



Becoming an independent Swedish citizen: Critical literacy as a tool for multilingual literacies in Swedish for Immigrants

Åsa Wedin

To cite this article: Åsa Wedin (2023): Becoming an independent Swedish citizen: Critical literacy as a tool for multilingual literacies in Swedish for Immigrants, Studies in the Education of Adults, DOI: [10.1080/02660830.2023.2171097](https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2023.2171097)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2023.2171097>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 27 Jan 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

ARTICLE



Becoming an independent Swedish citizen: Critical literacy as a tool for multilingual literacies in Swedish for Immigrants

Åsa Wedin 

School of Languages, Literature and Learning, Dalarna University, Hedemora, Sweden

ABSTRACT



The aim of this article is to study the space for multilingualism and multiliteracy in the development of literacy skills through critical literacy in Swedish for Immigrants. The focus is on adult second language learners (L2 learners) with low education and Hornberger's continua of biliteracy is used for the analysis of material from classroom observations. The observed teaching included space for multiliteracies and students were explicitly stimulated to bring their own experiences and express their own views. Thus, this linguistic ethnographic study supports earlier claims that all points on the continua are important in literacy education for adults. However, it also shows that conflicting perceptions may exist in class regarding what is happening and what should happen. Topics that are commonly used in critical literacy may further add to such risks. Developing literacy skills in an L2 means hard work, especially developing such skills from basic levels in adulthood. Thus, creating engagement is an important task for teachers, while teachers may hesitate in raising sensitive topics if they fear it may lead to conflict.

KEYWORDS

Swedish for Immigrants; multilingual literacy; continua of biliteracy; critical literacy; adult education; basic literacy education

Introduction

In this article, the use of multilingual literacies in work with critical literacy is studied in classes for adults with limited or no schooling who develop basic literacy skills in an L2 setting. In Sweden, education in Swedish for immigrant adults is arranged through the language programme Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), which is financed through municipalities and free of charge for students. Study path one is aimed at those with less than four years of schooling upon arrival in Sweden. Students complete four courses – A, B, C and D – before then taking a national test. However, many of the students in study path one never reach courses C and D as they fail to pass the lower courses (SOU 2020:66).

CONTACT Åsa Wedin  awe@du.se  School of Languages, Literature and Learning, Dalarna University, Hamre 5 Ollas, 776 90 Hedemora, Sweden

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

A central part of education is the teaching and learning of basic literacy skills. This is particularly challenging as the education normally takes place in Swedish – the language the students are learning. Existing research on SFI is fragmented and not much on literacy or teaching (Lundgren and Rosén 2017, see also Monsen 2021, for a Nordic context).

The demands for rapid development for students in SFI are high in order to facilitate entry into the job market. SFI teachers are required to have teacher education including at least 30 ECTS in Swedish as an L2, while there are no particular requirements in terms of qualifications in teaching literacy. Teacher training in literacy in Sweden generally does not focus on adult L2 learners but rather on children who are developing literacy proficiency in their first language (Colliander 2018).

The importance of preparing SFI students for their needs at home, in society and at work is highlighted in the Swedish Education Act (2010:800, ch. 20, §2). It is therefore important for teachers to teach literacy skills that students need in everyday life. This study focuses on the work of one SFI teacher and her work with critical literacy, with the aim to study the space for multilingualism and multiliteracy in the development of literacy skills in this SFI classroom.

Theoretical framework

Critical literacy as both a research field and teaching methodology has its roots in Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1976) and was established by Freire and Macedo (1987). Freire opposes what he calls the *banking model*, with teachers as the main facilitators who know everything and students nothing. He argues that the result is the oppression of students. The holistic view of literacy, proposed by both Freire, through his reading of the word and the world, and Street (1984), with his ideological model, may thus be linked to each other. Freire's liberating approach links critical literacy to issues of empowerment. Researchers such as Luke and Freebody (1999), Janks (2010, 2013) and Vasquez (2014) have been central to the development of the theoretical field known as critical literacy, which both makes theoretical claims and contributes concrete teaching advice.

The importance of developing critical thinking, not least in relation to digital tools and mass media, is expressed in curricula for adult education in Sweden (Swedish National Agency for Education 2017, p. 7), yet is only implied in the SFI syllabus. However, aspects of power are particularly important for the education of immigrant adults with short or no earlier schooling. Many of these students rely on social subsidies for their living and basic Swedish language skills are commonly a requirement to get a job and thus to become economically independent.

As an adult it is important to be able to handle contact with authorities, healthcare and schools, as well as having access to information through digital tools or mass media. As an SFI student with a low level of education and at beginner level in Swedish combined with low competence in reading and writing, it may be difficult to assert one's own interests, not only in working life and as a citizen but at times also within the family circle (Wedin and Norlund Shaswar 2021). Thus, critical literacy may be a relevant teaching method in the process of becoming independent Swedish

citizens, as it directs the focus towards aspects of power in relation to literacy by researchers such as Luke and Freebody (1999) and Janks (2010).

In this study, the continua of biliteracy model (Hornberger 1989, 2003, Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester 2000) will be used to analyse material from classrooms. The model includes aspects of power in relation to literacy and multilingualism and enables the analysis of complex material in relation to criticism. Based on an ecological perspective on language, this model consists of four sets of interrelated continua: context, media, content and development. It aims to situate ‘research, teaching and language planning in linguistically diverse settings’ (p. 96). The continua intersect and are nested in each other, with each of the 12 continua incorporating power aspects – at one end associated with what is commonly assigned lower status and the other end to what is usually assigned higher status. This follows Street, who argues that ‘for educationalists concerned with ... power, the question is not “how can a few gain access to existing power”, nor “how can existing power structures be resisted” but rather how can power be transformed’ (1996, in Hornberger 2003, p. 39).

