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Impromptu vocabulary work in English mother tongue instruction

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines how unplanned vocabulary work arises out of students’ talk. Furthermore, we show how the teacher and students jointly contribute towards the ensuing teaching trajectories, whereby the vocabulary items are turned into ‘teachables’, i.e. interactionally emergent objects of explicit teaching. In doing so, we also explore what aspects of vocabulary knowledge are targeted.

This collection-based study uses conversation analysis to examine video recordings of fairly advanced heritage speakers of English from English mother tongue instruction classes in Sweden. The analyses reveal a variety of ways in which the teaching trajectories arise: the teacher’s substitution requests for a more appropriate word; a student’s naming and word-confirmation requests; the teacher’s or a student’s translation and meaning requests. A third of these requests were initiated by a student. The trajectories then developed collaboratively and were tailored to the local context to address issues of meaning, form and use. Establishing the meaning of a word frequently involved (and could combine) requesting/providing, e.g., definitions and translations. Form could be targeted by carefully enunciating topicalised lexis or writing it on the board, and vocabulary use was typically elaborated by contextualising words and sometimes by exploring collocations.

KEYWORDS
Mother tongue instruction; English as a heritage language; vocabulary teaching; collaborative learning; conversation analysis

1. Introduction and background

Though there is general consensus within both research and the teaching profession as to the central role of vocabulary in language learning contexts, there is still a multitude of differing views concerning the specifics of what to teach and how to teach it. Part of the difficulty has to do with the complexity involved in ‘knowing a word’ and which aspects of this knowledge language teachers are able to deal with when approaching any given vocabulary item (Nation 2013, 44). Language acquisition research often frames the lexical dimension in terms of dichotomies such as implicit-explicit and receptive-productive, as regards the nature of such knowledge, and deliberate-incidental, as regards the process of acquiring such knowledge. These types of distinctions convey a view of learning as an individual, psycholinguistic process, divorced from its more nuanced social and situated contexts, where vocabulary items emerge as impromptu teachable learning objects. In
contrast, research on vocabulary instruction has hitherto focused mostly on planned vocabulary instruction, as pointed out by Waring, Box and Creider (2016, 88), thus emphasizing the strategies of teachers and curriculum planning of vocabulary-oriented tasks and activities.

Student or learner-centred teaching approaches, on the other hand, advocate flexibility in the classroom and embracing student interests and prior knowledge to promote engagement and active participation (Campbell and Kryszewska 1992, 5; Hedge 2000, 34–35). They welcome students’ contributions and ‘greater control over the learning process’ (Hedge 2000, 35) as a component of increasing responsibility for one’s own learning. It has been argued that the unique needs of heritage language learners would best be met through pedagogical approaches that take students’ existing abilities and backgrounds into account (Kagan and Dillon 2008, 149; 2011, 497). This is in line with what Lynch (2003, 37) terms ‘discourse-level activities’, which maintain the ‘dialogic and socially discursive’ contexts through which they have acquired their heritage language. However, more knowledge is needed about how these types of practices play out in interaction between teachers and students in heritage language settings (Kagan and Dillon 2012, 81). Hence, the current study takes its starting point in the actual discursive practices where vocabulary items are targeted on a moment by moment basis in teacher–student talk.

Mortensen (2011, 135) notes that vocabulary ‘is always a possible and relevant aspect to be extracted “on the fly” from the ongoing course of action in the language classroom and made a subject for explicit teaching’. His study of adult Danish as a second language classrooms closely examines how on-the-fly vocabulary teaching is done on a turn-by-turn basis. Similarly, other recent conversation analytic or micro-analytic studies on vocabulary teaching have greatly contributed to a nuanced understanding of vocabulary explanations in the language classroom by examining how this type of work unfolds in the moment-by-moment interaction of real-life classrooms. These have come from various language learning settings ranging from second or foreign language contexts (e.g. Lazaraton 2004; Majlesi 2014; Markee 1995; St John 2010; Waring, Box, and Creider 2016; Waring, Creider, and Box 2013) to – more rarely – content and language integrated learning contexts (Kääntä, Kasper, and Piirainen Marsh 2016; Morton 2015) and mother tongue instruction (MTI) contexts (Stoewer Forthcoming). Waring et al. (2013, 254) for example, examine what they call ‘analytic’ (verbal) and ‘animated’ (multimodal) approaches to word explanations among intermediate adult learners of English and find the following recurrent sequential pattern:

1. set WORD in focus (e.g. repeat, display on the board)
2. contextualise WORD (e.g. use in a sentence)
3. invite or offer explanation
4. close the explanation with a repetition (e.g. repeat, summarise)

The current study casts the net wider to include a far broader range of unplanned vocabulary teaching sequences that arise out of student-initiated trouble during whole-class activities, i.e. when students signal lack of understanding of a word or when they lack the right word in English. Using a multimodal ethnmethodological and conversation analytic (EMCA) framework (cf. Mondada 2014; Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974; Seedhouse 2004), we examine vocabulary practices in a hitherto rarely explored language classroom context: MTI in Sweden.
MTI is Sweden’s heritage language programme which allows compulsory and upper-secondary school students who speak a language other than Swedish in the home (in this case English) to receive state-funded support in maintaining and developing that language in school. MTI is an elective subject available upon parental request and it is included in the national curriculum under the Education Act of 2010 (SFS 2010:800; Skolverket [Swedish National Agency for Education] 2017a). It is estimated that over a quarter of all students in compulsory school are eligible to attend in one of well over a hundred languages represented by Sweden’s school population (Skolverket 2017b). Previous inquiries into MTI have focused on enduring discrepancies between policy and implementation on the ground level (Municio 1987; Hyltenstam and Tuomela 1996; Reath Warren 2013; Spetz 2014). MTI teachers’ beliefs and language ideological challenges and possible implications for practice have also been explored (Ganuza and Hedman 2015, 2017a). A recent experimental study seeking to measure the effects of MTI among Somali-Swedish students suggests it has a positive impact on reading comprehension, despite the limited time allotted the subject (less than one hour per week; Ganuza and Hedman 2017b). As in the case of other types of heritage language settings (e.g. Kagan and Dillon 2011), there is a shortage of classroom-based studies of MTI (but see Ganuza and Hedman 2015, 2017a; Reath Warren 2013). In particular, the current study fills a gap in the literature on MTI by attending to the concrete details of how it is accomplished as situated social interaction (see also Stoewer Forthcoming).

The multimodal EMCA approach adopted in this study allows us to home in on the vocabulary teaching and learning process and highlight the sequential import of all participants’ contributions. In addition to illustrating how lexical items become ‘teachables’, i.e. topicalised in explicit interactionally emergent vocabulary teaching sequences (cf. ‘learnables’ in Majlesi 2014, which suggests a greater focus on learning), we also show how the teacher manages impromptu vocabulary teaching trajectories and how the vocabulary work develops collaboratively as a multi-party activity (cf. Goodwin 1996).

