

Multilingual support for newly arrived adult migrants in ‘Swedish for immigrants’ learning environments

Research aim

Newly arrived adult migrants (NAAMs) regard communicative competence in the majority language as the key to the new country (Abdulla, 2017; Zackrisson, 2014). Language acquisition opens up opportunities for contact with others for whom Swedish is a mother tongue, for rewarding employment, for access to cultural and social information and is a major antidote to mental disorder (Beiser & Hou, 2001; Salameh, 2012). In short, learning the target language is a primary means of integration (Abdulla, 2017). Yet the road toward mastering a new language can be long and arduous for adults. It takes time for adults to learn new language (Lindberg, 2008), memory function is less efficient and senior learners often struggle with the indignity of going back to the classroom (Abdulla, 2017).

Despite motivation and ambition (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016), language acquisition among NAAMs, especially those with little or minimal school background, is generally a frustratingly slow business (Lindberg, 2008). For these reasons, effective host language induction programmes carry high stakes for both the learners themselves and for European governments in the field of migration and integration (Siarova & Essomba, 2014).

These difficulties are reflected in the educational results of the Swedish for immigrants (Sfi) language programme – Sweden’s national state-funded school form for teaching newcomers foundational skills in Swedish. Sfi has been the target of persistent criticism such as low flow-through rates, poor course achievements and inappropriate pedagogical approaches. Precious little research exists to counter this negative picture and to address those aspects of Sfi work that reports and inspections have identified as deficient (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2012; Skolinspektionen, 2018). It is a deep concern for this state of educational affairs and a striving to respond to the educational difficulties facing NAAMs that lie at the heart of this teacher-researcher partnership. With the conviction that use of the students’ mother tongues can serve as a vital learning support in second language learning programmes, an Sfi teacher team took radical action and recruited *bilingual language assistants, språkstödjare* (henceforth Sps) for their initial study path 1 courses. Sps in this context are those who speak one of the learner’s mother tongues and are able to use it strategically in the classroom to support the learning of additional language. The overriding aim of this research project is therefore to improve the quality of instructional support for NAAMs learning Swedish in Sfi learning environments by

developing the current practices and pedagogical competence of teachers and Sps working alongside each other in the classroom. The research engine is *practice-based research* in which teachers investigate their own classroom performance as a basis for understanding the relationship between teaching and learning and for developing their coordination of instructional activity with Sps in the Sfi classroom.

Background and research questions

In response to the question as to why the teachers have employed språkstödjare (Sps), two teachers answered:

Underlätta och förenkla elevernas lärande. Korta deras väg till måluppfyllelse. Om man inte förstå kan man inte lära sig. Vi behöver modersmål som hjälp.

Man måste förstå för att kunna lära sig. [Modersmål är] en väg att lära sig, att komma in i det svenska språket via modersmålet. Speciellt om man är på låg nivå. Det är ett sätt att förstå sammanhanget rund språk, bakgrund, och även kulturella delar i det hela. En hjälp att förstå bättre när man läsa speciellt när man inte ha en skolbakgrund eller väldigt lite.

Action taken to realize this initial vision launched a learning trajectory of extraordinary relevance in which professional challenges and development needs came into lucid focus. During the course of research into Sps-mediated teaching, these teachers became increasingly aware that they needed to learn more specifically about how to coordinate their classroom interaction with the Sps strategically and effectively in order to attain their initial goals. While introducing Sps into Sfi teaching is a major organizational change, learning to coordinate coherent teacher-Sps roles and moment-to-moment cooperative work in the classroom proved to be a further step. Thus, a central goal of the present project is to develop more strategic and effective ways of coordinating work with the Sps in the classroom in order to enhance conditions for student participation in instructional activity and second language learning.

Part and parcel of cooperative competence in this context is the need to gain more detailed understanding of how classroom participants coordinate their different language moves in order to communicate coherently in the classroom and attain pedagogical objectives. Thus, a further central goal of the present study is to generate knowledge about the use of students' primary languages in a context where learning a second or additional language as an adult is the main educational goal.

Initial research experience and results not only provided orientation to the critical pedagogical challenges, they also impacted the participants' attitudes to classroom learning and teacher development. In the absence of research into Sps classroom participation, the project participants realized that they could not *rely* on external sources of expertise for

developing the kind of knowledge and competence that investigation made relevant. A flexible, emergent, research strategy (Patton, 2002), one that demanded researcher faithfulness to the naturally occurring events and one that valorized teacher voices, created a community of participants learning together. Not only did this qualitative research design lead to the cardinal questions, it brought an appreciation of the complexity characterizing teacher-Sps cooperative work and the need to explore the *classroom interactional context* in greater depth. A growing awareness of learning conditions as negotiated interactionally, moment by moment, excited interest in exploring the way opportunities for student participation are created or limited by a teacher's speech performance and interplay with Sps. Participants recognized the importance of gaining a closer view of the dynamics and details of teacher-Sps alternating talk and orientations in the classroom in order to perceive what specific teaching strategies or changes prove necessary.

These research orientations constructed a local or 'internal' disposition to professional growth – one that invests in a 'bottom-up' exploration of actual classroom processes by teachers and researchers as a strategy for sustainable change and teacher development. Accordingly project collaboration and increasing understanding about how to gain locally relevant knowledge pan out into the following practice-based research questions:

1. What are the current routines and practices characterizing teacher and Sps work in the classroom?
2. What changes or action are necessary to enhance the learning conditions for the development of students' Swedish language competence in Sfi classrooms?
3. What are the accountable effects of such changes or courses of action on the quality of instructional support for NAAM students learning Swedish in Sfi learning environments?
4. When and in what ways can the students' mother tongues be used advantageously as a learning asset in the Sfi classroom to promote Swedish as a second or additional language learning among NAMs?