The model enables an analysis of the multiple and complex interrelationships between language and literacy in relation to multilingual literacy development. In the model, the concept of ‘biliteracy’ refers to ‘any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing’ (Hornberger 1990, p. 213). The intersection allows analysis of the flexibility and variability in the various dimensions of literacy through a focus on each or some selected continua, without ignoring the importance of and interrelationships with the others. According to Hornberger, ‘the more the learning contexts allow learners to draw on all points of the continua, the greater are the chances for their full biliterate development’ (1989, 286). The model highlights relations between language practices in classrooms and power relations. This makes the model suitable here, as adult immigrants with short schooling and limited literacy skills may face situations in which their knowledge and experiences are less valued.

Earlier research

Research on basic literacy skills among adults draws mainly on literacy practices in everyday settings (Street 1984, Prinsloo and Breier 1996, Wedin 2004, Barton 2007, Norlund Shaswar 2014, Vollmer 2019). Studies on education in basic literacy skills for adults often report experiences in developing countries (e.g. Kerfoot 2009) and education in the form of literacy programmes (Wedin 2008, Singh and Sherchan 2019, Rashid 2020). Studies on literacy education for adult L2 learners have been conducted in different countries including Sweden (Franker 2011, Wedin *et al.* 2018, Norlund Shaswar 2014, Wedin and Norlund Shaswar 2019, 2021), Finland (Malessa 2018), Norway (Monsen 2021), Luxembourg, Canada and Belgium (Choi and Ziegler 2015), Timor (Rashid 2020) and Nepal (Singh and Sherchan 2019) but is fragmented.

In a study on adult biliteracy programmes for Puerto Ricans and Cambodians in Philadelphia, Hornberger and Hardman (1994) argued the inadequacy of a cognitive skills-based view on literacy – what Street (1984) called an autonomous view – and that an emphasis on a single, standardised L2 literacy is of less relevance. According to Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000), what Street calls an ideological view can

assist learners in ‘claiming the ‘right to speak’ through use of their L1 (first language), oral and receptive skills as well as the L2, written, productive skills’. Young-Scholten and colleagues (Young-Scholten 2015, Haznedar *et al.* 2018) argued, among other things, for the importance of supporting students’ earlier languages in literacy education. Rashid (2020) concluded that programmes in themselves, as well as structural limitations on policy level may hinder the literacy development and Singh and Sherchan (2019) showed how literacy programmes that fail to value participants’ own experience and situated knowledge may result in feelings of inadequacy among participants. They argue for teaching that includes culturally contextualised literacy practices which account for students’ lived experiences and knowledge. In a study on Somali adolescents (16–22 years) with limited earlier schooling, Lewis and Bigelow (2019) found that the teaching, which included critical media pedagogies, led to feelings of shame, anger and resentment when students perceived that their cultures, communities and embodied experiences was criticised. Lewis and Bigelow argued for the need for researchers (and teachers) to examine their own cultural assumptions and possible ethical dilemmas that may arise when promoting critical media literacy. Bigelow *et al.* (2017) argue for the benefit of using students’ native languages in education and showed how social media analysis in class may serve multilingual and critical literacy aims.

In Sweden, Franker studied literacy as part of a study of teacher identities and teaching in relation to the languages of the students, while Wedin and colleagues studied classroom interaction and students’ everyday literacy practices (2018; Wedin and Norlund Shaswar 2019). However, there is little research on multilingual practices in the teaching of emergent and basic literacy in formal education for adult L2 students (see however, Wedin and Norlund Shaswar [submitted](#)).

Methodology

This study is part of a larger project: *Literacy education on basic level in Swedish for Immigrants* (2020–2022). The project is an action research study in which teachers and researchers worked collaboratively, with clearly defined roles, to develop teaching in basic literacy in SFI, study path one. Thus, both teachers and researchers developed teaching practices through action research cycles (McNiff 2013) and at the same time about these practices (Zuber-Skerritt 1996, Zeichner 2001). Linguistic ethnography provides the methodological framework (Copland and Creese 2015, Snell *et al.* 2015). Through its focus on language and interaction in educational settings, linguistic ethnography enables linking material on micro levels with processes and events on macro levels while considering aspects of power. In the planning stage of the action research cycles, collaborative discussions between teachers and researchers resulted in the planning of actions based on perceived problems. While teachers planned and taught lessons, the researchers created data through observations, interviews and collection of artefacts. This was then the base for reflections that resulted in plans for new actions. In the actions, some teachers focussed on two topics; becoming a student and critical literacy. Through the first topic, they wanted to encourage students to take responsibility for their own studies and develop suitable, individual learner

strategies. The focus here is on the second topic; critical literacy through which teachers wanted students to develop literacy skills to enable them to participate in society in ways important for them as adult citizens.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions observations only became possible in one of the classrooms and thus this study draws on observations in that specific classroom. Observations (18 h) were documented through fieldnotes, audio- and video recordings (2 h audio and 3 h 20 min video) and photographs of written artefacts (16 photographs). Observations were conducted by the author over two semesters in the classroom with four student groups. Due to the pandemic there were only 4–8 students in each session. Students also had access to digital tools for individual work outside the classroom. All groups consisted of students on the B-course, which means that they had passed the first A-course but were still at beginner level in reading and writing and had limited Swedish language skills. Ages ranged from 20 to 64 years with students from countries including Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Thailand, India, Afghanistan and Somalia. Some of the lessons had a teacher assistant present to support students through another language, such as Somali, Arabic or Thai. When possible, students who shared languages were placed in the same group to facilitate and encourage intragroup support. The teacher also spoke Swedish as an L2 and was an experienced teacher who had completed 90 ECTS in Swedish as an L2 as a complement to her teaching qualification. Although she did not speak any of the languages spoken by the students, she had learned a few words in every language and showed her interest in learning more words in the languages of the students throughout the study. This means that although the setting was a classroom in which the focus was on learning Swedish, many other linguistic resources were used during lessons.