Furthermore, as Nation (2005, 2013) points out, ‘knowing’ a word is a complex issue, involving form (spoken and written), meaning and use. By examining the teaching trajectories, this paper also highlights the different aspects of vocabulary knowledge that are targeted during emergent vocabulary-focused sequences (cf. Nation 2005, 2013) and how these correspond to the original ‘trouble’ as well as the distribution of knowledge in the class. Throughout, we explore the ways in which the students display their advanced knowledge as heritage language speakers.

Thus, the current study addresses the following research questions:

- In what ways does unplanned vocabulary work arise out of student talk?
- How are the lexical items managed and turned into ‘teachables’?
- What aspects of vocabulary knowledge are targeted in the teaching trajectories?

2. Data, setting and method

The data for this study draws on a corpus of 30 h of video recordings of English MTI lessons. The recordings involve three groups of students, between the ages of 6 and 15, who attended the classes with the same teacher. Lessons took place once a week at two mainstream compulsory schools in a medium-sized municipality in Sweden. Each lesson was one hour long and took place after ordinary school hours, with some students
commuting from other schools for the purpose of attending the MTI lessons. The teacher, a native English speaker and adult learner of Swedish, was employed by the municipality and commuted to each school for the lessons, bringing her own teaching materials with her. The video recordings were made using two video cameras, which were placed in the classroom at diagonal angles in an attempt to capture as much of the interaction as possible.

All participants were informed of the purpose of the study and written consent from parents/guardians and students was obtained, in accordance with the Swedish Research Council’s ethical guidelines (Vetenskapsrådet 2002) for research in the humanities and social sciences. Accordingly, the names of participants and places have been changed to ensure anonymity.

In line with the EMCA framework that informs this study (cf. Mondada 2014; Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974; Seedhouse 2004), a collection of instances centring on teaching and learning vocabulary was made across the corpus. Vocabulary work that arose spontaneously in a variety of contexts was found to be a very frequent occurrence in all the groups. To narrow down the focus for the present study, only examples of vocabulary items that arose in or from student talk were selected for analysis. Based on how vocabulary items emerged, the data yielded 21 cases, which we divided into three main categories according to whether the teacher or a student initiated the sequence, with respective subdivisions according to the type of request made: (1) teacher-initiated: four substitution requests, that is, a student’s use of an incorrect or inappropriate word occasioning the teacher’s repair initiation; (2) student-initiated: (a) two naming requests where a student asks the name of an identified object: ‘what’s x?’; (b) one word-confirmation request where a student initiates confirmation of whether a word is the correct one; and (3) teacher or student-initiated: (a) two meaning requests, whereby either the teacher or a student asks: ‘what does x mean?’ about a word used (read out) by a student; (b) 12 translation requests, more specifically, 8 teacher-initiated and 4 student-initiated requests for a translation of a word or words in Swedish. In addition to topicalisation, the analysis examines the ways in which lexical items were dealt with and treated as ‘teachables’, as well as how the vocabulary sequences were resolved across the teaching trajectories.

The extracts presented in the following come from a group comprised of six students, aged 12 and 14–15. One example for each of the above-mentioned categories has been selected for the analysis, reflecting the diversity of how vocabulary items arise, but also the complexity of trajectories vocabulary work can lead to. The extracts have been transcribed using conventions for conversation analytic (CA) transcriptions created by Jefferson (2004; see the Appendix), with some modifications to include bilingual features of the talk. In some cases, multimodal features of interaction between teacher and students have been highlighted, when these are considered of particular relevance for the analysis (cf. Mondada 2014).

By explicating the sequential unfolding of vocabulary work in situ, EMCA offers a data-driven approach to analysing how participants display and interpret their understanding of what is being accomplished across each of the teaching trajectories. This includes how the teachables arise, become topicalised and what aspects of vocabulary knowledge are targeted and dealt with by the teacher in collaboration with the students.
3. Analysis

Here, we exemplify each of the three categories of vocabulary activities arising spontaneously out of student talk. We show how the vocabulary items arise, how they are managed in real time by the teacher and how the teaching trajectories play out in collaboration with the students. The first example – the repair of an inappropriate word – is quite short and is quickly resolved; the second – a meaning request – is somewhat longer; the third – a translation request of a Swedish word – involves a long trajectory. In the first and third extracts, repair is initiated by the teacher, whereas in the second extract, the meaning requests are student-initiated. We conclude the analysis of each extract by highlighting the various aspects of vocabulary knowledge that are targeted in each sequence.

3.1. Teacher-initiated substitution request of an incorrect or inappropriate word

The first extract illustrates how the teacher initiates repair by topicalising a problematic and inappropriate item of vocabulary that arises in a student’s narrative. In this case, it is the student’s use of ‘vase’ instead of ‘urn’, as a receptacle for someone’s ashes. The teacher has been engaging students in some ‘informal’ talk at the start of lesson, while waiting for everyone to arrive. She has engaged one particular student (James) for a fairly long time before the first extract starts. His narrative, about a holiday abroad, is quite humorous, which is confirmed by the laughter of his fellow classmates.

Extract 1 takes place as James begins to talk about the house he and his family had been staying in. He recounts why his Mum liked staying at this (‘really nice’) house, lent out by friends of theirs, whereas he and his Dad felt slightly uncomfortable because of the responsibility of being guests in someone else’s home. The transcript begins after James has lost his train of thought and (somewhat comically) asks the teacher what he was talking about. She reminds him.

Extract 1 ‘Urn’
Participants: Teacher (TEA), James (JAM), Victoria (VIC), Cathy (CAT), Mary (MAR) and Stephen (STE)

1. TEA: you stayed in someone’s house (they weren’t) there.
2. JAM: 
3. (0.5)  
4. JAM: ehm: my mum was lovin’ actually oh yeah (...) super nice house and that (th’ I wouldn’ wanna touch that I mean that may be like their grandmother in a, (...) hhh[|] in a vase
5. >an’ I might be pouring it into my drink or whatever.
6. TEA: 
7. (0.3)  
8. JAM: it’s really weird.
9. CAT: $ghuh$ $Shoohoohoohoohoo=$
10. VIC: 
11. TEA: =whad’[|] you ;call ;that
   |gazes towards CAT & VIC
14 (0.5)
   | looks back towards JAM
15 TEA: >What’s it? gays

