Positioning of the recently arrived student: a discourse analysis of Sweden’s Language Introduction Programme

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ABSTRACT
This article explores how recently arrived students are positioned and position themselves in the Language Introduction Programme in upper secondary school in Sweden using a combination of position theory with nexus analysis. The material used consists of official national documents and local school documents, observations, interviews and photographs. Circulating discourses are analysed through discourses in place, historical bodies and interaction order. The analysis revealed ambiguous and conflicting discourses at the school, where students in the Language Introduction Programme are positioned both as having rights and as being deficient, lacking what is here termed Swedishness. While principals place the responsibility on students themselves to use Swedish in social situations, official documents emphasise the duty of the principals to ensure that education is relevant. Students’ voices do not appear to be important, and their agency is mainly restricted to their own learning. The identities that were made possible relied on their mastery of Swedish. Conflicting discourses circulate regarding the rights of students and their weaknesses and responsibilities. The combination of these two factors may mean that students run the risk of being positioned as having few opportunities to be successful at school.

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Introduction
Current globalisation processes of migration implies that many children and adolescents receive their education in settings where other languages are dominant than those they were raised through. In this article nexus analysis is used to study the positioning of recently arrived adolescents in education in Sweden. Young people aged 16–19 who have recently arrived in Sweden are usually referred to the Language Introduction Programme (LIP) in upper secondary school. Its main purpose is to teach students Swedish language skills and to provide them with an education in other subjects so that they can meet the requirements of mainstream programmes, called national programmes. LIP is thus a transitional programme, and students are expected to progress quickly to a national programme (either vocational or academic), to other forms of study or to
the job market. The challenges that the programme presents are great, since students must reach the required level in Swedish as a second language while completing studies they began before coming to Sweden.

Research and reports highlight several problems with LIP: for example, the prior experience and knowledge of students is not acknowledged, while their former education is not acknowledged either, and few students meet the prerequisites of mainstream programmes (Bomström Aho 2018, 2020; Sharif 2017; SNAE 2016). Hagström (2018) shows that organisational, spatial and social borders limit students’ mobility through the education system. Problems at the organisational and social levels, as well as a lack of cooperation between parties, such as teachers and parents, become apparent (Hagström 2018; SNAE 2016). Wedin and Bomström Aho (2019) found that students are very much left to develop their own learning strategies and that their agency is restricted to learning what is prescribed. There were discrepancies in teacher competence regarding teaching methods that stimulate the development of second language skills. A similar picture is painted by the Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE) (2016), which reports that LIP does not meet students’ educational needs and that students do not receive the support and guidance they require (see also School Inspectorate 2017; SNAE 2019). Research by Skowronski (2013) and Sharif (2017) shows that students in LIP are often treated homogenously despite their having starkly different backgrounds. Sharif shows that LIP is often disjoined from other classes at the school, while Skowronski highlights the difficulties LIP students experience meeting Swedish speakers. Furthermore, according to Bjuhr (2019), students are sometimes not involved in decisions relating to their education.

This article aims to explore how recently arrived students are positioned and position themselves in LIP. The study uses material from one upper secondary school, here called Cherry School. Position theory (Harré and Van Langenhove 1999) is used to ‘understand and study discourse and its relation to different psychic and social phenomena’ (p. 2), which enables the analysis of people and their individual and social identities as well as cultural levels of societal issues (p. 12). Furthermore, it allows for an analysis from various perspectives (micro/macro) of the agency of the individual and of how the individual navigates what he or she are allowed and not allowed to do. Harré (1987) talks of a ‘moral order’ as rights, obligations and duties together with how they are valued (p. 219) and as consisting of two dimensions: peoples’ rights in a given situation and the locations (space and time) that they can legitimately occupy.

To understand the positioning of students in LIP, these research questions are posed:

1. To what extent are students’ voices listened to?
2. What spaces for students’ agency are opened?
3. What identities are made possible for students?

The analysis is based on nexus analysis as a scalar ethnography for educational linguistics (Hult 2017; Scollon and Scollon 2004). As a form of discourse analysis, it enables the analysis of how cycles of discourses are constituted and used, while challenging hierarchical divisions between micro and macro levels, which allows for a multidimensional analysis of a complex system such as a school.
**Theory**