For the analysis, the material was first transcribed by the author, after which aspects of the interrelated sets of continua from Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) were recognised; context, media, content and development. The continua will be explained under findings. Transcription of talk in Arabic was done in collaboration with a researcher in Arabic. As the research was undertaken in close proximity to the teacher who was a participant in the action research, the teacher was given the opportunity to reflect on the analysis. Throughout the study, there were clear roles defined for teacher and researcher, with the researcher assuming full responsibility for the analysis.

Ethical aspects have been considered throughout the research. All participants have been informed and provided their written consent. Students were informed both verbally and in written form in appropriate languages. Video recordings were made only when all participants provided consent, with the camera facing the teacher and the whiteboard and not the students. All material has been stored securely in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Dalarna University data protection plan. All names used are pseudonyms and presentations are conducted in ways that prevent recognition of individuals.

Findings

Through the four sets of content, context, media and development, the nested relations between the 12 continua, appeared in the classroom. Moments and practices

that highlight one or the other have been selected here, keeping in mind that all continua may be understood as relevant in each situation. Consequently, analysis highlighted moments and practices representing both each set of continua, as well as different points on the continua, deliberately selected to establish the extent to which students were offered opportunities for full biliterate development, according to Hornberger (1989). Findings based on the four sets of continua are presented in succession.

Content of biliteracy

In Hornberger's model, content of biliteracy consists of three continua: minority – majority, vernacular – literary and contextualised – decontextualised. Commonly the right side of the continua representing majority, literary and decontextualised is given higher weight in terms of power than those on the left: minority, vernacular and contextualised. These aspects of the teaching were considered in the analysis. Linked to Freire's *banking model* (1976), where the teacher and the school represents power, aspects of power in relation to content of biliteracy considers the kinds of meaning expressed in particular practices and links them to diversity relative to literacy by considering the intersection of school knowledge and personal knowledge.

The main content for the observed lessons was schooling and parent-child relationships. These teacher-initiated contents involved a number of sub-contents, some pre-planned and some initiated during lessons by either the teacher or one or several students. Table 1 presents contents and sub-contents identified during the observed lessons:

Apart from these contents, several minor contents were also initiated both by teacher and students, such as date and weather, prejudices, traffic knowledge, covid vaccination, mobile applications and 'kanelbullens dag' (the cinnamon bun day, a local Swedish celebration). Linguistic issues such as vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar were actualised in relation to the different topics, for example pronunciation of the name 'Schutt', grammatical forms of specific words: 'lektion, lektioner, lektionerna' (lesson, lessons, the lessons) and compound words: 'modersmål' (mother tongue) and 'mobilfri/skärmfri' (mobile-free/screen-free).

Although the main contents were teacher-initiated and may be considered to be at the majority end of the continua, the content was also close to students' everyday

Table 1. Identified contents and sub-contents.

Main contents	Sub-contents
Schooling	Study technique: How do you learn better? Summary: What did you learn today? School rules Similarities and differences between countries A mobile-free school Rules for mobile use in class
Parent-child relationships	The Convention on the Rights of the Child Children's rights in Sweden and in respective home countries, The age at which a child becomes an adult Appropriate age to marry Rules in the home for children, such as screen time and mobile use

lives and also represented minority content. The teacher pre-planned both main contents – the first with the intention of supporting students in becoming more independent in their studies by developing individual learner strategies and also to become aware of their own learning, thus taking more responsibility for their own studies. This may be understood as majority content, given the link to the Swedish school context, where students are commonly given responsibility to independently steer their own studies. It may be simultaneously understood as a way in which to empower students relative to their own studies by giving them access to majority content. The second theme, child-parent relationships was also teacher-initiated and related to the students' experiences, for example by comparing conditions in Sweden to experiences from their home countries. The theme may be considered close to Swedish values and the values dominant in Swedish schools and subsequently related to majority content with some degree of decontextualisation. The way this was used in classroom practices resulted in content close to minority content that was therefore also contextualised.

This means that both the main contents and the sub-contents can be said to draw from varied points on the continua – either from left to right or from shuttling between different positions on the continua. Associations made by the students linked majority content to minority content and literary content in the form of formal texts in textbooks, official posters and information sheets were combined with vernacular forms through students' talk and written texts.