16 (0.4)
17 TEA: (there’s a w-) | word.
   | looks at VIC
18 VIC: L| disgusting?
   | looks at JAM
19 JAM: an ur:n:
   | looks at JAM
20 TEA: no? (.). *<an ur:n:.>*(<articulated very precisely>)
   | TEA looks back at VIC
21 (0.5)
   | TEA gets up to write word on whiteboard
22 CAT: *mm:* um
23 (.)
24 TEA: ur:n: (.). >is there a swedish word for that?!
25 (0.4)
26 VIC: urna\text{\textregistered}
27 CAT: \textregisteredurna\textregistered
28 (0.3)
29 TEA: WHAT?
   | TEA writes “URN” on whiteboard
30 (.)
31 VIC: urna\textregistered
32 (0.5)
33 TEA: >how do you spell it<
34 (0.6)
35 CAT: with an a after.
   | TEA turns & gazes towards CAT
36 (0.5)
37 VIC: Yea:h??
38 (0.5)
39 TEA: URNA?
   | adds an “A” on the end of “URN” on the whiteboard
40 (.)
41 CAT: yeah.
42 VIC: =:yeah:
While relaunching his narrative, James produces a short pause followed by an inbreath and a restart in his utterance while forming his right hand into a pot shape (6, #1), indicating some kind of production trouble, as per a search for the mot juste (Gafaranga 2000; Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977). He resolves the trouble quite quickly, producing the word ‘vase’ and concludes his turn. As he speaks, the teacher engages with him, producing an agreement marker (‘right’, 8) that displays her understanding of the kind of situation he is describing. The image James’s story has conjured up also gives rise to some laughter on the part of other students (11–12), following upon which the teacher produces a substitution request (‘whad’ you ↑call ↓that’, 13), which functions as a correction initiation, since it orients to some problem in James’s utterance. By moving her gaze to the other side of the table, where Cathy and Victoria are sitting, and then panning left again, past Mary (and Stephen) towards James, she indicates that the question is open to the others in the cohort (13, #2). The teacher’s action thus orients to the institutional context and transforms the informal student narrative into a vocabulary activity for the whole group, by topicalising a particular lexical item (‘vase’), while her use of the deictic ‘that’ in place of the noun she is referring to, at the end of the turn construction unit makes the reference somewhat ambiguous. In fact, this is one consequence of her delaying the repair initiation and allowing James to complete his story first, thereby prioritising meaning and communication over form. Thus, with no immediate uptake forthcoming, she turns back to James and reformulates her request, by specifying the lexical item that constituted the trouble source (‘vase’, 15, #3). After a very brief pause, she further clarifies that she is eliciting a specific lexical item (‘there’s a w-word’, 17) that would presumably be more suitable in the context of James’s narrative. In overlap with the teacher’s substitution request, Victoria supplies a humorous candidate (line 18) in the form of an adjective (‘disgusting’) that would serve to modify the noun rather than replace it with a more suitable term. We might note in passing that Victoria’s playful candidate demonstrates a high level of semantic, grammatical and syntactic competence in English (see Čekaitė and Aronsson [2014, 200] on metalinguistic play among L2 learners).

In line 19, James self-repairs by supplying the word ‘urn’. The teacher confirms the correctness of this candidate through her more precisely articulated repetition (cf. Mortensen 2011) after she dismisses Victoria’s suggestion (20). She further topicalises the new vocabulary item by writing it on the whiteboard (21), and repeating it once more. Semantically, a ‘vase’ is a type of vessel, usually for holding cut flowers, whereas an ‘urn’ is a similarly shaped vessel with another specific purpose: for keeping a deceased person’s
ashes. James’s narrative provides the necessary contextualisation for why the word ‘vase’ is inappropriate here. Indeed, both the laughter and comments from the teacher and the other students demonstrate that there are no issues of lacking intersubjectivity at play here.

Interestingly, however, the teacher tags on an inquiry directed at the cohort as to whether there is an equivalent in Swedish (24). Given James’s self-repair, the teacher’s prompt for a Swedish equivalent can be viewed as making use of yet another resource at hand to deal with the vocabulary item, whilst she once again invites participation from the whole group (see also her follow-up question about the spelling in line 33). Moreover, the teacher’s utterance is produced as a genuine question, one that she does not know the answer to. Eliciting a translation brings the other shared language on board and explores whether the same type of semantic distinction between vase and urn exists in Swedish as in English. It turns out that it does (26–27), and that the Swedish word is a cognate, very similar in appearance to the English word. The teacher’s display of lack of epistemic access (Stivers, Mondada, and Steensig 2011, 6) to the Swedish word (e.g. 24, 33) also allows the students to demonstrate their epistemic authority (Heritage 2005, 197) when it comes to knowledge of Swedish. Another interpretation of the teacher’s translation request (24) is as a way of checking students’ understanding of ‘urn’ that involves the entire cohort (cf. Stoewer Forthcoming on translation requests as comprehension checks).

Summing up, extract 1 exemplifies the topicalisation of a vocabulary item that arises ‘spontaneously’ within a student narrative, i.e. the item was not part of a pre-planned exercise or thematic area of teaching in the lesson. The student displays some orientation to trouble in completing the narrative, but quickly resolves the trouble and almost seamlessly completes his turn. The teacher topicalises the vocabulary item by initiating correction and orienting to the student’s use of an inappropriate word for the context. Figure 1 summarises the resulting vocabulary work, in which different aspects involved in ‘knowing a word’ are addressed (see Nation 2005, Table 32.2). For example, two aspects of form are highlighted: pronunciation, through the teacher’s repetition and articulation (20); and spelling (29, 39), though students are not expected to repeat the word (cf. Mortensen 2011). Moreover, these aspects are highlighted in both languages, at the teacher’s initiative. Meaning is dealt with indirectly through substitution requests for a more suitable word for the context and involvement of a translation to the other language. Vocabulary use is not developed further, on the other hand, for example through further contextualisation (cf. contextualisation in Waring, Creider, and Box 2013, 251). Indeed, the context in which ‘vase/urn’ have arisen is treated as sufficient.

**Figure 1.** An overview of the vocabulary work in Extract 1.
3.2. Student-initiated meaning request

Extract 2 exemplifies how a student requests a definition of a particular item of vocabulary, here the verb form 'plotting'. The request arises while students have been taking turns at reading from Roald Dahl’s children’s novel *The Twits*. At the point where Victoria makes her request (4), ‘plotting’ has occurred for the second time in the same paragraph and is central to understanding Mrs Twit’s dialogue (see Figure 2).

Extract 2 ‘Plotting’
Participants: Teacher (TEA), Stephen (STE), Victoria (VIC), James (JAM), Fredrik (FRE) and Mary (MAR)

1 STE: ((reading))>whenever you go< all quite [sic] like that (0.7)
2 I know very well you’re plotting something
3 (0.5)  
4 VIC: |what does plotting mean?
   |VIC looks up towards TEA
5 TEA: ^PLOTTING YEAH WHAT DOES |PLOTTING
   |TEA looks up at gp
6 TEA: | MEAN. #2 >d’s anyone know?<
   |FRE looks towards TEA & half raises hand
7 FRE: ^like eh::m (0.6) makin’ a plan?