Theoretical orientations

A fundamental theoretical premise of the Sps project is the axiom that all human learning is conditioned by the combination of *assistance* and *challenge*. This orientation is inherent in Piaget (*assimilation* and *accommodation*, 1951), Vygotsky (*zone of proximal development*, 1978) and Krashen (*input hypothesis*, 1982) and has direct relevance for the use of the mother tongue in learning a second or additional language. That is, the mother tongue can provide useful orientation to the new language but must not limit or remove vital opportunity for

learners to make personal efforts to communicate meanings with their emerging linguistic repertoires. In Vygotsky's terms, mother tongue clarification can make otherwise inaccessible language sufficiently intelligible to enter a learner's *zone of proximal development* where the learner can succeed in completing the communicative task *herself* in collaboration with a capable 'other'. Findings point to the risk of diluting the task challenge while seeking to individualize instruction.

Within SLA, there is considerable agreement about the conditions that promote successful language learning. These include access to *comprehensible input* (Krashen, 1982; Lightbown & Spada, 2006), the willingness to *communicate* in and with the target language in personally meaningful ways (Ellis, 2008; Swain, 1985) as well as the use of *communication strategies* such as code-switching to get across what one is trying to express (Gafaranga, 2007; Salameh, 2012; St John, 2014). As an alternative account of multilingual communication and pedagogic practice, the concept of *translanguaging* (García & Wei, 2014; Lewis et al, 2012) creates novel analytic and illuminative prospects.

These concepts are currently offering ways to view and understand project research findings. For example, a distinction within SLA has been made between *declarative* knowledge (understanding as the effect of instruction, *explanation* by or observation of an external source of knowledge) and *procedural* knowledge (understanding of how partially analyzed target language works by *using* it meaningfully). This distinction suggests that when Sps conduct (same-language) group work, they should routinely both explain teacher instruction and create opportunity for the students to practice the focal language in order to make the language their own.

Theoretical inspiration also comes from Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) insights into *utterances* (as *dialogically construed* and linked within a chain of speech communication), understanding (as coming to fruition only in the *response*) and language relationships (as *throwing light* on each other). The latter concept shows that multilingually supported language learning is never one-sided but that all second or additional language learning entails bilingual interillumination and reciprocal appreciation. Interillumination is significant for a sensitive attitude to languages other than our own. Although in this Sfi context, learning the majority language, Swedish, is the main educational goal, the force that "one language can, after all, see itself only in the light of another language (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 12) "challenges the privileging or subordination of any one language in language-learning settings because no language is ever completely unified" (St John, 2010, p. 216).

Relationship to relevant research

Adult oriented pedagogy

Second language learning is not the same kind of process as first language learning (Brown, 1994 ; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Consequently, teaching a second language to adults requires a different pedagogical approach than to children. As mentioned in the introduction, adults face special challenges when learning a new language that include less malleable cognitive capability, ingrained language habits, distal or limited experience of study techniques, limited opportunities for interaction with members of the host language community as well as low levels of self-esteem and emotional stability (Bigenstans, 2015; Lindberg & Sandwall, 2012; Salameh, 2012).

Yet learning language as an adult also affords advantages that can be exploited. Adult language learners have well developed intellects and conceptual systems that allow for high levels of metalinguistic awareness (Cook, 2001; Lindberg & Sandwall, 2012). They also bear a wealth of personal experience that teachers can activate to make additional language learning meaningful and coherent (ibid). However, second language teachers in adult education do not routinely take advantage of these preconditions to enhance their students' learning (Skolinspektionen, 2018). As a result, learning a new language as an adult in the Swedish context takes an unnecessarily long time, asymmetrical relationships prevail in the classroom and the voices of adult language learners remain muted (Abdulla, 2017; Skolinspektionen, 2018). Sfi teaching should be permeated by an adult pedagogical perspective and methods (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2012). According to Sweden's School Inspectorate's most recent inspection (Skolinspektionen, 2018), results point to a disfranchising pedagogy that fails to empower adult learners as autonomous and successful learners.

Mother tongue use in second language teaching-learning

The greater part of multilingual research foregrounds that the cognitive infrastructure and capacities created while developing a mother tongue generally facilitate the learning of a second or additional language (Baker, 2011; Cummins, 2015; Hyltenstam, 2014; Salameh, 2012). From advocating language separation and intralingual teaching methods, it is now widely recognized within the field of second language acquisition (SLA) that a strategic and informed use of the mother tongue functions supportively in learning another language and can be pedagogically justified (Cook, 2001; Cummins, 2017; Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013). Indeed, St John (2010) found that student efforts to make sense of French grammar led to new

perceptions of their own language and shows the way that two or more languages in contact *interilluminate*, throw light, on each other. While bilingual educational policy in Sweden highlights the use of pupils' pre-existing linguistic knowledge as a learning resource, monolingual norms and pedagogies stifle such intentions and pupils' indigenous voices (Björk-Willén, 2006; Duek, 2017; Jalali-Moghadam & Hedman, 2016).

Despite considerable research into the purposes for which language teachers use the students' first language in teaching another (e.g. Cook, 2001; Macaro, 2005), there has been a general avoidance in methodological discussions of the role students' first language can play in favour of an emphasis on the need to maximize use in the classroom of the target language (Littlewood & Yu, 2009). While the use of a learner's mother tongue during second language acquisition is heralded as an important learning asset (e.g. Cummins, 2017; Hyltenstam & Milani, 2012), the extent to which it is advantageous to additional language learning and its effect on learning conditions or even learner attitudes are currently still open-ended questions. As Macaro et al. (2014) assert:

just how far one can go in the direction of using the L1 as a tool is neither stated nor sufficiently problematized and the amount and purposes of L1 use are rarely related to the teaching approach that is being advocated or used. Moreover, the impact of teacher use of L1 has rarely been directly investigated (p. 42).