An example of how majority content was related to minority through student experiences, was when the teacher asked students to compare schooling and child care in Sweden to that in their home countries and then arranged them in pairs (Text in bold is spoken in Arabic and translations are made so as to represent the Swedish spoken by students.):

Example 1

Lärare: Ni kan prata med varandra Aisha du kan sitta här det är jättebra Arif att du kan arabiska och du om Aisha (xxx)	Teacher: You can talk to each other. Aisha you can sit here it's great that you can speak Arabic Arif and if you and Aisha (xxx)
Faysa: [skrattar]	Faysa: [laughs]
Lärare: så kan du hjälpa henne ja då kan ni tänka på då kan ni tänka på sådana saker som vi har pratat om med mat m ni kan prata arabiska med mat Awa skola vatten hem	Teacher: you can help her then, right? then you can think about the things that we've talked about with food um you can talk in Arabic about food Awa school water home
Awa: Ja (lärarens namn) skriva barnbidrag	Awa: Yes (teacher's name) write child support benefit
Faysa: Barnbidrag ja	Faysa: Child support benefit yes
Lärare: Jättebra jag kan skriva på tavlan	Teacher: Very good I can write it on the board
Arif: Mathalan sho el-sweed shloon	Arif: Like what how [it is] in Sweden
Aisha: Bs-sweed el-wallad yani, keef huquqho (...)	Aisha: In Sweden children what rights they have (...)
Aisha: Barnbidrag den mammaledig pappaledig	Aisha: Child benefit that parental leave
Teacher: Bra	Teacher: Good
Faysa: Ja den jättebra pengar	Faysa: Yes that very good money

When the teacher arranges students in pairs to talk, they start to discuss issues such as child support benefit, parental leave and economic issues such as students being served food at school. Different languages are used in this example and the situation

in Sweden is compared to students' earlier experiences, such as teacher-student relationships and their own experienced hardships in relation to schooling. In another example, the teacher wanted students to discuss rules about the use of mobile phones in class and reach a joint decision. Students were put into pairs depending on their main languages and tasked with writing suggestions for classroom rules. Group discussion included spontaneous comparison to school rules in the countries where they grew up. One from each pair was then asked to write suggested rules on the whiteboard. While writing, the student received support from the teacher and other students assisted with spelling and grammar.

Once all pairs had written suggestions on the board, the teacher asked students to choose the most relevant rules, such as choosing one out of three with the same content. However, this proved difficult for one of the students, Mariam who was the only student who had passed the exam and was to progress to C-course. This particular lesson was her last lesson in this group and she was the one who had written some of the suggested rules on the whiteboard. The first rule for discussion was the rule expressed by three of the groups about not talking out loud on mobiles in the classroom. The teacher asked students to choose one of the rules or reformulate a new rule based on them. Mariam then became angry and raised her voice to claim that her rule was well-written and should not be replaced by another formulation. An upset discussion took place – Mariam on one side defending her written rule and the teacher and fellow students on the other trying to calm her down and asking that she listens to the teacher. The reason she became upset could be that she understood the situation as an opportunity for her to show her skills as the only student who had passed the exam and was about to move on, while the teacher wanted students to focus on the content of the rules and those they preferred to have in class. This can be understood as a conflict involving both ends of the continua, where the student wanted a majority, decontextualised and literary focus given her consideration that her Swedish writing skills ought to be valued, while the teacher wanted a student focus on the minority, contextualised and vernacular ends of the content continua through the creation of their own classroom rules for mobile use in class.

Although the content in this example was related to both ends of each continuum: minority – majority, vernacular – literary and contextualised – decontextualised, some students may not have the same understanding as the teacher of what was happening. Mariam's frustration might be an example illustrating how she and the teacher had focussed on different ends of the continua – Mariam focussing on stipulated norms and the teacher on students' own perspectives.

Context of biliteracy

The three continua of context of biliteracy in the model are: micro – macro, oral – written and multilingual – monolingual, where power relations tend to be weighted towards the right side of the continua (macro, written and monolingual) while less power tend to be given to contexts on the left (micro, oral and multilingual). In the SFI context, the written Swedish language may be perceived as having high status

particularly through the national test, which specifically assesses literacy skills in Swedish.

The main content in these cases, schooling and parent-child relationships, is related to both macro and micro contexts, with both the school as an institution and the UN Convention creating the macro context, while simultaneously having clear links to the current daily life of the students. The schooling topic in which students developed learning strategies and class rules included discussions where comparisons were made to students' earlier experiences. Consequently, it was related both to macro and micro contexts.

An example of the topic relating to minority contexts is found in the discussion referred to above on rules, where students talked about schooling conditions in their respective home countries and compared experiences. Different examples were given by students in the discussions – one example was a student who demonstrated using her hands how her childhood teacher in Afghanistan had held her hand and stopped her from moving: 'jag kan inte hämta penna' (I can't get pen). Teacher-initiated talk around conditions for girls' schooling resulted in the exchange of experiences and arguments.

Another example in which teacher-initiated discussions related to student contexts was when the topic of 'fördomar' (prejudices) was discussed in relation to a short school film of a staffroom at a healthcare institution. In the clip, colleagues of a newly hired doctor who is a woman of colour wearing hijab, first demanded that she emptied the dishwasher but changed their attitude with the realisation of her rank and showed her high respect. The film resulted in a discussion about how doctors are treated differently in Sweden than in their former countries, as well as about prejudices the students themselves had experienced.

A third example in which macro context related to micro was a teacher-initiated discussion on the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child that started by showing an image from the Red Cross – a child's drawing from a war context. Students were paired up to discuss the image. The result was engaged discussion on war and children, where students discussed in different languages, then explained to each other and the teacher in Swedish. One student said: 'Irak och Syrien krig inte bra för barn.' (Iraq and Syria war not good for children.). The pair discussions were followed by class discussions in which the teacher asked:

Example 2

Lärare: Vad kan vara titel på bilden?

Aysha: Krig

Faisa: Barnkonventionen?

Teacher: What could the title of the image be?