#1

8 (0.7) | |TEA looks back at text and nods
9 TEA: |planning |to do something is |plotting.
   |TEA starts nodding gently again |looks up at F & back at text
   |FRE & VIC start to look back at texts
10 VIC: |mhm?:
11 TEA: EH::M | (.). A PLOT (.). IS | (.). ALSO:, (1.6)
   |TEA looks up but ‘unfocused’ below students’ eye level
   |VIC looks up again at TEA
13 TEA: UH::: |A PIECE OF LA:ND
   |lifts both hands from desk
14 (0.6)
15 TEA: someone can say| um <I HAVE |A PLOT (.). OF LAND> (.3)
   |FRE looks up at TEA
   |TEA stretches out lt arm & hand
16 >|over in::< (0.5) [place name]? (.). WHERE I GRO::W:
   |VIC nods
17 FRE: (0.4) [3
   |FRE taps desk
19 TEA: CHERRIES?
You're plotting something,” Mrs. Twit said, keeping her back turned so he wouldn’t see that she had taken out her glass eye. “Whenever you go all quiet like that I know very well you’re plotting something.”
When Stephen reaches the end of the sentence containing ‘plotting’, Victoria looks up from her text and addresses her meaning request to the teacher, who is sitting in front of her (4, #1). Even before Victoria completes the target word, the teacher repeats it and re-poses Victoria’s question as a counter-question (Markee 2000), but opening it up to the group through her gaze and speaking in a louder volume (5), rather than answering it herself. Fredrik responds, firstly by looking towards the teacher and half-raising his hand (6, #2), before launching a definition with try-marked intonation: ‘makin’ a plan?’.

The teacher nods her acceptance of Fredrik’s definition, but she paraphrases his definition while recycling the keyword ‘plan’ (9), before completing her turn with the target word. Victoria responds with a change-of-state token, ↑mhm?↑ (Heritage 1985), on having received an explanation to her meaning request.

The confirmation of Fredrik’s definition could have been the completion of the teaching sequence, which is in fact projected by Victoria and Fredrik adjusting their posture and gaze to focus again on the text (9). Instead, the teacher produces a prolonged hesitation marker and looks up again from her text (12). Rather than addressing the students directly again through her gaze, she looks into the middle distance with a glazed look, in a manner similar to that observed in word searches (Goodwin and Goodwin 1986; cf. also ‘thinking zone’ in Boblett 2018). Again in a loud voice, but delivered in a staccato fashion, she proceeds with ‘exploratory talk’ by reopening the teaching trajectory with a homonym of the verb ‘plot(ting)’ thereby experimenting with alternatives (Boblett 2018). She signals that the word is different by changing word class, prefacing the noun with an indefinite article, ‘A PLOT’, as well as projecting a different meaning ‘IS ALSO’ (12). After a long pause and yet another stretched hesitation marker, she produces a definition: ‘A PIECE OF LAND’ (13). To produce ‘contextualisation’ for the homonym, the teacher then produces an example of what ‘someone can say’ using ‘a plot’ (see Waring, Creider, and Box 2013, 251). The example sentence is punctuated with a few pauses and hesitations while she composes her example sentence making reference to the students’ local area (15–16, 19).

Just as the teacher is about to launch her example sentence, Fredrik looks up again from his text and turns his gaze towards her. When she reaches the first potential transition relevance place (TRP) in her example sentence after the local place name followed by a micropause, Fredrik then makes his first attempt to proffer another homonym. However, the recognitional onset (Jefferson 1983) of Fredrik’s turn results in overlap and is drowned out by the loud continuation of the teacher’s example sentence, produced as an increment (Ford, Fox, and Thompson 2002). During the pause (18) before the teacher’s final word, Fredrik indicates by tapping on the desk that he wishes to take a turn (#3). After the second TRP emerges in the teacher’s turn, Fredrik then relaunches his bid to provide a new homonym. At the same time, he has designed his turn to build on the teacher’s proposed homonym: a plot of land. He does so by prefacing it with ‘or’ followed by an alternative locus ‘in a book’ (21) in contrast with the location of the plot of land ‘over in [place name]’. Fredrik signals a different meaning through the discourse marker ‘or’, a different locus, and by substituting the indefinite article with the definite article: ‘the plot?’.

As soon as Fredrik has produced his alternative locus for a ‘plot’, the teacher indicates her first acceptance of his suggestion by pointing at him with her right hand (21). This is confirmed by her partial repetition of his alternative locus, but substituting the indefinite
with the definite article: ‘THE BOOK’ (23). In fact, Fredrik’s homonym is more related to the context of reading a story than the teacher’s homonym, which the teacher then exploits by means of her subtle substitution. By replacing ‘a book’ with ‘the book’, she moves from the general to the activity in progress immediately before Victoria’s clarification request. Indeed, the question format in which she inserts and thereby contextualises Fredrik’s homonym in line 25 specifically mentions The Twits. Her question could have been used to elicit answers from the group to check their comprehension of ‘the plot’. However, after a brief pause, she does not explain the plot either, but rather she proceeds to define the new homonym as ‘THE CORE of the story’ while illustrating ‘core’ by creating a ball with her hands (27, #4; cf. Waring et al.’s [2013, 258] ‘animated’ explanations). When the teacher then recycles the preface to her previously aborted word search (‘the main’) and once again signals word search problems (28–29), Fredrik first indicates wanting to take a turn by raising his hand from the desk (in a similar manner to #3) during the long pause, before he offers another definition of the homonym he has in fact suggested (29–30). The delayed direct acceptance of Fredrik’s response occasions his hedging discourse marker, ‘kind of’ (33). Although the teacher produces a formulation recycling most of Fredrik’s words (‘what […]’s about’) to conclude her extended definition turn (39–40), her first delayed response to Fredrik indicates an expansion of his definition to include the characters. At the same time, she returns to her previously incomplete turn, recycling ‘the main’ and now combining it with both ‘characters’ and then ‘story’ (32). Here, she uses ‘story’ as a synonym to ‘plot’, rather than the meaning of a ‘tale’ in Fredrik’s definition (30). Then once again, she connects her definition of ‘plot’ to The Twits, by referring to the main characters (34), before concluding with a more generalised definition with indefinite articles: ‘a PLOT of a story’ (39). After receiving a definition of the third homonym, Victoria acknowledges yet again her recipiency of the teaching trajectory (42; cf. also 11, 16, 38), as the initiator of the meaning request. Returning her gaze to the text (42) also anticipates the closure of the exposition; indeed, the teacher then returns to the reading of The Twits (46).

