because it is an easy and efficient way to learn several languages, and to learn to know and appreciate a new culture. Immersion is viewed as being of benefit to children in their future studies, as well as in working life. Parents also indicated that they chose it because of its well developed and scientifically proven teaching methods, in contrast to the parents' own experiences of language studies. In some cases, parents indicated that immersion had been recommended by friends and colleagues, but there were also some families who enrolled their child in immersion as an ad hoc decision made at the time the child needs day care (Bergroth 2007; Mård 1994.)

ECEC as learning environment in immersion

A number of studies have been carried out on the learning environment offered in early immersion settings in Finland. Mård (1995, 2002) conducted a number of case studies in immersion ECEC in the 1990s that showed that the typical day in ECEC immersion seemed to include activities that were not planned or used to systematically develop the children's L2 competence. Rather, it was noted that in some such activities, the communication failed to build systematically on the theme which had been discussed during circle time and in the structured activities. Furthermore, it became apparent that, while the educators expected children to answer in L2 during the structured large-group activities, they did not show that expectation to the same extent when communicating individually with the children, e.g. when helping them to dress up. In her longitudinal case study, Södergård (2002) further showed that there was a stronger emphasis on implicit strategies (e.g. repeating a question) than on explicit strategies (e.g. asking directly) in attempting to elicit L2 use from the children, as well as there being minimal positive feedback for children's use of the L2. These types of strategies and feedback have been shown by Lyster (1998) not to serve as ideal tools for L2 learning.

Intense cooperation between immersion researchers and immersion ECEC staff has helped Finnish researchers to identify classroom processes that maximise the quality of immersion during the ECEC years, in immersion settings where all children share the same language background. A number of studies, such as Buss (2007), Mård-Miettinen (2007) and Södergård (2007, 2008) have shown that the output-oriented and planned classroom processes implemented in the Finnish immersion ECEC in recent years have resulted in early immersion pupils entering primary school with a higher productive second-language competence than before, and thus point to higher pedagogical standards being attained in the entire immersion programme.

Swedish immersion in Finland: language outcomes

The aforementioned studies of classroom processes were qualitative studies of early L2 acquisition in immersion, and only a limited number of studies have attempted to evaluate Swedish immersion quantitatively in the early years in Finland. Large-scale studies at most involve samples no larger than around a hundred immersion children. In the late 1980s, Vesterbacka (1991a) assessed Finnish L1 mastery in two groups of six-year-old immersion children and two groups of controls who were in Finnish-speaking settings (23–25 children/group). Testing included four different Finnish vocabulary tests and a morphology test which assessed children's mastery of five different Finnish grammatical categories based on nonsense words. The results from all five tests showed no significant difference (applying one factor ANOVA) between the immersion and non-immersion groups at age 6 in terms of their L1 scores, indicating no detrimental effect of immersion on their L1 Finnish competence.

In a study by Harju-Luukkainen (2007), 133 immersion children aged 3–6 participated in a vocabulary test (based on the word-finding vocabulary test in the Renfrew language scales) and a

listening comprehension test which all children completed in both their L1 and L2. Thus, the researcher had the opportunity of comparing the immersion children's L1 (Finnish) skills with their L2 (Swedish) skills. Harju-Luukkainen concluded that the sampled children acquired excellent skills in L2 listening comprehension, whereas their naming ability was not as good. As expected, the immersion children showed weaker skills in their L2 than in their L1 in both tests. Based on the assumption that Finnish and Swedish have a shared cognitive field, Harju-Luukkainen estimated that skills in Swedish appear to 'catch up with' skills in Finnish at an annual rate of 6–7%, which would indicate that children would meet a language development threshold about one year earlier in their L1 than they do in their L2.

The same test of listening comprehension used in the study by Harju-Luukkainen has also been employed by Vesterbacka (1991a) and Mård (1994) to measure L2 comprehension skills both in relation to Swedish-speaking age controls and between different immersion groups (aged 5–6). The results from these quantitative research studies show that, in the one-way immersion context in Finland, immersion in the L2 in the daily ECEC activities and routines appears to give children good receptive L2 skills in Swedish.