Aysha: War

Faisa: The Convention of the Rights of the Child?

During discussions, students discussed equality with one student commenting: 'Vi är alla lika värda' (We are all equally worthy), which resulted in discussion of the difference between the words 'värda/väder' (worth/weather). The meanings of the word 'rätt' were also discussed. In Swedish, 'rätt' can mean both 'true' and 'fair'. A comparison was also made between 'sant' and 'rätt till' ('true' and 'the right to').

Students shared their experiences of the wars in Syria, Somalia and Afghanistan. Another example of how students related the topic to their own contexts appeared in the discussion on the rights of the child when one student collected all the pens from desks, held them up and said that they may symbolise food. She then distributed the pens to everyone and explained that this was symbolic of the fact that everyone has the right to food. Furthermore, one group discussion about children's right to schooling led to a discussion on the medium of instruction in school. In turn, this led to students asking a recent arrival from India why her language of schooling had been English, which was followed by a discussion on language policies within the context of their experiences. Thus, the macro context was linked to micro contexts through discussions.

Consequently, the practices drew on contexts from diverse points of the continua: from macro to micro, oral to written and multilingual to monolingual. The high-power ends were represented mainly through the teacher's presentations, text on the whiteboard, printed material and film, while students' own talk and written texts may be perceived as more at the low-power end. As talk predominated, the lower ranked ends of the continua may be perceived as present in all practices with students' diverse linguistic resources used throughout all lessons.

Media of biliteracy

Through media, Hornberger's model turns the focus towards the use of varied media in relation to literacy and language. The continua: simultaneous exposure – successive exposure, dissimilar structures – similar structures and divergent scripts – convergent script, address diversity through the investigation of languages as separate or used in parallel, variation of textual form and orthographic diversity. While the right side – successive exposure, similar structures and convergent script – is traditionally associated with high status, the left side representing simultaneous exposure, different structures and divergent scripts, is commonly associated with low status. During the observed lessons, verbal and written talk were used in parallel, with Swedish used as the main medium of instruction and focus language in parallel with other languages, as participants shuttled between registers and media in ways that characterise what is called translanguaging (William 1994, Baker 2011, Lewis *et al.* 2012, Paulsrud *et al.* 2017). The shuttling included diverse written media, such as writing on the whiteboard, display of texts and pictures and films from the internet, students' writing on paper and in notebooks and reading from textbooks, applications and messages on mobile phones as well as information material and advertisements brought to class by the teacher and students.

An example of the use of different media was when the teacher instructed students to write an email. To support students with developing knowledge about traffic rules, the teacher showed students how to send an email to a traffic school offering a free course: 'trafikkunskap på lätt svenska' (traffic knowledge in simple Swedish). The teacher instructed students to ask for time, date and location of the course. The students only had access to laptops at school and sent their emails from their email address during one lesson and in the following lesson, they learnt how to open their mailboxes and find the responses.

Another example of using different media related to the topic mentioned earlier on the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. The teacher had found posters in some of the students' native languages and instructed them to look up the translation in other languages that were used in class.

Figure 1 shows how posters in different languages and official symbols – here in the form of the UN flag – are combined with students' written texts. In relation to the poster in Somali a discussion took place between the Somali-speaking assistant and students regarding which concept was the best in Somali and whether the words used in the poster were relevant or not. The whole class engaged in the discussion, which led to talk about difficulties that may be associated with translations and a final agreement that the concept chosen in the poster was less relevant.

A piece of paper on the whiteboard was used to create a mind-map representing a number of claims based on the discussion and then students wrote their own claims (Figures 2 and 3)

Analysis of the media continua during the observed teaching shows that the practices cover a range of points along the continua as did the two earlier sets of continua (content and context), and that various languages were included in verbal and written forms.

Development of biliteracy

The set of continua referring to development in Hornberger's model are: reception – production, oral – written and L1-L2, with a tendency to weight power towards the production, written and L2 ends of the continua. This means in the context of SFI



Figure 1. Posts and Work on the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child in a Variety of Languages.

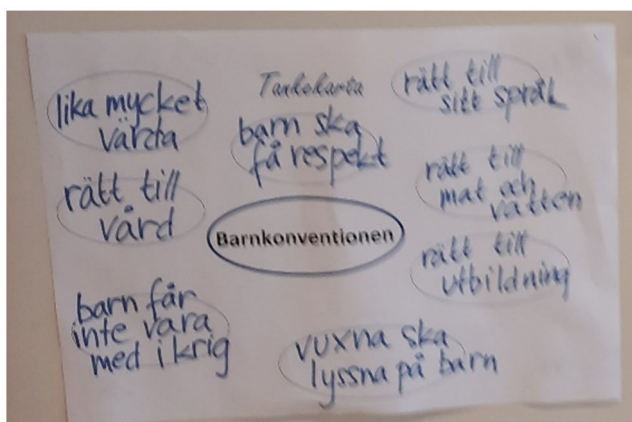


Figure 2. Mindmap representing claims made: Equal worth, right to healthcare, children must not be involved in war, children should have respect, right to your language, right to food and water, right to education, adults should listen to children.