The use of nexus analysis is particularly relevant for the study of multidimensional social phenomena, such as the positioning of recently arrived students in LIP (Scollon and Scollon 2004). Nexus analysis enables the illumination of relations between different levels and scales, and is used as a theoretical and methodological framework for multidimensional analysis. The nodal point in nexus analysis is the social action, while the wider socio-historical discourses are included as intersecting specific social action. The intersection is framed as follows: (a) discourses in place, (b) historical bodies and (c) interaction order. *Discourses in place* illuminates discourses that are relevant and foregrounded in the unit of social action that is in focus. *Discourses in place* constitutes norms that depend on other participants and that guide individuals in their interaction and their expectations of each other in relation to social positions and opportunities created for some actions and not others (Hult 2017). *Historical bodies*, which builds on the research by Nishida (1998), highlights the experiences of individuals and institutions. Because historical bodies are not static, they provide important analytical tools in combination with position theory (Harré and Van Langenhove 1999). In educational settings, issues of earlier (language) socialisation during and experiences from education and training are relevant for how individuals engage in the action. *Interaction order*, developed by Goffman (1983), constitutes behaviour in the formation of relationships in social action. *Interaction order* actualises issues of how shared norms guide both social interaction and issues of social positioning in relation to opportunities for certain kinds of actions.

The multi-dimensionality of nexus analysis highlights the conceptual relevance of scales (Hult 2017) by allowing an integration of multiple methods in the creation of data, which is valuable in an analysis of an educational setting, such as a programme in a school. The scalar perspective of nexus analysis facilitates an understanding of schools and classrooms as ‘points of intersection for discursive flows, where every moment can be seen as an instance of “layered simultaneity”’ (Hult 2017: 91). The scalar perspective allows for a study of what occurs in real time in relation to layers of historicity, ‘some of which are within the grasp of the participants while others remain invisible but are nevertheless present’ (Blommaert 2005: 130).

In this study, the nexus followed through cycles of discourses is how students are positioned, with focus on identity, agency and voice. *Voice* is here used to analyse who gets to talk and who is listened to. In an L2 setting, ideologies regarding language use are important for issues of voice. The importance of taking students’ development of identity into account in relation to language and education has been stressed by, among others, Fairclough (1989/2001), Cummins (2000), Gee (2000) and Wedin (2020). According to critical theories, identities are multiple, unstable and ambiguous, and may, according to Gee (p. 99), refer to ‘being recognised as a certain “kind of person”’. Students may negotiate identities in the classroom, which influences the outcome of schooling (Cummins 2017). Agency is here understood in a dialogic perspective (Ahearn 2001; Dufva and Aro 2015) in accordance with Ahearn’s definition as ‘the socioculturally mediated capacity to act’ (p. 112; see also Vitanova et al. 2015), meaning that agency is treated as dynamic, fluid and developed in social interaction. Understanding voice, identity and agency as relating strongly to power allows for an analysis of the interdependent and complex nature of interactions between individuals and communities (Wedin 2019, 2020).
Methodology and material

This study is part of a larger project, where linguistic ethnography (Copland and Creese 2015; Martin-Jones and Martin 2017) is used as a methodological framework by which to study students’ language development, disciplinary literacy and social inclusion. It is based on official documents and material from a school studied over two academic years. The study includes 64 h of classroom observation and approximately 150 h of observation in other parts of the school, together with interviews with principals (N = 3), teachers (N = 13) and students (N = 11). Observations were documented in fieldnotes, audio and video recordings, and photographs. Schoolscape was also done using photographs (more than 100) of displayed images, objects, symbols and written language in the school. As well, policy documents, both local and national, were examined. The school I selected is one of several upper secondary schools in a mid-sized town, and the only one to offer LIP. The school also offers several mainstream programmes, such as those for assistant nurses, childcare and business.

The first step involved framing the three aspects of nexus analysis using the material as follows:

(a) discourses in place (national and local policy documents, and interviews with principals)
(b) historical bodies (interviews with teachers and students)
(c) interaction order (observations from classrooms and schoolscape)

Material was analysed thematically to explore issues relating to identity, agency and voice. However, for lack of space no analysis of the pictures will be made here, but previous analyses will be used. In a second step, the nexus of cycles of discourses was used to answer the research questions. The third step involved a discussion of the positioning of students in LIP.

Ethical considerations were made throughout the study to ensure that nobody was harmed and that data was stored securely in accordance with the project data storage plan. Here, data is presented in such a way so as to avoid the recognisability of participants, and pseudonyms are used.

Findings

Discourses in place

Analysis of discourses that are relevant and foregrounded will be based on policy documents and interviews with principals, with focus on norms, expectations and social positions between participants.