Within the dominant qualitative approach in early settings in Swedish immersion, a number of research studies have been carried out in cooperation with educators (Laurén 1999; Mård 2002). Here the focus has included not only children's L2 skills but also their interaction in immersion groups. Data have been collected by observing (e.g. Björklund 1996) and videotaping interaction, both in pre-planned situations and in everyday interaction. Meaningful use of L1 to continue and maintain social interaction has been documented in case studies of two talkative and two other less talkative five-year-old immersion children by Mård (2002). Although all four children in the study were comfortable with using their L2 in communication situations with a semi-familiar bilingual adult, the less talkative children needed more guidance by the adult and used more L1 in communication with each other. The difference between the talkative and less talkative children was also important when the children were individually asked to instruct a monolingual Swedish-speaking child to place stickers in particular places in a kitchen setting. While the two talkative children gave their instructions independently, just occasionally using the adult as an L2 dictionary, the two less talkative children preferred the monolingual child to take the lead and ask questions about where each sticker should be placed.

Everyday interaction in pre-planned situations for language teaching were analysed by Södergård (2002, 2008) who investigated interaction between children (ages 5–6) in immersion and between children and educator over a two-year period. Södergård focused on educator-led small groups and on the strategies that the educator used in order to encourage or 'push' the children to use Swedish. Södergård found that the children's use of L2 was, in many cases, due to systematic 'pushing' by the educator, and she noticed a conscious development in, for example, the types of questions put to the children as their L2 command grew. She noted that the educator avoided Yes/No questions, such as Do you want the red crayon? but instead elicited more complex answers with why and how questions, and asked more difficult alternative questions in year two. She concluded that both informal and formal learning situations in immersion settings for early years seem to complement each other well, and help to develop fluent interactional skills among immersion children.

Following this overview of findings on immersion in ECEC in Finland, in the next section we present a fine-grained analysis of child and teacher interaction in Swedish early immersion settings, drawn from Savijärvi's (2011) study.

The current study: learning in interaction in early immersion

Savijärvi (2011) carried out a study which focused on learning in interaction in Swedish immersion in Finland. The study adopted an interactional approach to analyse the use of both L1 and L2 among a group of immersion children in dialogue sequences with an educator, in order to explore how learning is achieved collaboratively.

Participants and setting

The 15 participating children were 4 years old when they entered their immersion ECEC setting, and they were followed during their first two years in immersion. The ECEC setting in which the data were collected was an urban kindergarten setting with one group of 15 children and two educators. The data of the study were collected by videotaping the interaction between children and their educators regularly over the course of two years. The data were collected during 10 approximately four-hour sessions. In all, the videotaped data consist of 40 hours of interaction taped in different situations. The first recording was made one month after the children had entered Swedish immersion, and the last recording was made after they had spent one year and 10 months in immersion. The recordings were supported by discussions with the educators, filed notes made during the visits and by the researcher's own reflections on her experience of being in the group.

Method

The study used the method of conversation analysis (CA) (see Sacks 1992). Originally deriving from the research of spoken everyday interaction, CA has been increasingly applied to the study of second language acquistion (SLA; see, for example, Firth and Wagner 2007; Pekarek Doehler 2010). With its detailed analysis of authentic interaction, CA research uncovers the norms and the practices that speakers orient to in everyday interaction. These do not necessarily coincide with those they are aware of (e.g. Heritage 1984). In immersion research, CA has only been used in a few prior studies and in Finland by, for example, Niemelä (2008) and Viinisalo (1995).

Immersion interaction provides an interesting setting for a conversation analytic study as the analyses are based on the participants' turns in the ongoing interaction. Since immersion children can use their L1, they display their interpretations of the educators' turns even when they cannot produce L2. Accordingly, their turns are analysable from the very beginning, which allows a more detailed picture to emerge of how their understanding and learning develops over time.

Results

Educator's talk: caretaking and instructing

Recognising that an important aspect for L2 learning is teacher talk, which takes the function of caretaker talk (Savijärvi 2011), this type of language is examined in a number of extracts here to illustrate the types of interaction presented as input that the children repeat and discuss among themselves in order to extract meaning cooperatively, or in other cases where they reflect on form rather than meaning. First, we present two extracts which focus on the educator's turns, and then proceed to cases that display the learning process from the point of view of the children, and show clearly how the two roles are interwoven. Excerpt 1 represents a case where the educator (E) interprets the child's behaviour in a sensitive way by giving positive reasons for the child's withdrawing behaviour. The group is having breakfast, and Meri is joining them (all names are pseudonyms). E asks Meri if she wants to have tea, and Meri does not answer, but turns away instead:

Excerpt 1, First year, September, breakfast

01	E:	**Meri vill du ha te**
		Meri do you want to have tea
		T points to Meri's tea cup
02		Meri turns away
03	E:	**nä, de har du int besluta dej ännu du funderar lite**
		no you have not decided yet you think about it a while