Figure 3 summarises the vocabulary work that takes place in this second example. In contrast to extract 1, in this case, the vocabulary item arises in the context of a story the students are reading aloud. The sequence is initiated by a student in the form of a meaning request. Both for this reason and because the word ‘plotting’ is already available in written form in the students’ texts, the work revolves primarily around the semantic content of the item, without which the part of the text that has just been read cannot be understood. Unlike the two homonyms that follow, no contextualisation is offered, or indeed needed, since the item has already arisen in a given context. However, when the teacher explores another meaning of the topicalised lexical item beyond the local context, she not only defines the homonym (13) but she also contextualises

![Figure 3](image-url). An overview of the vocabulary work in Extract 2.
(exemplifies) it (15–16, 19). Another student follows suit and adds a third homonym, which receives similar treatment with definitions and contextualisations, but also supplying a synonym (32 ‘story’). The vocabulary work, developing aspects of meaning, use and form, is thus achieved collaboratively, through the teacher’s use of counter-questions (Markee 2000) to elicit definitions from students, as well as her opening up other opportunities for students to contribute. Furthermore, their collaborative efforts are visible through their recycling of each other’s language. The meaning of the homonyms is mainly targeted through an initial meaning request, definitions and providing a synonym. Vocabulary use of two of the homonyms is also dealt with through contextualisation, though aspects of form only arise indirectly by the homonyms crossing word classes (from verb to nouns).

Although one could ask whether the teacher’s introduction of synonyms and definitions relating to other forms of the word led to an unnecessarily long and potentially confusing interruption of the reading activity (cf. Nation 2013, 128), there is nothing in the data that indicates that the vocabulary work itself is perceived as problematic by the students. Indeed, Fredrik’s quick and eager attempts to contribute to the vocabulary work demonstrate once again the high level of competence that is on display in this group. One might even view the teacher’s introduction of a perhaps less common definition of plot (12–13) as an attempt to use the opportunity to extend their vocabulary knowledge beyond the immediate context.

3.3. Teacher-initiated translation request of a Swedish word

The third extract exemplifies vocabulary work revolving around a word in Swedish produced as part of a student’s narrative. The item that first gives rise to the impromptu vocabulary activity is uttered earlier, before the beginning of the transcript. Victoria has told the teacher about her initiative to make coffee-drinking more affordable for young people in the town. In response to a follow-up question by the teacher asking how Victoria will bring about this change, Victoria tells the teacher that she plans on taking it up with the ‘ordförande of ungdomsfullmäktige’ (the chairperson of the youth council).

Extract 3a begins after an insertion sequence involving the first word (ordförande) has been dealt with and concluded. The teacher then rounds off a comment regarding one specific café in town and returns to Victoria’s narrative.

Extract 3a: ‘Ungdomsfullmäktige’ Youth Council

Participants: Teacher (TEA), Victoria (VIC), James (JAM), Cathy (CAT), Fredrik (FRE), Mary (MAR) and Stephen (STE)

1 TEA: U::HM so you talked to the (...) representative of all cafés in: 
2 VIC: no: of ord-| ungdomsfullmäktige. youth council
   |TEA screws up eyes
3   (0.6)
4 TEA: [what’s ungdoms-| <ungdomsfullmäktige> in english.| youth council
   |TEA looks ahead of her
   |VIC averts gaze & smiles|VIC looks upwards smiling
5 VIC: =teenager fu- {0.4} full:: {0.5} mighty. | shakes head & smiles
T: $hh hh hh hh hh hh hh hh hh hh hh
C: $mh$ $mh$ $mh$ $mh$
F: raises arm in air
C: $he$ $he$ .huh$
T: $hh$ $hh$ sorry that was funny (.). $hh$: huhuhuhuhuhu
V: [$mhuhuhuhu$]
T: .hh:$ teenager: [[0.3] teenager forum?]
gazes upwards
F: raises shoulders & raises hands upwards
T: .ts (0.6) teenager:
C: [child]

T: |no?: |what’s a fullmäktige<? |
screws up eyes council
F: >I don’t even know<
T: ‘kay >you don’ even know in swed- I don’ know in swedish.< (.)
fullmäktige is kind of a, .ts (0.3) [political:] (.)
council |looks towards CAT & VIC
is it political?
V: [yeah it is.]
C: [nods head]
T: |we have, (0.7) kommunfullmäktige riksdags--
city/municipal council |parliament
|TEA gazes upwards |TEA screws up face & looks at CAT
T: =COUNTY:: (0.8) |council.
F: county council |
T: whoa:$h$ |
gazes to left |council.
|clicks finger
T: (0.3)
T: $council$. (.). {{clears throat}}
gets up
|TEA makes space on whiteboard
In line 1, the teacher signals a return to a previously unresolved matter by clearly prefaces her turn with boundary work (‘U:HM’), and using a continuation marker (‘so’), then summing up what has been said previously (cf. Waring, Box, and Creider 2016, 93). Her emphasis on ‘all’ and the unfinished turn issued with a stretched final consonant invites Victoria to confirm and continue her story. Victoria’s correction (2) not only underlines that the content of her narrative has been misinterpreted somewhat by this point, but also results in her repeating the second Swedish term (‘ungdomsfullmäktige’; Eng. ‘youth council’) used in her original utterance earlier. Victoria’s repetition of the Swedish word thus sets the stage for the teacher’s translation request on line 4. The teacher’s facial expression, her redirected gaze towards the cohort and her explicit translation request (‘in english.’) orient to the monolingual norm in place (see Stoewer Forthcoming). Her restart and slow production of the Swedish word highlights it both as long (it is a compound word) and difficult to pronounce. As soon as the teacher has issued her translation request, Victoria’s upward gaze signals a word search (cf. Goodwin and Goodwin 1986; Boblett 2018; ‘thinking zone’) and her smile perhaps
indicates her lack of epistemic access (Sert and Jacknick 2015) and/or foreshadows her prompt and humorous candidate translation (5).

Victoria’s candidate translation (‘teenager full mighty’, 5) is a literal, morpheme-by-morpheme translation of the Swedish compound noun. Her drawn-out articulation shows how the utterance is produced incrementally. It should be pointed out here that, though fullmäktige is Swedish for ‘council’, the Swedish adjective mäktig translates to ‘powerful’, or ‘mighty’ in English. Victoria shakes her head and smiles as she completes her turn, further indexing the utterance as a literal but facetious candidate. Her juxtaposition of words from Swedish to English results in a comical construction, provoking laughter by the teacher and other students. In the midst of this laughter, Fredrik recycles Victoria’s words, adding a super-hero gesture that embodies the new connotation created by her word-play (10 #2, see Čekaitė and Aronsson [2014; 198] on language play improvisations; Waring 2013; 206‒207). Lines 5‒10 thus illustrate the advanced level of the participants, in both languages (see Bell [2005; 203‒204] for language play as a marker of proficiency; Pomerantz and Bell 2007).