The absence of pedagogical specifications of the extent to which L1 use is valuable, what pedagogical purposes or phases it best serves and how it can work supportively alongside the need for target language exposure and communication pedagogical make these issues critically relevant to address in greater depth. The cost of first language use in terms of reducing the *beneficial* opportunity for learners to cope communicatively in the target language is a particularly thorny question (see Littlewood & Yu, 2009). The controversy between advocates who insist on target language only learning zones and those who recognize that a student's first language can provide valuable support for learning additional language is far from resolved and therefore deserves research attention.

Språkstödjare (Bilingual language assistants)

To find research that touches on the work of språkstödjare (Sps) as bilingual language assistants one must widen one's research scope considerably. Literature searches via data bases such as DIVA, ERIC and SwePub have not to date yielded scientific investigation in Sweden on the work of the educational practitioner we describe as *språkstödjare* in the Sfi research reported here. Widening the search net with terms such as multilingual

support/education/study guidance in the Swedish context draws in at least two different categories of instructor – the study tutor, *studiehandledare* (often doubling up as mother tongue instructor) (see Avery, 2017; Reath Warren, 2017; St John, 2018) and *bilingual teachers* (see Bigenstans, 2015; Moussu & Llurda, 2008; St John & Liubiniene, forthcoming). Both categories of instructor reflect similar kinds of multilingual issues that attach to Sps work and offer useful perspectives for understanding the role and mediation of Sps. For example, both teachers and newly arrived pupils view the work of study tutors in the Swedish context positively since it provides the necessary support for attaining (subject) learning goals (Nilsson Folke, 2015). In the UK, a batch of studies on classroom or teacher assistants that explore the roles and contribution of these unqualified educational practitioners is relevant to Sps work (e.g. Baker, 2014; Cable, 2004; Martin-Jones & Saxena, 2003). These studies highlight the instructional advantage of understanding some of the pupils' backgrounds and home cultures, their position as positive role models for their pupils and the link they create between home and school-based contexts for learning.

From this collection of broadly connected studies, three common results can be identified that form some background against which the context and contribution of Sps stand out more clearly. A frequent finding is the lack of cooperation and collaboration between the bi- or multilingual practitioners and classroom or subject teachers. The significance of this finding is heightened by arguments showing the importance of close cooperation between these groups of classroom participants in planning and preparing instruction for making the curriculum accessible and facilitating learning for the pupils. This finding is not mirrored in the sps situation reported here. From the start, the teachers expressed an appreciation that negotiating and establishing complementary roles in the classroom would not be easy and, given large differences in background, would require substantial investment in collaboration and supervision.

Related to this finding is the low status frequently assigned to the multilingual practitioners (even bilingual teachers) by other members of the school community. The consequence is pedagogical constraint and marginalization of these practitioners. Again, this finding does not resemble the teacher attitudes to the Sps in this research venture. From the outset, the teachers expressed confidence in Sps language competence to radically change the character of the Sfi learning conditions for NAAMs and affirm that the students own languages are important. As has been described, the Sfi teachers hold the Sps potential contribution with regard to mother tongue use in high regard, seek their views and treat them as valuable and indispensable educational players in their own right.

A third finding which is reflected in several of the studies (e.g. Martin-Jones & Saxena, 2003) is a distinction between the bilingual practitioner as educational solution to or relief from a situation the teacher is not able to manage (resource for the class teacher) and as a valuable support for the pupils in their learning (resource for the learners). This distinction is very relevant in the need identified in the Sfi research reported here to distinguish between a pedagogical approach that revolves around the Sps and one that focuses primarily on the NAAMs. Results have shown that while both the needs of Sps and the students are important considerations in planning instructional activity, there is a danger of constructing pedagogical practice that revolves around first and foremost to the needs and circumstances of the Sps rather than those of the students. Such awareness has proved crucial in pursuing a *student-oriented pedagogy* not Sps-oriented classroom practice.

Research design

Practice-based research

In this project, practice-based research is considered a powerful way of increasing a teacher's understanding of classroom teaching and learning as impetus for bringing about change in teacher practice (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). With inspiration from action research (Bailey, 2001) and strongly aligned to a reflective teaching approach (Schön, 1991), practice-based teaching enables professional practitioners to take charge of their own competence development by investigating their own practices and applying the findings strategically.

While this kind of teacher-initiated research has strong traditions in Australia, USA and the UK (see Bailey, 2001), it is not common in the Swedish context. However, a number of Swedish studies (e.g. Ahlberg, 2013; Eidevald, 2017; Tjerberg, 2013; von Ahlefeld Nisser, 2014) have documented research projects that showcase the way teachers can become skilled co-researchers alongside university researchers and the unprecedented pedagogical learning such collaboration has brought about for instigating sustainable change and professional development.

A change of research strategy

In order to fulfill the project goals and answer the research questions (see Background and research questions), the project participants realized that a radical change of research logic and quality was necessary. Project challenges brought about a change of strategy that moved from researcher(s) researching teachers' practice and then informing teachers to teachers and researchers, in collaboration, researching instructional practice based on systematic

exploration of classroom processes and performance. As mentioned earlier, one reason for this shift of thinking was that, after initial research phases, we realized we still had not got to grips with the fundamental issues we wanted to tackle – more effective teacher-Sps classroom cooperative strategies, a genuinely supportive use in instructional contexts of the mother tongue in relation to use of Swedish and gauging the effect of Sps mediation on the learning conditions for NAAMs in Sfi settings.