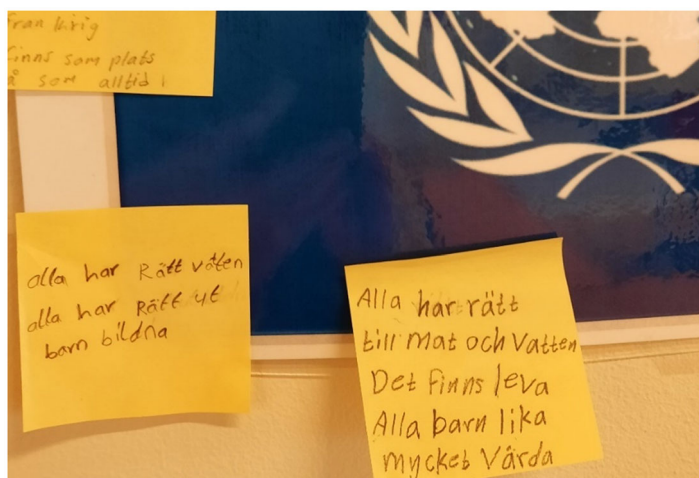


Figure 3. Students wrote their claims on yellow sticky notes, such as: everyone has the Right water; all has the Right ed child ucation; Everyone has the right to food and water; There is live; All children equal. Note that students' writing in some cases did not follow standard norms, which has been represented in the translation.

that production of written Swedish by the students is crucial for their assessments and the possibility of passing the national test. That national policy and school curricula focus on development of literacy in the dominant language in terms of language teaching and learning is common in schooling all over the world, while other language and literacy resources are usually less valued, if at all.

Students had access to the full range of continua during the observed lessons, including the high-power ends of production, written and L2, as well as those at the low-power ends of reception, oral and L1, in both analyses of sets of continua in content, context and media, as well as in development of biliteracy. For example, when

the teacher asked students to translate and explain to each other using various languages, she also created space for this by waiting until students were ready. The teacher was also flexible and picked up student initiatives. For example, one morning the teacher told the students that this particular day had been named 'kanelbullens dag'. This encouraged students to start a discussion on the cost of the buns and whether they preferred to buy them individually or pre-packed in bags. This also engaged the Somali assistant who was present and who initiated a discussion in the Somali-speaking group. She then addressed the teacher and the whole class in Swedish and explained the group preference that resulted from the discussion.

Another example of the teacher picking up student initiatives that created space for the low-power ends of the continua, was in a group discussion on the rights of the child in which the question was raised regarding the age at which a child is considered to become an adult. This led to a discussion on the age at which boys and girls respectively were considered old enough to marry. It became a discussion that engaged the whole class, with arguments raised both for and against proposed ages. However, this did not mean abandoning the pre-planned lesson plan, which involved primarily the more high-power ends of the continua.

However, a few conflicts arose during the observed lessons, which may be linked both to the themes related to critical literacy and to which ends of the continua were perceived as the focus or as more important. A reason for conflict was presented above under content, where Mariam and the teacher seemed to have different aims for a particular task. Another conflict that arose can be related to development and different objectives for a task. In this case, a student, Rajib, who was new to the group expressed annoyance about a missing worksheet at the beginning of the lesson and blamed the teacher for its disappearance. The teacher gave the student another sheet and asked him to fill it in at home. During the lesson the student, Rajib, gave the sheet to another student and asked her to fill it in for him. She started to do so but was discovered by the teacher who gave the form back to Rajib, telling him that he was supposed to do this by himself in order to learn. Nevertheless, Rajib kept giving the worksheet back to the other student. When students were tasked with writing suggestions for rules on the use of mobile phones in class, Rajib wanted to sit by himself and did not write anything. In this case, the reason for Rajib's frustration is less clear and his frustration was directed more towards the teacher, who found herself in a difficult situation in which she needed to also manage the rest of the class working on the given task. In this case, there also seemed to be different understandings of the meaning of filling in a worksheet – it can be presumed that the teacher wanted Rajab to carry out the exercise to develop his Swedish, while Rajab may have understood the task as something to be completed, no matter who does it. In this case, production and written L2 at the high-power end of the continua may be the teacher's intention while Rajib perhaps saw schoolwork as something he was forced to do.

Discussion and conclusions

The focus here is on the space for multilingualism and multiliteracy in one classroom for basic literacy education in SFI. The teacher chose to base her teaching on critical

literacy through two topics; schooling and parent-child relationship, which included space for multilingualism and multiliteracy. The use in the analysis of Hornberger's continua of biliteracy (1989, 2003) brought out both diversity in the teaching and the negotiation of power through classroom interaction (Street 1996, Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester, 2000). The holistic view on literacy in this classroom, which was contextualised and included multiple languages and media, was in line with the holistic views of Freire and Macedo (1987) and Street (1984) as well as Hornberger's highlighting of diversity (1989). Thus, in a manner like that of Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000), this study demonstrates the importance of giving voice to adults in general and in particular to L2 learners with short or no earlier schooling. Giving these students the 'right to speak' (Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) necessarily includes creating space for use of all their linguistic resources in ways that are typical of translanguaging. The use of the continua here showed the importance of including not only students' receptive skills and earlier resources in the form of language, knowledge and experience, but also to enhance L2 written and production skills. Consequently, this study supports the claims of Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) that all points of the continua are important for what they call 'a culture practice approach' (p. 105) but adds the aspect of critical literacy.

In accordance with Hornberger (1989, 2003), power ends of the continua are related to what is promoted in schooling, and in education for immigrant students, their own experiences are often given lower value (see e.g. Gee 2003, González *et al.* 2005). In the teaching studied here, students were explicitly stimulated to bring in their own experiences and express their own views. However, in critical literacy is also a potential to opposition and for students to claim their rights. Although the teacher explicitly asked for students' opinions and invited them to compare with earlier experiences, in most cases students positioned the Swedish examples as preferable and their earlier experiences as more or less negative. This may have several explanations. One may be that in educational settings all over the world, adult and adolescent students tend to show obedience in school rather than opposing the teacher. This is in line with the power relations where teachers are the ones who distributes grades. Another reason may be that most of the students in these groups are refugees and have experienced many hardships, such as oppression and having been denied schooling. Thus, it may be that in case of child-care and schooling they (still) find conditions in Sweden preferable, when compared to their earlier experiences.