Meri's behaviour shows unwillingness to answer rather than cooperation. However, E interprets her behaviour as though it is relevant to the ongoing activity. Instead of explicitly pressing Meri to answer, she creates a context where Meri's behaviour is treated as adequate in the situation. Thus, the teacher seeks to interpret Meri's behaviour to the other children in a positive way, displaying a sensitive attitude towards the child. (The term sensitive is used here to describe the caretaker's behaviour that considers the child's viewpoint in a positive way; see e.g. Koren-Karie et al. (2002).) According to research on infants learning their L1, sensitive behaviour by mothers has been found to enhance learning (Paavola 2006). Since the interpretation is verbal, E is also offering relevant L2 input as a model for the group, even if this role remains more secondary in this case than the effort to integrate a particular child.

In excerpt 2, the educator's role as a language teacher is more evident. One of the children asks for more porridge by shouting ***lisää*** 'more' in Finnish. E prohibits this behaviour and provides a more polite expression in Swedish by modeling 'can I have X?' This expression is spontaneously taken up and repeated by two other children. At this point in the data, the children had been in immersion for two months.

Excerpt 2. First year, October, breakfast

01	Kimmo:	**LISÄÄ** (*shouting in Finnish*)[1]
		More!
02	E:	**kan ja få, int såhär, titta, ME:RA:**
		(*shouting, imitating the child*)
		can I have, not like this, look, MORE
03	E:	**man säger'kan ja få: mera gröt'**
		you say 'can I have more porridge'
04	Rita:	**kan ja få: mera gröt**
		can I have more porridge
05	Jussi:	**KAN JA FÅ: MERA RÅ:**
		(*shouting, imitating E in Swedish*)
		Can I have more (xxx)

1. Finnish is represented in bold italics and Swedish in bold only.

In both examples, the educator verbalises the child's behaviour in the L2. In Excerpt 1, the verbalisation concerned the child's behaviour, while in Excerpt 2, the teacher both corrects the child's impolite behaviour and recasts it in the L2. The focus of the correction is the behaviour rather than the language, since E clearly shows (line 2) that even the equivalent Swedish expression for Kimmos's L1 expression (line 1) is impolite on its own. It is relevant here to note that, in the group investigated in this study, the educators never corrected a child if s/he used a polite expression in Finnish, their L1.

L1 as a shared resource between children

In early immersion, in particular, the L1 functions as a shared resource for the group. It is understood by all although spoken only by the children. Furthermore, especially at the first months in the immersion, the children interpret L2 words on the basis of their knowledge of and about their L1. Artigal (1991) has discussed such L1-based understanding in Catalan immersion, where the L1 and L2 are very similar. In the case of Swedish immersion in Finland, such L1-based understanding is more challenging because the languages are structurally different.

Excerpt 3 illustrates an L1-based interpretation of L2. As it turns out, the interpretation is not the one meant by E. Despite that, the emerging conversation creates possibilities for learning, because the children end up comparing the two languages. The conversation emerges spontaneously, when E serves breakfast and names the served items in L2. This example illustrates that, even when E is leading the activity, she does not necessarily decide the topic of the conversation among the children. Excerpt 3 starts when Jussi has pointed to a sausage, in this way giving a non-verbal answer to E's question about what he wants to have on his bread. E verbalises the item in Swedish offering the noun *korv* 'sausage'. The children interpret this Swedish word (*korv* 'sausage') as akin to a similar sounding Finnish word *korppu* 'rusk'. This leads to a conversation where the children discuss the meaning and the phonetic form of the words.[ii]

Excerpt 3, First year, September, breakfast

01	E:	**korv aha: dehär e korv** sausage okay this is sausage
02	Jussi:	**korpe** (*attempting to repeat the noun*)
03	E:	**vasågod jå korv** here you are yes sausage
04	Ulla:	***sehän on makkaraa*** it is sausage
05	Jussi:	***tää on makkaraa eikä korppua*** this is sausage and not rusk
06	Ulla:	***ne ei ymmärrä mikä toi on,*** ***se on sitä makkaraa samaa makkaraa*** they don′t understand what it is, it is the sausage the same sausage
07	Meri:	***kyllähän aikuisen pitäis käsittää*** ***et se on makkaraa eikä korppua*** an adult should understand that it is sausage and not rusk
08	Meri:	**korv** ***kuulostaa ihan korpulta*** korv (sausage) sounds just like (korppu) rusk