Another reason was methodological. Classroom observation supported by field notes, while key for orientation, can only capture fragments of the intricate details and patterns of diverse language deployment in the classroom. Focus group interviews are vital for gaining teacher meanings and attitudes about their work but do not readily provide an accurate picture of what actually occurs moment by moments in pedagogical situations (Patton, 2002). Video filming of classroom activity provides a far more detailed and reliable way of capturing the dynamics of speech and nonverbal performance (Eidevald, 2017). As Harvey Sacks (1984) maintains the main advantage that recordings offer is that researchers can return to the data repeatedly to corroborate their attempt to disclose the participants' perspectives and orientation in the situation. At the outset of 2019, the teachers and researcher agreed that analyzing filmed sequences of participant instructional practices was the way forward toward realizing relevant and sustainable professional change and growth. Since this change of research strategy, a practice-based research model has been developing dynamically.

An emerging practice-based research model

The following model emerged and was carried out during the spring of 2019:

1. Identifying critical aspects of teacher-Sps classroom work

Each teacher constellation (3 or 4 teachers) chose a classroom activity, lesson phase or challenge they considered was a critical aspect to examine in more detail.

2. Video recording of focal classroom sequences

Teachers, within their constellations, helped each other to film classroom sequences they had chosen. While the researcher delivered and collected the recording equipment, etc. he was not present during the recording. The researcher then arranged the synchronization and mastering of the sound and visual data with technical support at the university and then sent the relevant sequences to the respective teachers for viewing.

3. Analyzing the recorded sequences

Each teacher constellation on their own analyzed the sequences they had recorded with the aid of a set of reflection questions (see Bilaga 1). The researcher, who had access to the sequences, also analyzed them. Both teacher and research documented their analyses in the format of the reflective aid.

4. Constructing situation-transcendent knowledge

Researcher and teachers met together on a project day to appraise the initial analyses and identify common strands of learning experience and insights. The objective was to intertwine these currents/elements of learning into collectively approved experience (beprövad erfarenhet) and situation-transferable knowledge (överförbar kunskap) that becomes robust as the strands of a rope bear weight when bound together. These discussions were audio recorded as integral parts of project progress and competence development.

5. Reflecting in teacher constellations on a further cycle of investigation.

During the spring of 2019, this teacher action cycle was conducted twice. The second action cycle benefited from the confidence grown in the first cycle, the technical learning that had taken place and practical improvements made to facilitate the collective learning process such as teacher constellations making their documented analyses available to the researcher before the project day discussions. The voices and responses to the recorded sequences were also solicited and integrated into ongoing analysis.

A new, whole-cycle, practice-based research model

The experience and momentum of putting into effect the steps of the practice-based research model during the spring brought into focus important challenges to be resolved and priorities to implement in developing a more effective model of teacher-researcher classroom investigation. At the same time, the initial model outlined above stopped short of some essential components necessary for a full cycle of investigation that, in classroom action research, incorporates the implementation of new strategies to bring about desired pedagogical ends and assessment of the effects of such changes in practice. Priorities and component parts considered as crucial to model development include the challenge to:

- Break down the project's qualitative goals into specific and measurable objective or indicators (see Bilaga 2 for an initial draft of indicators)

- Translate and transcribe the existing recorded sequences to make possible fine-grained analysis of the *multilingual* classroom communication and interaction. Incisive analysis is crucial for identifying key ways of changing practice in order to improve cooperation and coordination between teachers, Sps and students in the classroom. This analytic work must provide a strong empirical basis for deciding what strategies *need to be adopted* and how the findings *should be applied* to current practice.
- Decide what changes or alternative ways of working are necessary for enhancing the effect of practice in view of the project's objectives/indicators. This entails developing an action plan to bring about the desired effects or learning conditions in the classroom.
- Incorporate or implement the chosen strategies into classroom procedures and performance. This phase (as the principle of Sfi research site underlined) will be processual and may require particular forms of support to achieve since the changes are likely to be reasonably pedagogically demanding and require time to try out and appropriate. At the same time, the changes are likely to involve strategic adjustment or addition to current practice rather than radically different approaches. Change is sustainable when gradual.
- Video record sequences of adjusted or changed practice in order to be able to observe and gauge the effects of the action plan or changed instructional behavior on the learners' orientations to and participation in learning activity or lesson content. This third cycle of recordings and analyses complements the two earlier cycles of the initial model and creates conditions for comparison of the outcome of the action plan with the consequences of the previous practice. The comparative work will serve to test empirically the pedagogical value of the implemented action plan. Comparison between the recordings will provide the framework for identifying and approving a set of tried and tested techniques or strategies for developing cooperative competence among instructors and enhancing instructional support for NAAMs learning Swedish in Sfi environments.
- Plan action and grasp opportunity, both locally and abroad, designed to disseminate the project's research findings and fund of knowledge. Sharing the insights and competence gained by project participants is an integral step since the aim of the project is to generate context-transferable knowledge which can be used in settings beyond the research site

(see model phases). Moreover, communicating project findings affords “the principle advantages of outsidedness”, supplements understanding and continues the “co-creativity of those who understand” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.141-2).

By the end of the spring, the stage was set irrevocably for a new, developed, practice-based research model that would transcend the former. By incorporating the above component parts into the frame of the previous model and extending its scope, the aim is to form a fully-fledged practice-based research model capable of robust empirical classroom investigation for attaining the project’s objectives.