In the examples here, conflicting perceptions were expressed twice, the examples of the frustration of Mariam and Rajab. This need not be negative but may be an example of space being created for the voices of the students. However, not all teachers or students may be comfortable with conflict and the importance of awareness among teachers regarding which risks they themselves are willing to take in this respect also needs attention. In addition, emotional awareness among students is important to take into consideration, as was shown by Lewis and Bigelow (2019), for example in the case of students suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or who may be vulnerable for other reasons. The topics commonly used in critical literacy where students are explicitly stimulated to reflect on different social features relevant to their own lives may further add to such risks, something that was highlighted by

Lewis and Bigelow (2019). In turn, this may lead to teachers being hesitant to raise sensitive topics, such as religion or issues related to family life.

In the two cases of conflict between teacher and student presented here, the reason seems rather to have been issues related to the teaching itself combined with different views on what was or should be happening. Frustration may also be a result of engagement. In these observed lessons, the level of engagement was high. This is nothing that explicitly appears through the continua, but Cummins (2011) highlights the importance of engagement in literacy education, particularly in L2 education and for students from environments in which literacy is used less and not in ways that are commonly promoted in school. Cummins' research is mainly from primary school but is also relevant in this case. Developing literacy skills in an L2 means hard work, particularly when developing such skills from basic levels as an adult. Thus, creating such engagement is an important task for teachers.

Acknowledgments

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the teacher and students who allowed me to take part in their work and also to my co-researchers, Annika Norlund Shaswar, Jenny Rosén and Birgitta Ljung Egeland, who supported the work with this study.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This research has been supported by the Swedish Institute for Educational Research, Grant [nr. 2019/0001].

ORCID

Åsa Wedin  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2992-0818>

References

- Baker, C., 2011. *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*. 5th ed. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Barton, D., 2007. *Literacy: an introduction to the ecology of written language*. 2nd ed. Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell.
- Bigelow, M., et al., 2017. Literacy as social (media) practice: refugee youth and home language literacy at school. *International journal of intercultural relations, special issue: cultural and academic adjustment of refugee youth in educational settings*, 60, 183–197.
- Choi, J., and Ziegler, G., 2015. Literacy education for low-educated second language learning adults in multilingual contexts: the case of Luxembourg. *Multilingual education*, 5 (1), 1–21.
- Colliander, H. 2018. *Being and becoming a teacher in initial literacy and second language education for adults*. Thesis (PhD). Linköping University.
- Copland, F., and Creese, A., 2015. *Linguistic ethnography: collecting, analysing and presenting data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Cummins, J., 2011. Literacy engagement: fueling academic growth for English learners. *The reading teacher*, 65 (2), 142–146.
- Franker, Q. 2011. *Litteracitet och visuella texter: Studier om lärare och kortutbildade deltagare i sfi*. [Literacy and visual texts: Studies about teachers and shortly educated participants in SFI]. Thesis (PhD). Stockholm University. <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:386054/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Freire, P., 1976. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Freire, P., and Macedo, D., 1987. *Literacy: reading the word and the world*. Bergin and Garvey.
- Gee, J.P., 2003. *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*. London: Palgrave MacMillan
- González, N., Moll, L.S., and Amanti, C. eds. 2005. *Funds of knowledge: theorizing practices in households, communities and classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Haznedar, B., Peyton, J.K., and Young-Scholten, M., 2018. Teaching adult migrants: a focus on the languages they speak. *Critical multilingualism studies*, 6 (1), 155–183.
- Hornberger, N.H., 1989. Continua of biliteracy. *Review of educational research*, 59 (3), 271–296.
- Hornberger, N.H., 1990. Creating successful learning contexts for bilingual literacy. *Teachers college record: the voice of scholarship in education*, 92 (2), 212–229.
- Hornberger, N. H., and Hardman, J., 1994. Literacy as culturalpractice and cognitive skill: Biliteracy in a Cambodian adult ESL class and a Puerto Rican GED program. In: D. Spener, ed. *Adult biliteracy in the United States*. Washington DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 147–169.
- Hornberger, N.H., and Skilton-Sylvester, E., 2000. Revisiting the continua of biliteracy: international and critical perspectives. *Language and education*, 14 (2), 96–122.
- Hornberger, N.H. ed., 2003. *Continua of biliteracy: an ecological framework for educational policy, research and practice in multilingual settings*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Janks, H., 2010. *Literacy and power*. Boca Raton, FL: Routledge.
- Janks, H., 2013. Critical literacy in teaching and research. *Education inquiry*, 4 (2), 225–242.
- Kerfoot, C. 2009. *Changing conceptions of literacies, language and development: implications for the provision of adult basic education in South Africa*. Thesis (PhD). Stockholm University.
- Lewis, C., and Bigelow, M., 2019. Mobilizing and languaging emotion for critical media literacy. In: R. Beach and D. Bloome, eds. *Languaging relations across social worlds in educational contexts*. Boca Raton, FL: Routledge, 216–234.
- Lewis, G., Jones, B., and Baker, C., 2012. Translanguaging: origins and development from school to street and beyond. *Educational research and evaluation*, 18 (7), 641–654.
- Luke, A., and Freebody, P. 1999. *Further notes on the four resources model*. <https://pdfcoffee.com/qdownload/further-notes-on-the-four-resources-model-allanluke-pdf-free.html>
- Lundgren, B., and Rosén, J., 2017. *15 års forskning om sfi - en överblick: Förstudie inför ett Ifous FOU-program*. [15 years of research about SFI – an overview: Pre study for an Ifous FOU-programme]. Stockholm: Ifous – Academedia.
- Malessa, E., 2018. Learning to read for the first time as adult immigrants in Finland: Reviewing pertinent research of low-literate or non-literate learners’ literacy acquisition and computer-assisted literacy training. *Apples - journal of applied language studies*, 12 (1), 25–54.
- McNiff, J., 2013. *Action research: Principles and practice*. Boca Raton, FL: Routledge.
- Monsen, M., 2021. Om å investere i R-U-M-P-E: En etnografisk studie av lese- og skriveopplaeringen for voksne nyankomne. [To invest in R-U-M-P-E: An ethnographic study of education in reading and writing for newly arrived adults]. In: M. Monsen and V. Pájarro, eds. *Andrespråkslaering hos voksne: Vitenskapelige innsikter og didaktiske refleksjoner [L2 learning among adults: Scientific insights and pedagogical reflections]*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 130–145.
- Norlund Shaswar, A. 2014. *Skriftbruk i vardagsliv och i sfi-utbildning: En studie av fem kurdiska sfi-studerandes skriftbrukshistoria och skriftpraktiker*. [Use of print in everyday life and