National policy documents used in the analysis include the School Ordinance, curricula, general advisory and support material from SNAE. LIP falls under the directives of the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and aims to ‘give young immigrants who have recently arrived in Sweden an education with a focus on the Swedish language, which will allow them to continue into high school or other forms of education’ (ch.17 §3). General regulations are similar for all programmes in upper secondary school, including LIP (SFS 2010:800), and are specifically regulated in Regulations for Upper Secondary School (SFS 2010:2039).
There it states that students’ knowledge should be identified upon arrival and continue to be monitored so that ‘the student can progress without undue delay with his/her education’; it further states that the programme must focus on Swedish or Swedish as a second language and the subjects that the student needs to be able to progress (ch. 6 §7, see also 2010:800 ch.17 §14 a). The curriculum (SNAE 2011a) states that it is the school’s responsibility to provide each student who has completed LIP with a plan for continued education or to prepare the student for the job market (2.1). The comment material (SNAE 2011b) further stresses the importance of assessment and plans that enable students to continue their education as soon as possible. Students have the right to receive study guidance in the mother tongue (SGMT) and home language instruction in Mother Tongue Tuition (MTT), such as they are termed in Sweden.

General advice on the reception of recently arrived students (SNAE 2008) emphasises equality and the rights these students have to education, support and adaptations that suit their individual needs and backgrounds. Emphasis is also on students’ heterogeneity in terms of educational background, state of health and potential problems that may arise as a result of prior experiences. In 2016, the SNAE also highlighted the importance of good cooperation with parents, guardians and caregivers, and the importance of procedures was also highlighted, where responsibility is placed on the school to organise, establish and evaluate the students’ education. Later, general advice on the education for recently arrived students (SNAE 2016) highlighted the responsibility of the principal to report the need for resources, to ensure procedures for reception and education are in place, to analyse the need for in-service training and to procure this training. The SNAE further stressed that each student must have an individual study plan that is drawn up in dialogue with the student and that this plan should be revised ‘when required’.

Furthermore, the support material for LIP (SNAE 2013) stresses the important role of the principal and the need for staff to have knowledge about teaching and learning in a second language, and to understand how to integrate LIP in the school at large.

A discourse becomes apparent where students are positioned as having the right to education that focuses on Swedish and Swedish as a Second Language (SSL) and in which teaching accommodates their specific needs: for example, appropriate opportunities to learn content in the second language; Study Guidance in the Mother Tongue (SGMT); and study advising. The heterogeneity of students is highlighted, while the principals as representatives of the school are positioned as being responsible for ensuring that staff are appropriately trained and that teaching is relevant and adheres to carefully drawn-up individual study plans.

At Cherry School, the local school level, policy documents and interviews with principals were used in the analysis of relevant and foregrounded discourses. At the start of the study, two principals (P1 and P2) were responsible for LIP – P1 for LIP specifically and P2 for the school as a whole. After one year, P1 moved onto a new position and a third principal (P3) was hired. After two years, P3 was the only principal for LIP remaining, as P2 had also moved on. Nevertheless, all three took part in interviews that were 30–45 min long, audio recorded and transcribed. In the analysis of the interviews, talk relating to norms that guide individuals in their interactions, expectations in relation to social positions and opportunities created for actions were identified. P1 and P3 held teacher certification and had teaching experience, while P2 had only entered a teacher education programme upon being appointed principal at another school. Only P3 claimed to have any education
in the teaching and learning of multilingual students and recently arrived students (a 7.5 ECTS university course). She is also the only one to have experience teaching recently arrived students.

At the beginning of the project, Cherry School did not have a written policy or plan for LIP: it only had what was termed ‘Crib – ABC for Lip’. The short text consisted of several concepts with explanations. After an inspection, the school was informed of the SNAE and School Ordinance requirement to draw up a plan. Consequently, P1 was given the duty to develop such a plan – namely, Plan for the Introduction Programme 2018–2019 – in the third semester of the study. The plan was for all introductory programmes, and the LIP section was little over one page. It adhered to official documents in that the focus was on Swedish as a second language in combination with other subjects, and also in the fact that students were to be graded and were to continue their education. The part about LIP did not mention caregivers, SGMT, study guidance or special needs. It stated that the individual study plan should be established after a discussion to gather information, but nothing was mentioned about working together with students in this process or about follow-ups.

P3 explained that after the inspection, the school was involved in a development project run by SNAE. An initial analysis highlighted a lack of procedures and structures at the school. What were termed individual study plans at the school were merely excerpts from the digital pro capita system, which includes information about individual students, the courses they have started and completed, and grades. Several teachers were chosen to develop a new document, while P3 developed a reception plan for new students. P3 further explained that her actions exposed conflicts among staff – for example, regarding the grouping of students.

According to the principals, parents, guardians and caregivers were seldom invited to take part; furthermore, when invited to be involved, they seldom came. P1 and P2 said that they were only invited for individual contact for students under the age of 18, and mainly when problems had arisen. P3 claimed that she did not see how working with parents and guardians was useful since students had ‘outrun parents in terms of knowledge and language’.