In line 13, the teacher accounts for her lengthy laughter and then redirects focus to the institutional task at hand by producing some more ‘legitimate’ candidates. She opens an exploratory sequence where she also enters a ‘thinking zone’ (displayed by prolonging ‘teenager:::’, a pause and averted gaze; cf. Boblett 2018) before offering a new suggestion (‘teenager forum’, 15). This recycles the first part of Victoria’s utterance, treating it as acceptable, and builds on it, adding and experimenting with her own candidate (‘forum’). The latter is try-marked through rising final prosody. The teacher thus invites further collaboration from the group, framing the vocabulary activity as a collective project. Temporarily suspending work on the first part of the compound noun, the teacher shifts focus to the base word (fullmäktige ‘council’). She holds students accountable for finding an equivalent for the Swedish word, though Fredrik’s claim of insufficient knowledge (22; cf. Sert and Walsh 2013) is treated as confirmation that this is not an ‘easy’ word. The teacher begins the work of unpacking the semantic content of fullmäktige by narrowing down the type of context it would appear in (‘political’, 25‒26). This is achieved in collaboration with the students.

With the help of student contributions, the lexical item in English is elaborated through collocation work. Thus, Cathy’s first example in Swedish, kommunfullmäktige, is quickly picked up by the teacher who produces the first part English word (‘COUNTY’, 31) with stretched prosody, indicating that she is still performing a word search (Goodwin and Goodwin 1986), followed by her delayed emphatic production of ‘COUNCIL’. The teacher repeats the word ‘council’ twice (36, 38) before clearing her throat and getting up to write it on the whiteboard (38‒39). She accompanies her actions by announcing that ‘council’ is a suitable equivalent for fullmäktige. Her mitigating preface (‘I’monna say’, 38) to this declaration both affirms her institutional role as teacher and treats it as a ‘good enough’ equivalent. Interestingly, the teacher does not stop here, but rather continues using
Figure 4. An overview of the vocabulary work in Extract 3a.

colloctions as part of the work of elucidating ‘council’. Lines 42 and 50 show how she adds two more suitable collocations for council to the board. Both of these are supplied by the same student, though one of these (‘hairdresser council’, 48) is acknowledged (53) but treated as a non-serious candidate and ‘re-interpreted’ (50) before being written on the board.

Figure 4 illustrates how the translation of the compound Swedish word embedded in the student’s narrative is approached in situ by breaking it down into parts and tackling the base word first. The teacher does not position herself as knower and involves students in clarifying the meaning of fullmäktige to narrow down possible equivalents in English. Notably, Cathy’s contribution of Swedish collocations that contextualise the item are acknowledged by the teacher, who moves from these to English collocations. Moreover, both Victoria’s and Fredrik’s participation demonstrates their advanced level of English through their playful contributions (5, 48). Besides addressing important aspects of meaning, the teacher highlights aspects of form through verbal repetitions of ‘council’ and through board-work, as well as aspects of use by providing and eliciting collocates of the base part of the original compound noun.

Having resolved the root part of the compound noun (ungdomsfölfölmäktige), the teacher now revisits and re-evaluates the first part, the modifier. Extract 3b, the immediate continuation of 3a, shows how she accomplishes this work in real time.

Extract 3b: ‘Ungdomsfölfölmäktige’ Youth Council
Participants: Teacher (TEA), Victoria (VIC), James (JAM), Cathy (CAT), Fredrik (FRE), Mary (MAR) and Stephen (STE)

64 TEA: how ‘bout- >instead of< it’s not teenager it’s ungdom. (.)
65 is what? youth/young person
66 {0.5}
67 FRE: child. =
68 VIC: =youth?
69 FRE: yOUTH
70 TEA: not children ;youth is a better word.
71 {0.7}

|TEA starts writing “youth council” on whiteboard|
In her turn marked by restarts in lines 64–65, the teacher produces a delayed rejection of Victoria’s previously ratified candidate (‘teenager’, ex 3a: 5, 14, 16). The first part of her utterance (‘how ↑ ‘bout- > instead of<’) suggests that she has another word in mind, but rather than supplying a word herself she uses a pivot construction (with ‘ungdom’ as the pivot; cf. Norén and Linell 2013) to shift from a statement to an elicitation of a more suitable equivalent of ‘ungdom’ from the students (64–65). With two candidates forthcoming (67–68), the teacher rejects ‘child’ and ratifies ‘youth’, through repetition and a positive assessment (70). Further confirmation is that she writes ‘youth council’ on the board (71; cf. Mortensen 2011).

For reasons of space, we have omitted some of the subsequent lines of transcript. To compensate, the complex trajectory of vocabulary work is summarised in Figure 5. In spite of having endorsed a suitable translation for ungdomsfullmäktige through her board work, the teacher does more work to get students to align with her choice of ‘youth’ over ‘teenager’. Taking other student candidates (e.g. ‘child’, 67) into account, the teacher elaborates aspects of meaning by involving the students in definitions and clarifications of both the English (‘youth’) and the Swedish (‘ungdom’), thereby exploring the semantic extension of ungdom. A complication arises when the teacher changes the form of the Swedish to the countable, plural form (ungdomar), whereby she seemingly unwittingly shifts the meaning to ‘young people’. Yet she accords students with epistemic authority in regard to Swedish as part of the vocabulary work of elucidating the English terms. As a result, several suggestions and assessments are produced across both Swedish and English for age-related words, particularly pertaining to children of preschool age (‘kids from dagis’).

In extract 3c, the teacher requests further clarification as to the semantic extension of ‘ungdomar’ (young people) and ‘youth’, but in the process the students reintroduce ‘teenager’ as a possible translation of the teacher’s pluralised Swedish word.

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**Figure 5.** An overview of the vocabulary work from Extract 3b up until Extract 3c.
Extract 3c: ‘Ungdomsfullmäktige’ Youth Council
Participants: Teacher (TEA), Victoria (VIC), James (JAM), Cathy (CAT), Fredrik (FRE), Mary (MAR) and Stephen (STE)

TEA: SMALLBARN, (0.4) uhm (. ) SO WHEN DOES UNGdomar start? youth young people
MAR: (I like) starts smiling
VIC: thirteen?
MAR: (0.3)
TEA: ts hhh it’s not teenagers.
TEA: (I think,)
MAR: no but that’s like what we think,
JAM: it’s like after.
CAT: we use the word for the same thing
MAR: yeah
TEA: for for what (.) for teenagers.
CAT: for teenagers
MAR: ()
TEA: ungdommer is teenagers.
FRE: yeah
MAR: yeah
CAT: yeah
VIC: *yeah!
TEA: MM: (0.4) ts KAY? (0.6)
returns to desk from board
youth council, (0.5) we’ll call it, not teenage council
sits down & looks at VIC
>teenage council sounds funny. (0.4)
anyway so you have told the (. ) head of the, (0.4)
[your council]’s (. ) youth council or, [region] youth council.
VIC: = (city)=
TEA: = (city)’s youth council that you are not gonna be:, (0.3)
.hhh $dr(h i(h)nking$ >coffee why should she care? (0.5)
>bout what you have to say?
Before the teacher has concluded her turn requesting the starting point for ‘ungdomar’ and ‘youth’ (138–139), one student, Mary, begins to supply a candidate that most likely orients to the Swedish word (since it comes in overlap with the English word; 139–140). Her candidate amounts to an explanation that ‘ungdomar’ is synonymous with ‘teenagers’. Victoria also produces an age-related candidate (‘thirteen’, line 143), in overlap with the second part of Mary’s utterance. Though the teacher is still hesitant to accept this definition (145–147), Mary stands her ground (148). Interestingly, this utterance shows Mary asserting epistemic authority (cf. Heritage 2005, 197) over Swedish as ascribed to her by the teacher earlier (see also Li Wei 2014 on co-learning in Chinese complementary schools). Cathy reiterates Mary’s point while also asserting her epistemic authority by using a more objective argument: ‘we use the word for the same thing’ (151). On line 158, the teacher displays her uptake of what the students have said by producing a new equation/hypothesis: ‘ungdommer [sic] is teenagers.’ This statement illustrates the shift in the teacher’s epistemic stance since it clearly contrasts with her utterance at the start of the sequence (3b: 64), which implied a difference between the Swedish ungdom and ‘teenager’. Four students confirm the teacher’s new candidate understanding (159–163).