Jussi makes an attempt to repeat the Swedish word *korv* (line 2) and shows orientation to the phonetic form of the word. He also adds a similar-sounding Finnish word *korppu* 'rusk' and corrects E (line 5). Ulla focuses on the referent: she states in Finnish that the item referred to is known as *makkara* 'sausage' (line 4). She even states that there might be a problem in understanding (line 6). Meri participates with a turn that continues the themes that the other children have started, and concludes by her explicit observation that the words discussed sound similar but refer to different foods.
In this extract, we see the children constructing their turns contingently on the basis of the previous turns, both continuing the themes and elaborating by adding new elements. E's initial L2 turn triggers the conversation but in all likelihood this unfolded in a different way than she had planned. In this case, all of the children could participate and understand what became a metalinguistic reflection because they spoke among themselves in their L1, while engaged in an L2 learning activity.

Recycling

We now turn to cases that show how the children started to use their L2 in output by recycling elements of E's L2 turns. At the early stages, the recycled items were typically lexemes that were incorporated in L1 turns, as was noted in Björklund (1996). Leaning on a view that derives from the analysis of everyday interaction, the current study shows how these kinds of turns emerge. According to this view, recycling is seen as the typical method of turn construction in everyday talk: people reuse words and expressions used by previous speakers, not necessarily repeating them exactly, but modifying them in different ways (Anward 2005).

Excerpt 4 shows such an approach, where the children recycle the Swedish quantifiers *mycke* ‘a lot’ and *lite* ‘a little’ in a conversation that emerges after a question–answer sequence started by E while serving tea to the children.

Excerpt 4, First year, October, breakfast

01	E:	**Meri vill du ha mycke eller lite te**
		Meri do you want to have a lot or a little of tea
02	Meri:	**lite** (*Educator goes to another table*)
		a little
03	child:	***mullaki on* lite**
		I also have a little
03	Child:	***tytöt otti* lite**
		the girls took a little
04	Jussi:	***kaikki otti* lite *mutta mä otin* mycke**
		everybody took a little but I took a lot

Even though the children spoke mainly Finnish here, they adhered to the Swedish quantifiers that E had used in her question. The Finnish equivalents would be *vähän* ‘a little’ and *paljon* ‘a lot’, which are not phonetically similar to the Swedish ones. After two months in immersion, the children have certainly heard these Swedish quantifiers many times, and it appears that they are salient to them. Additionally, the situation creates a context for understanding what E is aiming at. The crucial detail here is that E used the quantifiers in the situation at hand in a way that made their meaning clear, making them available to the children. What is particularly interesting is that the children are not just responding to E, but together they create the conversation spontaneously, using the new L2 items meaningfully with each other. They compare the amounts of tea that each of them has taken, and at the same time, they analyse the meaning of the quantifiers, not by translating them into their L1 but by using them in context.

Recycling is seen also in later stages of language learning in immersion, when not only lexical items but also syntactic structures are recycled. The data present examples where children also modify the recycled items, thereby showing an ability to analyse the educator’s Swedish turns (see Sacks 1992, 716–720). Such cases occur in the data from the children’s second year in their immersion setting, when they have begun to use more Swedish in their output. In Excerpt 5, the verbal phrase *komma å baka* ‘come and bake’ of E’s turn is recycled by two children. The example illustrates how the children spontaneously participate in Swedish. It also shows how recycling functions in everyday conversation, allowing both children to contribute turns that are fluent Swedish and appropriate in the situation, even if their turns are recycled for the most part. The conversation starts when E wonders if a child, Mallu, would like to come and bake. Mallu does not respond, but two other children declare their wish instead.

Excerpt 5, Second year, December, baking

01	E:	**står Mallu i kö för att komma å baka?**
		is Mallu queing to come and bake
02	Anu:	**ja vill komma å baka**
		I want to come and bake
03	Lea:	**ja vill också komma å baka**
		I also want to come and bake

Anu recycles the verbal phrase *komma å baka* ‘come and bake’ but adds the first person pronoun and the verb *vill* ‘want to’. Lea recycles all elements from the previous turn but adds the particle *också* ‘also’, tying her turn to the previous speaker’s turn and making it thus an appropriate second declaration. It is noteworthy that the particle is placed correctly according to the Swedish norms.
In Excerpt 6, the child makes use of E’s Swedish turn, showing a detailed understanding of that turn and an ability to modify it. The children are baking, and Ulla asks Anu to give her an object. Anu refuses to give it, but E does not accept her refusal. She grounds her directive with the argument that Anu does not need the object at that moment. A few moments later, Anu uses the same argument in order to get the object back.