When discussing language policy, P1 mentioned a rule that Swedish was to be used and if other languages were used, it was to be in ‘quiet talk with each other’. Teachers were to use Swedish but could provide support in ‘the other language’. The importance of the mother tongue was to be accepted, but linguistically mixed classes were to be preferred as then ‘they have to start talking Swedish with each other’ – otherwise ‘they easily only resort to Somali’.

Regarding multilingualism, P2 also expressed his scepticism. He argued for the importance of making students talk Swedish outside the classroom. He claimed that students were encouraged to talk Swedish when they could. He stressed the importance of Swedish in relation to other languages and the fact that students should speak Swedish in school so that they can progress academically. However, P3 stated that even if Swedish was the working language at the school, all languages may benefit everyone at the school.

Both P1 and P2 expressed problems relating to the perceived lack of understanding students had of the Swedish school system, and their perception of knowledge. P2 stated that many students were frustrated that they were unable to achieve their desired grades.
Unlike the other two principals, P3 stressed the importance of students using their own languages and explaining things to each other in the language they shared. In particular, she highlighted how students should use a language they know well when working on difficult assignments so that they can deepen their understanding. Furthermore, she was the only principal of the three to mention the importance of cooperation between staff, such as teachers of Swedish as a second language and teachers of other subjects, and that arenas need to be created for this. P3 was also the only principal to mention the need for in-service training and the fact that all teachers need to learn how to ‘build students’ Swedish’.

From what the principals said, there appears to be an ambivalent discourse regarding multilingualism: on the one hand, it is perceived to be (quite) positive and students are felt to have the right to use their own languages, while on the other hand, Swedish is the language of value. It may be possible to discern a development from a monolingual view by P1 and P2 with Swedish as the way to become an ‘academic person’ and other languages used in ‘quiet talk’ to P3 who highlights the importance of using other languages that students master to help them deepen their understanding. Policy documents and individual study plans may be understood in the same way – that is to say, they are steps towards change. The ABC-crib, followed by the rudimentary plan for the introductory programmes and the digital excerpts of students’ study records, was subject to change. Both the new principal and the development project initiated by SNAE seem to have contributed to this.

A further discourse that became apparent was that of students being regarded as deficient and lacking what may be considered Swedishness: here, this means qualifications expected of Swedish residents, such as linguistic and cultural competence that allows for the use of Swedish, the learning of Swedish (school) culture, and the understanding of the Swedish school system and way of thinking. This contradicts the discourse apparent in the interview with P3, where both the need for in-service training of teachers was mentioned as was the importance of creating arenas for cooperation between different groups of staff, a discourse that is closer to what is expressed in policy documents.

**Historical bodies**

In the analysis of historical bodies, interviews with students and teachers were used to identify experiences that are collectively formed across time, and experiences of education, training and socialisation of relevance for socialisation and engagement in education.

Of the eleven students interviewed, three had been in the programme less than one semester, while three had been in it more than 2.5 years. Four were close to progressing to a national programme, adult education or employment. One had received only sporadic education before arrival in Sweden, while seven claimed to have had more than nine years of schooling, two of them 12 years. All eleven had experience using different languages in daily life, at schools in their countries of origin, and in other parts of the world where they had lived. Only three, prior to arriving in Sweden, had received an education in the same language as they used at home, while five had received an education in several languages. S7, for example, grew up in the Philippines and his first eight years of
schooling (preschool and primary school) were in Tagalog. He then moved to Italy where he had eight years of schooling in Italian. S4 and S5 were taught in Somali in their first school years before receiving schooling in English. The first five years of schooling for S9 and S10 were in Tigrinya and the next five years in English.

Apart from S3, who had only received rudimentary schooling a few months per year for a few years, all students described school settings that placed high demands on students. Three claimed to have been among the top students at their schools. The level of study had been high, but their experiences of teachers varied. While S1 and S2 claimed teachers were better in Syria and prepared students better for tests, S7 and S5 found teachers in Sweden better than at their previous schools. All students appreciated the freedom they had as students in Sweden, the free schooling and school lunches, and the fact they are even paid to study. They also appreciated the availability of material and how the use of study aids, such as mobile phones, is allowed.

The two students from Afghanistan said that everything they were now studying was new to them, as their prior schooling had only included a few subjects, while most of the other students claimed that what they were now doing was simply repetition, with the exception of Swedish and social sciences.