In the omitted transcript lines, there is a side sequence, during which James makes a tenuous connection to a previous topic. The teacher, however, takes the floor again in line 178 by tutting and uttering a transition marker (“KAY?”) announcing her return to the previous business as she takes her place at the desk again. With her gaze directed at Victoria (179 #5), she puts together the two items that have been the focus of this vocabulary sequence and verbalises ‘youth council’ (180) – which, indeed, up until this point, has only been written on the whiteboard but not spoken aloud. Moreover, she adds the increment ‘>we’ll call it,< ↑not teenage council’. In contrast to her earlier utterance ‘I’m’onna say’ (3a; 37), this time the pronoun includes everyone in the cohort. Thus, while her utterance acknowledges an element of approximation in the translation that has been chosen, it is produced as something that the class has collectively arrived at. Moreover, she asserts her epistemic authority while providing an account for why ‘teenager’ is not appropriate here: because it ‘sounds funny’ (180) when combined with the word ‘council’. In other words, even if teenager is another possible translation of ungdom, it does not work in this case because it is unsuitable in the collocation with ‘council’. This resolution also highlights the difficulty of moving between languages in vocabulary work, since word extensions and collocations may differ.

The teacher’s statements on lines 179–180 mark the conclusion of the vocabulary teaching trajectory, following which the teacher picks up the lost threads of Victoria’s narrative once again (181). She signals this by using the continuation markers ‘anyway so’ before recycling and reformulating her own utterance produced several minutes earlier, at the start of the impromptu vocabulary activity (extract 3a: 1–2). Importantly, she contextualises the target vocabulary by embedding it into her utterance three times (182, 184) before producing a new follow-up question that invites Victoria to continue talking about her plans for making Sweden a better place.

Figure 6 illustrates what aspects of word knowledge have been raised in extract 3c. Developing aspects of meaning have been central. Indeed, the teacher recalibrates her understanding of the semantic confines of ungdomar and its relationship with the English ‘teenager’ as well as ‘youth’. This is a collaborative effort, insofar as the students
clarify that, in Swedish, the plural *ungdomar* is synonymous with ‘teenagers’. Following this, the teacher steers the interaction back to the lexical items that have been written on the board, re-assembling the compound and verbally reconfirming ‘youth council’ as the most appropriate translation of Victoria’s original utterance. She reiterates the repair/assessment of ‘teenager’ as being unsuitable in this collocation, thereby bringing aspects of use to the fore. Finally, the teacher uses the new vocabulary in context as she invites Victoria to continue her story, thus further elucidating lexis in use.

4. Discussion and conclusions

In this paper, we have shown how impromptu vocabulary work arises out of trouble in student talk in English MTI. The trouble occasions requests made either by the teacher or by a student: teacher-initiated substitution requests targeting students’ use of an incorrect or inappropriate word; student-initiated naming and word-confirmation requests; and teacher- or student-initiated meaning and translation requests. Teacher-initiated requests dominate with almost twice as many cases, and with translation requests constituting just over half (12) of all teacher- and student-initiated requests (21). Organisational ly, all three categories are recognisable as spontaneously arising vocabulary teaching trajectories, produced as side sequences embedded within larger, ongoing, temporarily suspended activities, such as student narratives or whole-group activities.

For each of the three categories, the analyses have also elucidated the teaching trajectories, showing how items are multimodally managed and collaboratively turned into ‘teachables’, that is, interactionally emergent objects of explicit teaching. The teacher and also students topicalise items, but irrespective of who initiates the topicalisation, the teacher regularly initiates ‘exploratory talk’ (Boblett 2018), which frequently involves students in the vocabulary work via, e.g. substitution requests (ex: 1: 13–17), counter-questions (Markee 1995, 82) that redirect meaning requests at the cohort (ex 2: 55–56) and translation requests (ex 3: 4). The sometimes complex and lengthy trajectories include various types of verbal and multimodal scaffolding work, such as repetition and precise articulation of topikalised items, writing items on the whiteboard, eliciting definitions or translations from students, recycling lexis from students’ turns, breaking down compound words into parts and reconstituting them. Through these exploratory techniques, the teacher maintains overall control over the
direction of the trajectories, while also facilitating a high degree of student collaboration. Indeed, rather than supplying the correct vocabulary item herself (cf. Huq, Barajas, and Cromdal 2017; Mortensen 2011), the teacher frequently encourages students to do the work of providing or elucidating lexical items.

By explicating the teaching trajectories involved in the vocabulary work, we have shed light on the various aspects of vocabulary knowledge that are targeted in the sequences (see Nation 2005, 2013). What aspect of word knowledge is elaborated tends to be tailored to each emerging context by both teacher (e.g. by responding to student contributions) and students (e.g. by designing their contributions), even though confusion may arise in the process (e.g. mismatching semantic extensions between English and Swedish synonyms). As a result, aspects of meaning, form and use are regularly but variously developed. Meaning is dealt with in a number of ways: via, for example, definitions, clarifications, translations, substitutions, exploring homonyms and semantic extension (e.g. comparing synonyms). As regards form (both spoken and written), the pronunciation and spelling of lexical items are highlighted through the teacher’s carefully articulated repetition and through writing them on the whiteboard. Finally, in dealing with vocabulary use, the teacher provides and requests contextualisation (cf. Waring et al. [2013, 254, component (2)]) and works with collocations and compounds.