- SFI-education: A study of five Kurdish SFI-students' literacy history and literacy practices]. Thesis (PhD). Umeå University.
- Paulsrud, B., Rosén, J., Straszer, B., and Wedin, Å. eds., 2017. *New perspectives on translanguaging and education*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Prinsloo M., and Breier, M. eds., 1996. *The social uses of literacy*. Cape Town: Sached Books.
- Rashid, T., 2020. Adult literacy/recurrent education programmes in Timor-Leste. *Studies in the education of adults*, 52 (2), 134–156.
- Singh, A., and Sherchan, D., 2019. Declared 'literate': Subjectivation through decontextualised literacy practices. *Studies in the education of adults*, 51 (2), 180–194.
- Snell, J., Shaw, S., and Copland, F., eds. 2015. *Linguistic ethnography: Interdisciplinary explorations*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- SOU 2020:66. *Samverkande krafter: För stärkt kvalitet och likvärdighet inom komvux för elever med svenska som andraspråk*. [Collaborative forces: Strengthening quality and equality in municipal adult education for students studying Swedish as a second language]. Stockholm: State Public Investigations from the Ministry of Education.
- Swedish Education Act, 2010:800. Ch. 20 §2. Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet.
- Swedish National Agency for Education, 2017. *Läroplan för vuxenutbildningen*. [Curriculum for adult education]. Stockholm: Skolverket.
- Street, B.V., 1984. *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Street, B.V., 1996. Literacy and power? *Open letter*, 6 (2), 7–16.
- Vasquez, V.M., 2014. *Negotiating critical literacies with young children*. London: Routledge.
- Wedin, Å., 2004. *Literacy practices in and out of school in Karagwe: The case of primary school literacy education in rural Tanzania*. Thesis (PhD). Stockholm University. <http://du.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A523325&dsid=-2176>
- Wedin, Å., 2008. Literacy and power – The cases of Tanzania and Rwanda. *International journal for educational development*, 28 (6), 754–763.
- Wedin, Å., and Norlund Shaswar, A., 2019. Whole class interaction in the adult L2-classroom: The case of Swedish for Immigrants in Sweden. *Apples - journal of applied language studies*, 13 (2), 45–63.
- Wedin, Å., and Norlund Shaswar, A., 2021. Litteracitetspraktiker (-praxis) i vardags- och samhällsliv: Skriftspråksvanor hos svenska sfi-elever på studieväg ett. *Nordic journal of literacy research*, 7 (2), 19.
- Wedin, Å., and Norlund Shaswar, A., submitted. Teachers' perceptions of letter learning among adults: the case of basic literacy education in Swedish for Immigrants.
- Wedin, Å., Rosén, J., and Hennius, S., 2018. Transspråkande multimodalitet i grundläggande skriftspråksundervisning inom sfi. *Pedagogisk forskning i Sverige*, 23 (1–2), 15–38. <https://open.lnu.se/index.php/PFS/article/view/1468/1330>
- William, C. 1994. *Arfarniad o ddulliau dysgu ac addysgu yng nghyd-destun addysg uwchradd ddwyieithog*. Thesis (PhD). University of Wales, Bangor.
- Vollmer, S., 2019. Digital citizenship for newly arrived Syrian refugees through mobile technologies. In: M. Cooke and R. Peutrell, eds. *Brokering Britain, educating citizens: exploring ESOL and citizenship*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 1–22.
- Young-Scholten, M., 2015. Who are adolescents and adults who develop literacy for the first time in an L2, and why are they of research interest? *Writing systems research*, 7 (1), 1–3.
- Zeichner, K., 2001. Educational action research. In: P. Reason & H. Bradbury, eds. *Handbook of action research: participative inquiry and practice*. London: Sage, 273–283.
- Zuber-Skerritt, O., 1996. Emancipatory action research for organizational change and management development. In: O. Zuber-Skerritt, ed. *New directions in action research*. Brighton: Falmer Press, 83–95.