Research project plan

This research design will be realized in the through the following outline of planned research action between August 2019 and June 2020. The six research priorities described above have been arranged as overlapping phases over the project period with the first three in the autumn and the last three in the spring to facilitate the realization of each phase of this research plan. The entire process of the action plan will be documented by both researcher and teachers in terms of field notes, teacher journal entries, as well as recordings of the project day meetings.

2019

August

- Draft report of spring research phase for discussion
- Coverage and report of the project by Nationellt centrum för svenska som andraspråk (NC), Institution for språkdidaktik (ISD), Department of Language Education, Stockholm University (Malin Dahlström)
- Project kick-off day

September

- Conference paper presentation by applicant. ‘Developing language learning environments for newly arrived students through practice-based research’ at ECER, 2019, Hamburg, 3-6 September.
- Multilingual translation of sequences recorded in spring, 2019 (complete by mid-October)
- Initial analysis of the translated multilingual classroom interaction in teacher constellations

October

- Applicant and teacher presentation of the project (Multilingual support for newly arrived adult migrants in Sfi learning environments' at 1st International Conference on Research of Integration, Migration and Digitalization in Europe, 3-4 October, Komvux Örebro Sfi (day 1) and Örebro University (day 2).
- Further analysis of the multilingual classroom interaction made visible by the translation
- Strategy day 1: Analysis support and collaboration
- Teacher and applicant organized practice-based research workshop at Lärarutbildardagar, 30 October, Örebro University.

November

- Developing a concrete action plan for strategic change in teacher – BLA cooperation
- Initial integration of the plan into teacher – BLA classroom cooperative practice

December

- Strengthening implementation of the action plan in teacher – BLA classroom practice
- Preparations for a further round of recordings with a focus on the changes in practice

2020

January

- Strategy day 2: Scientific article writing support and collaboration
- Recordings of sequences that feature adjusted or changed teacher – BLA practice

February

- Multilingual translation of the new sequences recorded in January
- Analysis of the sequences in teacher constellations
- Article planning and coordination

March

- Strategy day 3: Analysis support and collaboration
- Comparison with original recordings and describing/assessing the effects of the action plans on instructional practice and student participation, etc.
- Collaborative article writing
- Funding application to the new teacher education programme, Örebro University, for the continuation of the practice-based research project, etc.

April

- Further comparison and collective gathering of strategies for successful cooperative practice with BLAs
- Collaborative article writing

May

- Collaboration article writing with submission by the end of the month
- Strategy day 4: Critical reflection on the project phases, the changes achieved, learning experiences, barriers to change and possible further improvements to the focal changes, etc.

June

- Production of research report and decisions about the way forward
- Day conference on supporting newly arrived adult migrants learning Swedish in Sfi settings hosted by project participants.

Relevance for the participating school's need of professional development and teacher education

1. Anchorage in the profession's challenges and needs

This project is designed to support practice-based research on teaching and learning within an adult educational institute Sfi study path 1. As practice-based research, the aims of the project and the pedagogical intervention have arisen from the participant teacher's vision and initiative to improve the learning conditions for Sfi students by incorporating the support of mother tongue assistants (spåkstödjare, Sps) into their teaching and learning how to work with them effectively. Thus, the research agenda is anchored in the professional and everyday work needs of the practitioners for competence development. It is the teacher team, supported by the Sfi school head, who have initiated the venture and invited in the applicant researcher to help them develop its pedagogical thrust. The project's development, direction and research questions have emerged in and through the teachers' desire to strengthen their initiative with research reinforcement and the stimulus of many project strategy meetings involving the teachers, researchers and, on most occasions, the institute's head. The role of the researcher in this process of learning and adjustment has been catalyst, counsellor and facilitator, so that the

outcome of the venture as a practice-based research project has been a collaborative negotiation of perspectives and experiences, a landed synthesis of interests and commitments.

In view of this needs-based anchorage, the results of the project are intended primarily to benefit the practitioners in their efforts to develop their professional teaching practice and competence. In the journey towards practice-based research, these teachers have come to understand that a teacher's own practice when treated systematically and reflectively is a rich source of teacher learning and change. To investigate a teacher's own conduct in the daily course of work makes teaching visible and can create unprecedented opportunities for developing and varying a teacher's pedagogical strategies in the classroom. This understanding has significant implications for professional development in schools (Ahlberg, 2013; Eidevald, 2017) since practice-based research action, in that "it scratches where it itches", insures the relevance of information a teachers seeks about her own teaching. This application rests of a project trajectory that has already succeeded in engaging the practitioners as co-researchers of their own classroom practice in pursuit of deeper understanding of learning in the classroom and strategic change in their pedagogical performance.

2. Urgency and usefulness

While the results of the project will serve the needs of the participant practitioners, the project focuses on issues which are crucial for the improvement of Sfi teaching and student learning in a wider context. Teachers employed within Sfi currently face substantial pedagogical challenges. In the majority of occasions, teachers lack the use of a common language with their students so that the students are obliged to think with and develop conceptual knowledge through a language they have not yet mastered and regularly do not understand. In that the students are frequently either illiterate or semi-literate in their mother tongue, they are not able to take advantage of individual study techniques or strategies such as using dictionaries. This means that that they highly dependent on the quality of the teachers' instruction and pedagogical skills. Such vulnerability contributes significantly to the predicament that a large number of study path 1 students do not attain a pass grade at the end of the B-course. In view of this situation, teaching within the Sfi study path 1 stands in dire need of new approaches, different ways of working, and introducing multilingual support is proving to be one such promising way.