Overall, students expressed relatively high hopes for their futures, mentioning professions such as surgeon, psychiatrist, engineer, pre-school teacher, hairdresser, waitress, chauffeur, dentist and computer engineer. They talked about negative experiences from their prior schooling, such as beatings from teachers and teachers they feared; school uniforms; bullying due to low grades; and large classes: these they were happy not to experience in Sweden. Students presented a heterogeneous picture of prior schooling experiences, particularly regarding language use.

The 13 teachers were interviewed once, and interviews lasted 25–70 min. Two of the teachers were hired as SGMT assistants but for part of the study worked as teachers. Four had themselves immigrated to Sweden and were second language speakers: one had a Swedish teaching degree and one had a teacher exam from another country and completed his Swedish teaching degree during the project. In total, nine of the 13 teachers had a Swedish teaching degree and two attained their degrees during the project. Seven were SSL teachers, and the others taught Mathematics, Natural Sciences, English, Physical Education and Social Sciences. Three of the SSL teachers had completed 90 ECTS in SSL, one had completed 60 ECTS, and three had completed 30 ECTS. None of the others had training in teaching students in a second language.

An ambivalence regarding language ideologies became apparent in the teachers’ interviews. Although all the teachers said students should be allowed to use their own language, some mentioned the Swedish-only policy, although none claimed to follow it. While some argued that students should be encouraged to use their own languages, others were more reluctant to let them do so. T4 talked of linguistic chaos when students were allowed to use other languages. He wanted to see the school clearly state in its rules that Swedish should be used at all times at the school. Similarly, T6 argued that students should speak more Swedish and that too much use of other languages hinders the learning of Swedish. Generally, the SSL teachers were more positive towards students using their own languages, and T5 and T9 referred to research on this. T5 argued for the importance of students feeling ‘my language is important’ for their development of Swedish but stated there was no consensus on this in the school. T8 also argued that students’ use of
their first language is important for further learning, and that multilingualism broadens a person’s views. Some of the SSL teachers described how students juggle many languages and learn languages from each other: ‘Those from Syria, how is it that they know Dari?’ (T1). They claimed they tried to persuade other teachers to give students opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge in different languages. The advantages of multilingualism were exemplified by T3, who described using his Arabic with Eritrean students who had lived in Sudan. T9 claimed to have learned some greetings in the students’ languages.

Some teachers talked about SGMT routines and the competence of assistants, and about how some teachers did not want SGMT assistants in their classrooms. The importance of MTT was highlighted. According to T5, MTT was not prioritised, and students’ timetables were already full before plans for MTT could be made. On the subject of MTT, T9 stated: ‘I think that students view MTT as mark of respect, as a duty, as an integration, and they come to feel a duty towards society. They will understand what democracy means, what human rights are’.

The ambivalence between a Swedish-only ideology and a multilingual ideology was reflected both by T2, who claimed that although students’ own languages are important for knowledge, identity and tradition, Swedish is the main language of the classroom, and by T7, who was positive towards students using their own languages, although she added ‘if they talk their languages, others don’t understand and the teacher doesn’t understand’.

The teachers talked a great deal about how they perceived school management to be weak and about an unclear organisation. Several stated that the principals were new and did not have the required knowledge (T7 and T10) or were not interested (T3). Some talked about the lack of a language policy, such as the SSL teacher (T1) who stated how she had argued for the positiveness of multilingualism, but the response she got was that Swedish was the focus. She explained that management did not listen and that arguing was ‘like banging your head against a brick wall’. T5 claimed that multilingualism was made invisible. T4 talked about a lack of guidelines and of an action plan, and called for collaboration between his subjects and SSL. Other teachers mentioned a lack of collaboration between teachers, such as the SSL teachers T7 and T5. T7 also called for more directives on teaching. T5, who completed her teacher education during the project, claimed that older teachers in particular liked to tell her what to do, while she wanted to do as she had been taught in her teacher education and from research. T10 spoke about her suggesting that teachers could be organised in groups but that her suggestions came to nothing.

All the teachers talked about a lack of integration between LIP and the school’s national programmes. T5 stated how some teachers had visited a school in Stockholm that had developed such integration but how nothing resulted from the visit. Several teachers mentioned their attempts to help students who have grades in subjects, such as English and mathematics, who should be allowed to progress, but with little success.

Regarding relations between the school and caregivers, teachers spoke about there being little contact between the two, with some believing that parents were engaged and may be positive. T4, who himself has an immigrant background, claimed that parents ‘do not know Swedish and lose their status. They feel pushed down’. T1 stated the issue of parents wanting their children to advance faster: ‘But he’s already done his second year in upper secondary school in Syria’.
When teachers talked about students’ previous schooling and their current knowledge, they referred to forms of teaching that they perceived to be more traditional. For example, T1 mentioned English lessons that do not require students to talk but only to fill in gaps and work with photocopied handouts. T2 talked about students’ unhealthy respect for teachers and that students may be afraid of teachers and hide their mistakes. T5 mentioned how students may have learned a certain type of study technique that is not relevant here. The Koran school is mentioned by one as an example of a place of education where memorisation is the goal.