One further aspect of ‘knowing a word’ cuts across meaning, form and use, namely translation and comparisons with Swedish, which draws on and assumes both the students’ and teacher’s bilingualism. Thus, despite there generally being an English monolingual norm in place in these lessons, just over half of the targeted lexical items in the collection involve substituting Swedish words that are exploited by the teacher as an additional source of pedagogical material. In line with the syllabus for MTI (Skolverket 2017a, 81), she invites comparisons between Swedish and English form, meaning and use. Nation and Anthony (2016, 362) argue that the ability to find equivalents in the ‘other’ language is a more accurate indicator of word knowledge than, e.g. choosing from a selection of definitions in the same language, a commonly used practice in tests of vocabulary size. Though translation can be a ‘quick, simple and easily understood’ way of communicating word meaning and checking comprehension across the cohort (Nation 2013; 122; see also Stoewer Forthcoming), it also potentially allows ‘deeper and more elaborated processing and therefore may facilitate retention’ (Hummel 2010, 63). Translating is not always simple and straightforward, especially when dealing with more difficult and/or culture-specific lexical items. Producing suitable equivalents for spontaneously arising lexical items is a complex task – one that builds on the distributed knowledge of the speakers since there are no pre-planned answers. Indeed, the process of moving between items in the two languages may shed light on both languages in unforeseeable ways (cf. St John 2010). As extracts 3a, b and c have shown, joint negotiations such as those involved in clarifying the semantic boundaries of closely related items in each language, effectively elaborate and expand students’ (and the teacher’s) existing vocabulary – in both languages (cf. Li Wei 2014).

The findings highlight the fairly advanced level of these MTI students. One way this is no doubt reflected is in the predominance of what Waring, Creider, and Box
(2013) call ‘analytical’ definitions, i.e. verbal as opposed to ‘animated’ or embodied word explanations. However, these students show far greater variation in vocabulary work than the four sequential components of word explanation or definition work described in Waring, Creider, and Box (2013), whose students were at intermediate level. This may be in line with experimental research suggesting that HLLs possess ‘a more diversified vocabulary’ than L2 learners (Isurin and Ivanova-Sullivan 2008; see also Kagan and Dillon 2008), besides also providing some empirical evidence of the potential link between vocabulary knowledge and HL proficiency (cf. Polinsky and Kagan 2007). Some of the more advanced aspects that are targeted in this context include exploring semantic extensions, collocations and translating more ‘difficult’ culturally bound Swedish lexical items. Moreover, the teacher in this data generally displays an expectancy that the pupils might (already) know the items targeted in both Swedish and English and be able to understand long explanations in English. This is evident in the way she involves the students in the vocabulary work, which contrasts with, e.g., foreign language classrooms, where the burden of modifying input so that students can follow along perhaps more saliently lies with the teacher (cf. Huq, Barajas, and Cromdal 2017; Mortensen 2011; see also Barcroft 2018, 25–27; Lightbown and Spada 2013, 128; Nation 2013, 126).

Not only do the students demonstrate their ability to produce and join in on spontaneous narratives, their frequent use of playful and jocular language testifies to their bilingual proficiency. Humorous candidates produced by students were a frequent occurrence in the data and occasionally served as attempts to ‘derail’ the teacher’s pedagogical agenda (see also Li Wei and Wu 2009; Li Wei 2014 for examples of the creative use of code-switching in Chinese complementary schools). However, in contrast with recent critiques of communicative approaches in language classrooms for restricting the types of linguistic practices that are sanctioned (Čekaitē and Aronsson 2005; Pomerantz and Bell 2007), in this data, the teacher usually acknowledged (and sometimes praised) students’ playful contributions before steering the interaction back ‘on track’. This finding suggests a greater flexibility in that the MTI setting is perhaps more similar to ‘out-of-school’ contexts.

A central principle of learner-centred teaching is basing classroom activities on ‘information that the learners themselves bring to class’ (Campbell and Kryszewska 1992, 5). Although the language-focused trajectories exemplified in the data sometimes entailed a prolonged deviation from the content of the students’ narratives, the language work is characterised by being a joint project where participants explore more than one alternative to the vocabulary issues that arise. In this sense, they stand in contrast to previous observations of a hurried, product-oriented focus in MTI (Ganuza and Hedman 2015, 132). On the contrary, the findings here show how, despite similar time constraints, the ground is laid for student-initiated vocabulary work that provides rich opportunities for language learning. While the teacher has the final say on what is a ‘good enough’ definition, translation or otherwise, of topicalised items, she does not assert a position of epistemic authority throughout, particularly as regards the more nuanced aspects of Swedish. Students’ knowledge is brought on board to collaboratively achieve lexical solutions. By providing ample
space for contributions based on students’ own ‘funds of knowledge’ (Li Wei 2014, 171), the teacher in these lessons makes use of the resources available in order to extend and refine their vocabulary and build a solid understanding of items that emerge as ‘trouble’.

Kagan and Dillon (2012) point out the need for classroom-based studies of heritage language learning settings that focus on teacher–student interaction, as well as studies investigating ‘the connection between vocabulary and overall proficiency’ of HLLs (Kagan and Dillon 2011, 501). By examining the micro-details of how impromptu vocabulary sequences arise and are collaboratively developed, moment by moment, in the MTI classroom, the present study offers a more nuanced understanding of the ways MTI teachers contingently ‘differentiate instruction by learner needs’ (Carreira and Kagan 2011, 58) in this highly diverse classroom setting. Additional research on social interaction involving other languages and age groups in MTI classrooms could help paint a broader picture of similarities and differences between heritage language and other bilingual/multilingual language classrooms.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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References


Appendix: Transcription Conventions

- Pauses in speech of tenths of a second
- Pause in speech of less than 0.2 seconds
- Equal sign: latching between utterances
- Opening square brackets between adjacent lines: overlapping talk or other activity
- (between different participants)
- Dash: cut-off word
- Colon: prolonged previous sound
- Words in single brackets: uncertain words
- Word in square brackets: omitted proper noun for ethical reasons
- Words in italics: code-switching into Swedish
- Words in other font: translation of code-switched line above
- Double brackets: comments on contextual or other features, e.g., non-verbal activities
- Underlining: focal stress (marked on stressed syllable)
- Capitals: noticeably louder than surrounding speech
- Encompassing degree signs: noticeably quieter than surrounding speech
- Initial full stop: in-breath or tutting (.ts)

- Encompassing dollar signs: laughter or laughter-infused speech
- Encompassing asterisks: particular voice quality
- Double brackets + asterisk: description of voice quality
- Encompassing inward chevrons: faster than surrounding speech
- Encompassing outward chevrons: slower than surrounding speech
- Full stop: at the end of a falling intonation contour
- Comma: slight rise at the end of an intonation contour
- Question mark: clear rise at the end of an intonation contour
- Upside-down question mark: partial rise at the end of an intonation contour
- Encompassing upward-pointing arrows: higher pitch
- Upward-pointing arrow: marked rise and/or upstep in intonation in the following syllable
- Downward-pointing arrow: marked fall and/or downstep in intonation in the following syllable
- Broken bar in speech line: marker for non-verbal actions in line below
- Broken bar + words in grey: non-verbal actions starting at broken bar in speech line
- Hash + number: numbered image at this exact point