Excerpt 6, Second year, December, baking.

01	Ulla:	**får ja nu Anu**
		can I have (it) now Anu
02	Anu:	***ei***
		no
03	E:	**jo::, Anu du behöver den int just nu**
		yes, Anu you don′t need it right now
04	E:	**ger du den åt Ulla.**
		give it to Ulla
		Anu puts the thing on the table And waits for a while
05	Anu:	**NU BEHÖVER JA DE** (*shouting*)
		Anu looks at Ulla
		NOW I NEED IT

Although the child uses the same lexemes as E, she modifies the word order. She starts with the temporal reference (*now*) and this requires her to use inverted word order. This is evidence of her L2 learning, especially as there is no equivalent grammatical inversion in Finnish. Her contribution is skillful also in terms of interaction, in that she makes use of the argument that E has used with authority a few moments before.

Excerpt 7 represents a case where a child continues E's turn in Swedish with a similar syntactic structure but with different lexemes. In the situation at hand, one of the children is looking for his toy, an elf, but he cannot find it. E spontaneously comments evaluatively on the elf, and adds a turn that seems to explain her evaluation of it. After a one second pause, Meri continues with a turn that matches E's turn syntactically and completes the explanation semantically.

Excerpt 7, Second year, December, baking

01	E:	**de e no en konsti tomte**
		it is a strange elf
02		**just va de mitt på golve här**
		just now it was here in the middle of the floor
03		(1.0)
04	Meri:	**å nu e de borta**
		and now it is gone

Both turns (lines 2 and 4) are constructed of similar elements: they begin with a temporal reference followed by a verb (*vara* ′be′), and the last element is a place reference. Note that there is an inversion (*e de* 'is it' pro *de e* 'it is') which is an obligatory feature in Swedish syntax but would not be used in an equivalent clause in Finnish. Although E's turn is syntactically complete, it is incomplete in the sense that she starts to explain the 'strangeness' of the elf but leaves out an essential part of the explanation. The elf is not strange because it was in the middle of the floor but because it is not there anymore. Meri adds the missing part and thus completes the verbal action that E had started. This, in turn, shows that she has acquired a fluent interactional competence in Swedish during her first 18 months in immersion.

Discussion

The results of the CA presented here document learning in interaction in child(ren)–child (ren) dialogues and in educator–child(ren) dialogues in Swedish-medium immersion, showing how children build and recycle L2 items in their output. The bilingual dialogues further show how the children of the study use their common L1 as a resource in order to understand items in the L2 and continue dialogues. These results confirm previous results by Mård (2002) who highlights the use of L1 as a common resource and as a L2 learning strategy in her case studies of four immersion children.

In the excerpts discussed here and at greater length in Savijärvi (2011), we see the teacher's dual role as caretaker and instructor. The evidence regarding the multi-faceted nature of that role is backed up by previous studies focusing on teaching in immersion kindergarten by, e.g. Mård (1995) Mård-

Miettinen (2007) and Södergård (2002). Mård points out that immersion kindergarten offers ideal conditions for L2 learning, but at the same time she shows how immersion educators may fail to optimise learning opportunities if they are not aware of the centrality of their role as language models. They need to provide ample opportunity of language input, to verbalise ongoing activities and scaffold L2 use for individual learning. Södergård (2002), in turn, illustrates teacher strategies for scaffolding and developing L2 skills in a systematic way.

The overview of research conducted in early years of Swedish immersion presented in the first part of this article shows that, in studies of first- and second-year immersion children, where results are based upon language tests and compared with same-aged monolingual children, the students' L1 test results are comparable to those of monolingual Finnish control groups (Vesterbacka 1991a), whereas their L2 is not yet comparable with monolingual Swedish-speaking children's skills (Björklund 1996; Harju-Luukkainen 2007; Mård 2002). However, while it is recognised that receptive skills in particular seem to develop very early (during the first months in immersion) and very quickly, the CA data presented here show that children's use of L2 productive skills are also observable even from the first days in immersion, although at the early stage of using mainly 'micro-elements' of the L2 in predominantly L1-based utterances. This early use of L2 elements can be partially characterised as formulaic speech, where children make use of routines and shared contexts in order to express themselves without necessarily fully understanding every linguistic element of the L2 utterance used (Vesterbacka 1991b; see also e.g. Cameron and Hickey 2011; Hickey 1993 for discussion of comparable formulaic speech in L1 acquisition). This is an acquisition strategy which serves as a rocket start to social interaction in the L2 and offers valuable support in the communicative events needed for further L2 acquisition.