The importance of listening to students as they talk about their experiences and of learning from them was mentioned by some teachers. Two mentioned the Somali clock as an example of something they had learned from students. T2 stressed that when students are given the opportunity to explain, their confidence grows, while T5 stated: ‘I see how the students are like “wow, my teacher sees this and she’s interested in what I’ve done and where I’ve been”’. T10 said: ‘Every day I learn something new (...) they feel they can share what they know’; she stressed the importance of showing interest in students as this builds their confidence.

Some of the teachers had themselves experience of living in another language setting. T5 studied at secondary school and university in Spain, where she learned first-hand how difficult it is and how she had to start to work on a task long before others. T6, who lived in USA, says that he experienced the restrictions that language can present to a L2-speaker.

The lack of what may be understood as Swedishness was expressed by, for example, T2, who argued for ‘traditional Swedish students’ in classes, and T4 and T6, who complained that LIP students socialised only with each other, not with Swedes.

The experiences of teachers of recently arrived students and of LIP varied. What some referred to as ‘linguistic chaos’ that ‘hinders the learning of Swedish’ was by others highlighted as important for the learning, identity and confidence of students. They also talked about the positive effects for all, such as integration and respect, and their joy from learning from students. A problem with management and organisation appeared to relate to teachers’ feeling they are not listened to and their knowledge and multilingualism being made invisible. Furthermore, the divide between LIP and the rest of the school was blamed on management.

**Interaction order**

Schoolscaping and classroom observations were used to analyse the interaction order in the form of behaviour in social action, shared norms and social positions that enable certain kinds of actions. More than one hundred photographs from classrooms and other shared spaces at Cherry School from the two school years of the study were analysed in an earlier study (Juvonen & Wedin submitted; Wedin submitted). This study also included sixty-four hours of classroom observation in the subjects SSL, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Mathematics, English and Mother Tongue Tuition with eight study groups and 13 teachers.

In the schoolscaping, images, objects, symbols and written language displayed in the school were analysed according Scollon & Scollon’s model (2004) in terms of how they (1) orient to time, place and space, (2) control behaviour and (3) shape discourses. They were analysed in terms of content, placement, languages, authorship, agency, and assigned or
assumed recipient roles. The schoolscaping showed that LIP students and their languages were not particularly visible in what was on display and that students did not act as authors (Wedin submitted). No transgressive signs (Pennycook 2009) were found – for example, scribbles or graffiti. There was almost no representation of students’ multilingualism: the visible languages were Swedish and (to some extent) English. The signage was mainly authored and displayed by representatives for the school, such as janitors and management, and in classrooms also teachers. A picture emerged of what was called exclusive inclusion (Juvonen & Wedin submitted), which means that students were invited to be included through the schoolspace where their earlier linguistic resources and cultural references had been excluded (cf. Nilsson Folke 2017). The schoolscaping made it apparent that the preferred identity for the LIP students demanded adaptation. One example was a poster from an external association (see Picture 1) addressing students who would like to pursue a football career abroad. Its use of English hints at internationalism, with English as the language to be used there. The poster depicts young, fair-skinned men and light (bleached) hair. As the majority of LIP students have black hair and dark skin, this poster may be interpreted as exclusive inclusion.

The ambiguity regarding language norms was also visible in how teachers related to students’ multilingualism in classroom practices (see, for example, Wedin forthcoming; Wedin and Bomström Aho 2019). Here, two selected lessons will be used to exemplify how language ideologies in the classroom affected the interaction order. They were selected because they represent two different teacher ideologies that dominate in terms of multilingualism.

The lesson with T2 was in physics and about sound. For several reasons, there were only four students in the classroom: three had 10–12 years of education and one had
The teacher organised lessons by theme, planned for a set period and concluded each theme with a test. Students were required to pass all tests to attain a grade. Typically, lessons began with a teacher presentation followed by individual student work. In this lesson, the first presentation took nine minutes. T2 demonstrated how to use a tuning fork, stating it ‘is made to vibrate and condenses and thins the air’. She explained how to tune an instrument, exemplifying with a flute on which she played a Swedish, traditional tune. She asked a student to make the tuning fork sound and wrote a list of important concepts, such as sound, tuning fork and amplification, on the whiteboard. She then told students that to pass, they needed to be able to explain these concepts. The rest of the lesson students spent finding explanations for the words using the textbook and the Internet on either their laptops or mobile phones. T2 invited them to use any language and reminded them to use the reading services where the textbook was translated into some of the students’ languages. While students opened their laptops, T2 referred to the concepts, stating: ‘This is what I will ask about’. The rest of the lesson students spent searching for the concepts on the Internet, listening to translations and writing explanations.