The purpose of the project is to develop a model of cooperative work between Sfi teachers and Sps with NAAMs and generate robust knowledge about optimal levels of

multilingual/mother tongue support for learning Swedish as a second language among adult migrants. In view of the pedagogical challenges surrounding the teaching of linguistically diverse persons, newly arrived, with limited or no school background (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016), there should be widespread interest among other Sfi teachers (bilingual or with Swedish as mother tongue) and school managers in the findings and recommendations of this project. The knowledge generated by this project with its focus on constructive and sensitive ways to enable NAAMs to learn Swedish as well as the challenges and advantages of mother tongue support on the study path 1 should be highly useful and transferable to other Sfi organizations.

3. Relevance for the provision and development of teacher education

Recognition of the lack of qualified Sfi teachers and criticism of the poorly qualified character of Sfi teachers for the particular challenges of teaching Swedish to NAAMs (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2007; 2012; 2017) has inevitably traced back to the quality of training Swedish as a second language teachers at teacher education programmes. Lindberg & Sandwall (2017) suggest that a basic education for training Sfi teachers is missing and that “regular extensive teacher education tailored for the specific conditions framing the sfi program is top priority for the development of sfi as a professional field” (p.19). The current project, for example, has highlighted that the teaching of illiterate or semi-illiterate students demands a high level of contextualization such as relating teaching subjects to students’ personal experiences and own life worlds. It is currently tackling the way multilingual support can play a critical role in helping students make sense of the teaching situation and make themselves understood in response to it. This project has the potential to make a scientific and relevant contribution to the development of a strong teacher education for training Sfi teachers at Örebro University. While this project-based research project may be regarded as a supreme and feasible form of teacher development, it is in no way a self-contained or sufficient system. Teachers in this practice-based research project need plenty of strategic support with regard to pedagogical knowledge, teaching a second or additional language to adults many of whom are semi-literate and without the background of a school education and all that this can entail. Although the teachers “own” the project, they also need leadership from the head of the school, stimulus and counsel from the researcher-teacher educator, technical support from the university, guidance in analyzing data and collaborative supervision in reporting their learning experiences and implications for their professional work and development in the form of, for example, a scientific article. These are areas of challenge and need that teacher educational

units and courses can address and serve. For example, a course module that introduces practice-based research as an effective and feasible way of achieving professional development, runs on teacher-researcher collaboration and mobilizes teachers as researchers of their own classrooms, reflective analysts of their own data, collaborators with their own colleagues and producers of their own scientifically packaged accounts of their learning experience, etc. would meet the needs and challenges of the participant teachers HEAD ON.

The generation of context-transferable knowledge

The claim that this research collaboration can produce context-transferable knowledge may be made on the following bases:

1. The current practice-based research venture issues from and is informed by almost two years of research orientation, fieldwork experience and research findings. This substantial investigative work has taken the participants from conventional researcher researching teachers' teaching to collaborative classroom practice-based research. The research direction has been exploratory, winding and finally stronger for the time and tensions it has taken to test. During the second year of research, focus moved onto mapping the classroom approach and work of a second Sfi study path 1 teacher team consisting of both Swedish-speaking teachers with Swedish as their mother tongue and those with another mother tongue. The purpose of the mapping was to be able to compare two different Sfi learning environments for the perspectives and insights this might provide. There were several parallel findings. Teacher use of students' mother tongues was determined in both Sfi environments by student proficiency level, the complexity of the teaching content and the purpose of the classroom activity. There were also differences. Factors determining use of the students' mother tongues in the second Sfi environment (but not observed in the Sps-mediated learning environment) included the strategy of encouraging students by inviting them to communicate their knowledge of a subject in their mother tongues, checking student understanding and the circumstances of the specific pedagogical situation. This research background to the current project is rich in learning and makes demands to make new knowledge coherent with what has already been achieved.
2. The practice-based research model outlined in Research design has been crafted to yield scientifically reliable findings and a quality of knowledge that has relevance for educational contexts beyond the research site in which it is produced. The research strategy is inductive, starting with empirical data that leads through systematic analysis to general conclusions and creative understandings. As method, video filming produces a

more trustworthy record of naturally occurring classroom events than participants' verbal accounts of such events (Patton, 2002). The design demands that analysis is subject to a systematic process in which, for example, separate teacher and researcher analyses are brought into coherent conversation with each other and further validated, tested, by comparison with the analytical thinking and response of the other teacher constellations. The creation of two analytic instruments – the reflective aid and indicators for gauging the effect of implemented action – are also intended to systemize examination and produce knowledge that can be relied on beyond the immediate context of production.

3. The practice-based research model outlined in Research design has also included and analyzed the voices of the Sps in response to their viewing of the recorded classroom sequences they were involved in. Their voices and views have added vital perspective for a clearer understanding of classroom incidents and orientations. For example, during reflective conversations about the classroom recordings, several of the Sps shared that they regularly felt unprepared and inadequate with regard to explaining specialized vocabulary or particular grammatical items. This perspective was a useful counterpoint to the teachers strategy of saving the more abstract or complex language content for classroom occasions when the Sps were timetabled to be participating in the lesson! Such divergent views have contributed to a more comprehensive and holistic picture of what teacher Sps cooperation entails and what coordinating the classroom work demands

In these first cycles of practice-based research then, an attempt has been made to attend carefully to the research context in order “to keep explanations from becoming simplistic or reductionist” (Wolcott, 1999, p. 79).

Ethical considerations

The first ethical concern of the project is to strive for trustworthy research. The ethical responsibility of the researcher and the quality of the research are inextricably connected. Despite trade-offs between sound ethical practice and the conditions needed for producing valuable, ground-breaking, knowledge, the way participants are treated by researchers can open up or close down research opportunity (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). In pursuit of robust scientific investigation, the research design builds on the findings of an extensive initial study and efforts to ensure systematic and balanced analysis by engaging different perspectives in a collective reasoning around the data are regarded as indispensable.