It is important to take into account here the fact that immersion research in the early years in Finland reflects the national context in which language proficiency objectives are prioritised in educational research. As literacy is not a part of the kindergarten or preschool activities in Finland, general language awareness and oral proficiency are therefore the major research interests for early years' immersion. In order to assess children's oral proficiency in their L2, researchers have endeavoured to analyse the language learning situation and develop appropriate tests, taking the relevant socio-linguistic aspects of the learning context into account. It is particularly relevant that almost all young children in immersion in Finland only have the opportunity of hearing and using their L2 while they are in their immersion kindergarten or preschool, and have little or no exposure to the language outside of those settings. Therefore, it is important to define what types of language items are naturally contextualised in kindergarten and preschool as a basis for testing. Furthermore, in order for immersion children to acquire a functional L2 lexicon and syntax that is appropriate for children of their age, it is necessary to examine and train educators to prepare carefully planned activities and language routines for the introduction and use of the kind of language items that are very central to young learners but are less likely to occur in outside of the home environment.

Thus, the sociolinguistic context in Finland results in these young children having exposure to two languages in quite separate contexts: only/mainly Finnish (their L1) at home and outside ECEC, and only/mainly Swedish (their L2) only in immersion ECEC (though other children offer input in Finnish there also). This may be one reason why immersion research in Finland has not been strongly test-oriented, since standardised tests tend to ignore the specific language background of immersion children. Instead, there has been a distinct research preference for analysing naturalistic situations in kindergarten and preschool. This is exemplified by the study reported in the second part of this article where we presented extracts from a qualitative and fine-grained analysis of language learning and metalinguistic reflection in the interactions between an individual educator and small groups of children over time in an early years' immersion setting. Such in-depth analysis casts additional light on the incidental learning process among these young children in an immersion ECEC, showing it to be both home-like in certain ways, such as in types of activities and roles, but also formally reactive to pedagogical input and consciously reflective as children work together to find and use meaning in their new language items. The children's young age tends to bring the caretaking role into the foreground. Because the educators systematically speak only the L2, their every verbal production provides children with L2 resources. Because the children are in similar age groupings and at similar stages in learning their L2, and because they are young enough to think aloud quite naturally as they

engage in activities, they are enabled to reflect on their language experience and make use of their L2 resources by recycling words and, as their proficiency develops, incorporating syntactic structures gleaned from the highly contextualised input of their educator. At the initial stages, the recycled items are incorporated only into what are mainly L1 turns. By the second year, the children have learned how to modify the recycled items, and to incorporate them appropriately into fully L2 turns.

Conclusions

This article has outlined a body of research on Swedish immersion in the early years in Finland, incorporating the different research objectives of examining immersion parents' expectations, evaluating kindergarten/preschool as a learning environment in immersion, and assessing both quantitative and qualitative research results of outcomes. When elements of early L2 production among children have been evaluated and documented in Swedish immersion research, typically they have not been viewed as a collective outcome, measured only via language tests. Instead, children's L2 use has been related to their learning, teaching and communication contexts in the immersion kindergarten and preschool environment, as exemplified in the discussion of the CA data presented here.

This review shows that the scientific evaluation of immersion kindergartens in early years' education in Finland appears to be relatively well documented, in comparison with some immersion programmes implemented elsewhere. Up to now, Finnish research results of early years' immersion have mainly been used for national programme development and teacher training. Such results have been disseminated and published mainly in national and Nordic scientific forums. This offers a valuable contribution to international immersion research which has not hitherto received much attention, since it has mainly been published in languages other than English. We argue that increasing the international discussion of research on immersion in such contexts view would be very valuable, because international comparative research would help to foster provision, quality and good practice in immersion education in general, and because many of the results obtained in studies of particular early immersion contexts are neither context-specific nor language-specific.

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Notes

[i] Basic education is a term used in Finland for the compulsory education in grades 1–9. Grades 1–6 was formerly called ‘primary school’ and grades 7–9 ‘secondary school’ but these have been labelled ‘basic education’ since their integration some years ago.

[ii] The example is abbreviated here. The whole example is analysed in Savijärvi and Seppänen (2010).