During the lesson, focus was on the concepts. T2 did not ask students about prior knowledge or if they understood, and students did not ask any questions either during the presentation or at the end of the lesson. They worked individually or helped each other using the tools available. While working, they communicated with their peers in various languages.

While the above may be perceived to be an example of poor teaching, it is worth noting that T2 is a qualified and experienced science teacher. While students are invited to employ learning devices and their linguistic resources, interaction is limited to two main types. Her presentation is a one-way, teacher-led presentation limited to crucial concepts: students are not invited to contribute, not even by answering questions, as is common in whole-class teaching, to assess understanding. The second type of interaction is when the students work on their own, interacting with each other and digital media. T2 does not involve herself much here and as such is not involved in the use students make of their diverse linguistic resources. In the interview, it becomes apparent that she was unaware of the multilingualism of students, although she does refer to ‘their mother tongue’ in singular. What this indicates is that she was unaware of the language practices of students that may be described as translanguaging (Baker 2001; Lindahl 2015; Paulsrud et al. 2017) – that is to say, creative language use, including shuttling between languages.

The following lesson was the only one observed with T13. A former engineer, T13 was hired as an SGMT assistant to support students using the languages he had mastered, namely Swedish, English, Sorani, Farsi and Arabic. However, for one term he was employed to teach mathematics to the most recently arrived students. Attending his class were ten students who had up to ten years of previous schooling, while the others were attending school for the first time. Three SGMT assistants in Dari, Somali and Tigrinya were also present in the classroom. The topic for this second lesson was money and numbers. T13 tells the students that he is aware that some of them have received lots of teaching in mathematics and that they must now learn mathematics-related Swedish. He begins with a presentation where he includes both basic knowledge about numbers and the decimal system and an explanation of the VAT system in Sweden.
He uses a language strategy whereby he first provides an explanation in Swedish and then makes sure that every student has understood by switching to the languages he himself knows and that the assistants use to explain. He also allows students to explain things to each other. However, the students do not say much, although some do ask a few questions for clarification. Students are then put in groups to work on written tasks. These tasks require that students exchange fake money and work in groups. The teacher walks around and engages in the students’ exercises. Throughout the lesson, various languages are used, and T13 several times refers to the importance of learning mathematics language.

While T2 mainly taught concepts, T13 talked about mathematics and checked students’ understanding. T2 had students work alone for most of her lessons and did not involve herself much in their work or use of linguistic resources. T13, meanwhile, both involved himself in and allowed for students’ negotiation of meaning and use of other languages. By engaging in translanguaging practices, he legitimised the practices as important. His inclusion of the VAT system in his lesson on basic numerics demonstrated that T13 considered students’ varied knowledge levels in mathematics.

**Discourses that circulate**

The research questions on issues of voice, agency and identity are answered by way of nexus analysis of circulating discourses. Through the analysis, ambivalent and conflicting discourses appear. Regarding the first question about students’ voices, voices that were made visible here were those of teachers, students and school authorities. An ambivalence towards students’ rights and responsibilities appears in official documents, where students’ right to relevant education adapted to their individual and specific needs is stated, while principals and some teachers highlight instead the responsibility of students to use Swedish and to socialise using Swedish. An ambivalence also appears regarding the role of students’ multilingualism at school, with students, some teachers and one principal arguing for the positive effects of students using diverse linguistic resources, which is consistent with policy, while other teachers and two principals supported a monolingual ideology, where Swedish is what counts. A contradiction appears with regards to the view of the role of parents and caregivers between official directives and local management, principals and teachers. Contradiction also appears with regards to views on students’ prior schooling and competence, with students and their parents on one side and teachers and principals on the other. While T13 both showed students that he was aware of their knowledge and explicitly argued for their need to learn subject-specific language, T2 did not ask students about their knowledge and mainly restricted her teaching to central concepts. A conflict appears at the management and organisational level, with teachers complaining about the divide between LIP and other school programmes and expressing feelings of powerlessness. Thus, the impression is that students’ voices are seldom listened to and that they are not included in discussions about topics, plans or ways to learn.