Documenting the social and classroom activity of culturally-diverse participants can cause already vulnerable individuals to feel even more intimidated. The task of informing participants about the purpose of the project and reasons for the research methods needs to be conducted carefully leaving as little room as possible for misunderstanding. The demand for explicit and respectful information takes on particular importance when the students have mother tongues other than the majority language and the practice of researching educational contexts is not culturally familiar. This means making use of the students' mother tongues and guarding against cultural stereotyping such as assuming that the circumstances of culturally-diverse groups are all the same.

Soliciting the students' and Sps' agreement to participate in the project must be done without exploiting a position of authority and student dependence on institutional provision. It is vital to make clear that the students have the right to make their own decisions about project involvement without feeling that they will be penalized if they do not agree to participate (Bryman, 2011). Anonymity, a code of silence, clear information about the purpose of data collection, the safe protection of data, stringent regulation regarding access to the project data and analysis that is faithful to participant voices and action are some of the critical ethical aspects to adhere to. Above all, relational building is envisaged as being key to reducing participants' ill of ease.

Intent of publication and the transfer of knowledge

At least two publications are being planned as joint projects. The first, designed to target a Nordic audience, gives special place to the voices and vision of the participating teachers whose initiative launched the mother tongue Sps venture. This article, co-authored with the teachers, will target a Nordic audience. The second article, written by the researcher in collaboration with the teachers, will profile the practice-based research project work, its results and conclusions and target an international journal such as *International Journal of Inclusive Education*.

In October, 2019, the project team will lead a workshop as part of Lärarutbildardagen on participants' experiences of conducting practice-based research. In June, 2020, a day conference of dialogue, hosted by the participating teachers will feature the input of an expert in the field of multilingual education, presentations by other Sfi practitioners who have developed language assistant-inspired projects and a presentation of the results and learning of the present project. Skolverket will be invited to attend and contribute to this day of

dialogue. These events are envisaged as providing important platforms for the sharing and transfer of knowledge in professional and scientific educational arenas.

During the project period, participation and peer-reviewed presentations are planned at three conferences, one in a Nordic country and two international conferences. In September, 2019, the applicant will be presenting a paper entitled *Developing language learning environments for newly arrived students through practice-based research* at the ECER 2019 conference in Hamburg. This paper presents the findings and conclusions generated during the Spring in the through the emergent research model and will also be an important opportunity to stimulate interest in the project work and establish significant contacts. In October, the project team will be presenting experiences and findings of their collaborative research at the 1st International Conference on Research of Integration, Migration and Digitalization in Europe to be held at Komvux Örebro, Sfi and Örebro University. A project presentation will be submitted to a third suitable international conference such as EARLI or ECER during 2020. Participation and papers at these events will afford high-profile opportunities for project dissemination, forging contacts, gaining feedback on the project and various forms of exchange and collaboration.

Scientific contacts and collaboration in the project

Collaboration with research colleagues is a vital level of support and stimulus this project solicits. The applicant is a member of the Swedish Translanguaging Network with an international membership. In 2017, the applicant organized an international conference, *Translanguaging – researchers and practitioners in dialogue* in cooperation with the network. Since 2006 the applicant has presented at EARLI (European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction) conferences and is a member of the Social Interaction Special Interest group. These groups are key sources of support and collaboration.

Other scientific contacts and potential collaborators include the Nationellt centrum för svenska som andraspråk (NC), Institution for språkdidaktik (ISD), at the Department of Language Education, Stockholm University. Karin Sandwall has been contacted and is keen to be affiliated. Her colleague Malin Dahlström has asked to do a cover piece on the project for their web site that includes on-site reporting and interviews with participants. Monica Axelsson from Stockholm University has agreed to serve as scientific expert and will extend opportunity for contact and collaboration with other research networks.

The applicant is also a member of the network for Digital multiliteracies, integration, language and mutual cultural learning with a mandate during 2020 to organize four international network meetings, organize an international conference and produce three scientific articles for publication in international journals. Network members come from Lithuania, Moldova, Russia and Sweden. These members are already research partners and extend possibilities for the dissemination and enrichment of current project plans.

The development of partnership between school and academic institutions

Meeting needs reciprocally and striving towards mutual goals creates a sense of fellowship and conditions for partnership between, in this case, school and university enterprises. Commitment to common goals is also a prerequisite for sustainable partnership and it is worth pointing out that the partner Sfi school has “put their money where their mouth is” by committing to the project with financial resources (see attached Skolhuvudmännens medfinansiering av Språkstödjarproketet 201909-202006). Backing the project financially comes in terms of releasing the participant teachers from 10% of their teaching work in order to engage with the project research effort.

Several arenas of potential cooperation have already been described that can develop mutually advantageous partnership (see Relevance for the participating school’s need of professional development and teacher education). These include the need for a basic education designed specifically to educate Swedish as second language teachers for Sfi learning environments and training for the challenges and demands of practice-based research as default and ongoing teacher development. In addition to these, the following three university arenas of corresponding commitment and interest to the Sfi-based work have potential to develop mutually beneficial and fruitful partnership:

1. Utveckling, Lärande, Forskning

This application reports a practice-based research project that has come a long way in terms of mobilizing teachers in researching their own classroom practices and understanding the benefits and logic of doing so. Thus, it shows a promising mix of open-ended practitioner research for evidence-based learning and championing change in classroom practice. As such, it fits in squarely with the Framtidens lärarutbildnings profile of Utveckling, Lärande Forskning.