The question of responsibility relates to students’ spaces for agency and becomes an issue within circulating discourses of the school. When it comes to preparing students for further education and working life, official documents explicitly place the responsibility on the school and its principals. However, many discrepancies in terms of this
responsibility are visible within Cherry School management. It may seem that a process of development is underway, but it appears to be top-down. The inspection (as mentioned earlier) of Cherry School resulted in measures that were implemented by the principal and a select number of teachers. This may be relevant at the outset of a long process but is problematic if development has not been discussed with and established among staff and if students are not listened to. However, a process at the school may have begun where responsibility moved from students themselves and placed on management. However, agency appeared to mainly rest with management, with few spaces for student agency being visible: for example, the conflicting views on students’ prior knowledge between on the one hand parents and students, and on the other hand principals and teachers appeared to demonstrate strong agency of the latter, with parents and students having to simply accept. It would therefore seem that the only space for agency students had was to take quite high responsibility for their own learning. This also included space to help each other through their varied languages.

When it comes to identities of students being made possible, visibility of their languages and knowledge is relevant. It is easy to understand students’ frustration at being taught what they already know, with some teachers not showing any insight into their real educational needs. Teachers who are SSL teachers or who themselves have Swedish as L2 express the importance of learning from students and of making students’ knowledge visible, and that this was important for students’ identities. This view conflicts with the schoolscape where only Swedish, and to some extent English, was made visible, and where students were blamed for not interacting in Swedish or with Swedish-speaking students and for ‘resorting’ instead to other languages. Thus, few identities are made possible for students. The attributed identity as recently arrived student and L2 learner places the focus on the individual’s lack of Swedish, while other possible identities demand mastery of Swedish. The attribution of identities related to perceived deficiencies did not make identities such as a successful student or a student with previously high proficiency and advanced education possible. That this was something that was negotiated appears in the analysis.

Issues of identity may create conflict for some teachers: those who have no education in teaching recently arrived students in their L2. With the exception of SSL teachers, subject teachers are trained in teaching their subjects with the presumption that their student groups know Swedish. Some students may have already studied the subject in question but lack the language skills required in that same subject in Sweden. The resulting perception is that the teaching is of poor quality when in fact the issue lies with the conflicting identities of subject teacher and language teacher. It may be the case that teachers try to modify their teaching to what they perceive will work, which is teaching concepts related to relevant topics. As there was little apparent collaboration between teacher groups, this may be how they understand students’ needs. It is therefore understandable that students are perceived as weak because of their low Swedish language proficiency.

Discussion and conclusions

The analysis makes apparent ambiguous and conflicting discourses at Cherry School, where students in LIP are both positioned as individuals with rights and as deficient and lacking what is here termed Swedishness. The fact immigrant students in Sweden
are mainly positioned as lacking the dominant language and culture has been previously demonstrated (Runfors 2003; Wedin 2010), and also that they are positioned as a homogeneous group (Sharif 2017; Skowronska 2013) and with less valued experiences (Sharif 2017; SNAE 2016). It is problematic for students and their parents to be positioned as lacking important resources, with their previous experiences being devalued. As Bomström Aho stated (2018, 2020), Swedish language and Swedishness are constructed as barriers, stumbling blocks and gatekeepers for students’ education. Harré’s moral order (1987) may here be understood to be conflicting discourses that circulate, discourses about student’s rights in relation to discourses about students’ deficiencies and responsibilities. The combination may mean that students risk being positioned as having few opportunities to achieve success at school.

The ambiguous and conflicting discourses that become apparent may result from a lack of collaboration between various groups of staff, such as management and teachers; SSL teachers and other subject teachers; and teachers and SGMT assistants (see, for example, Sharif 2017). As Hagström (2018) demonstrates, the separation of LIP from other programmes is a structural and organisational problem that restrains students’ mobility in the school system. In this case, it is particularly teachers who have no training in teaching L2 students or who themselves have not lived in an L2 setting, who highlight the need for students to learn Swedish and who place the responsibility for this on the students themselves. It may be understood that T2, by not teaching and assessing students’ explanations of individual concepts, does not perform her role as science teacher because she neither teaches content to students who have yet to study it nor teachers how to talk about the knowledge in the new language. She thus, in fact, positions students as instructors, teaching themselves and each other.

This study paints a picture of ambiguity, contradictions and conflicts in circulating discourses. When students are positioned mainly based on their (lack of) skills in Swedish and in what may be called Swedishness, this makes earlier experiences, skills and knowledge invisible in ways that hamper and impede their learning, both of Swedish language and of school knowledge. This shows the necessity of organising education in ways that position students as experienced and knowledgeable and in ways that give them voice in issues regarding their own education. At the same time, as students they should also be positioned as in need of instruction.

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