2. Swedish as a second language unit

The focus of the current Sfi research project is essentially Swedish as a second language for NAAM students that research in the field (e.g. Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017) points to as a crucially important area to develop within teacher education in Sweden if a Sfi programme of excellent quality and best practice is to be had. Thus developing the link between Swedish as a second language university researchers and lecturers and the Sfi research project participants would be to invest in common interests and productive partnership. As mentioned, a second Sfi teacher team has been added to the project participants that has already expanded the project scope from Sps-mediated instruction to multilingually-supported Sfi instruction, the role of different categories of Sfi teacher and second or additional language learning support for NAAMs (See St John & L....., forthcoming). Such development would support the focus and supervision of student dissertations with an orientation towards Swedish as a second language and benefit from the contribution of empirical small-scale student research projects.

3. *Snabbspåret*

A third arena of affinity and strong commonality is the university programme *Snabbspåret*. The project's focus and outcomes run parallel to the aims and purpose of the fast-track teacher education programme (snabbspåret) designed to introduce newly arrived school and preschool teachers to the Swedish school system and prepare them for further academic study. Many of the challenges and struggles that these students faced during their Sfi course work are similar in principle to those they face at the university. Consequently, the experience and learning generated by the current project is likely to be very valuable for and transferable to the work of the language tutors and teacher educators seeking to support the students in their efforts to retrain for a teacher certificate in Sweden. The Sfi project experience and findings were solicited by Emma Arneback (Pedagogik) who headed up the recent reorganization of snabbspåret programme. As a result of interest in the project, Tafida Kayaci, a snabbspåret course instructor, received 15 days to work with the Sps project during 2019 as language expert and co-analyst of some recorded multilingual interaction. Half of this time remains to be invested in the new project plan during the autumn and is expected to excite further insights and reciprocal development for both parties in this cooperation.

These three arenas of common interest and potential cooperation are envisaged as key bases on which to build a framework for symmetrical and complementary partnership between Sfi school and university teacher education concerns in the very near future.

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Bilaga 1: Förslag till ett verktyg för att stimulera reflektion och lärande vid videoanalys (Reflektionsmal)

| Beskriva situationen/det som händer | Svar/respons |
|---|---------------------|
| <p>a) Vad gör/säger deltagarna (lärare, sps, elever)?</p> <p>b) Vem eller vad är det deltagaren orienterar sig mot?</p> <p>c) Vad utmärker kommunikationen och interaktionen mellan deltagaren?</p> | |
| Hur förstår du/ni situationen? | |
| <p>a) Hur tänkte du/ni i situationen?</p> <p>b) Hur kan deltagarens handlingar/beteende förstås eller tolkas?</p> | |

| | |
|--|--|
| | |
| <p>Utfallet/Resultat?</p> <p>a) Vilka konsekvenser leder deltagarens handlingar/interaktioner till?</p> <p>b) Hur kan man relatera dessa konsekvenser till lärarens avsikt eller syftet med undervisningsmomentet/uppgiften?</p> <p>c) Vilka faktorer/strategier bidrar till att det pedagogiska syftet med situationen uppnås eller inte uppnås?</p> | |
| <p>Insikter/Lärande?</p> <p>a) Resonera om alternativa sätt att hantera/bemöta de andra deltagarna för att åstadkomma ett (mer) fruktbart resultat.</p> <p>b) Vad kan jag/vi lära oss kring samverkan lärare – språkstödjare från/utifrån situationen?</p> | |

| | |
|--|--|
| | |
|--|--|

Bilaga 2: När ser vi att språkstödjaren skapar förutsättningar för elevens lärande?

Indikatorer

1. *Att exponeras för svenska.* När språkstödjare väntar (lite) med sina förklaringar till efter eleverna först har fått chansen att förstå orden på svenska och ha visat svårigheter att kunna begripa orden i sammanhanget.
2. *Elevengagemang.* När språkstödjare ger eleverna utrymme för att kunna tänka och pushar dem till att använda sig av vad de troligtvis kan eller redan har varit exponerade för.
3. *Motivation och hopp.* När språkstödjare uppmuntrar eleverna att kämpa mot (del)målet, bygger upp deras självkänsla och ger dem hopp om att de kommer att klara av uppgiften.
4. *Verktyg för självständighet.* När språkstödjare ställer frågor som ger eleven strategier/verktyg att förstå ett moment/företeelse och därigenom kunna hitta svaren själv.
5. *Hjälp – Stöd.* När språkstödjare inte bara hjälper eleverna utan stöttar dem genom att utmana dem till att göra uppgiften själva.
6. *Elevernas berättelse.* När eleverna själva berättar om positiva inlärningserfarenheter och framsteg med hänsyn till språkstödjarens medverkan.
7. *Elevens observerbara utveckling.* När vi märker direkta kopplingar mellan språkstödjarens språkliga handlingar och elevens genombrott och utveckling.
8. *Förlängning av det pedagogiska arbetet.* När språkstödjare kan förklara och visa elever väsentliga och svårare saker på modersmålet som en grund till lärandet.
9. *Elevens produktion.* När språkstödjare tar sin uppgångspunkt i elevens språkliga produktion för formativ respons.
10. *Elevens språkliga förutsättningar.* När språkstödjare utgår från och bygger på hela elevens språkliga förutsättningar och repertoarer.
11. *Uppgiftens avsikt/syfte.* När språkstödjarens stöd och pedagogiska strategier anpassas till avsikten eller syftena med undervisningens uppgifter.
12. *Kontextualisera.* När språkstödjare utmanar eleven att sätta nya språk i en personlig och meningsfullt kontext/sammanhang.

