

## Global Citizenship and Lingual Identity: the ability to perform in different lingual settings

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**ABSTRACT** The aim of this article is to interpret second-language pupils' encounter with the Swedish school regarding first- and second-language learning. An empirical context called experienced learning is investigated by interpreting student teachers' oral and written narrated learning memories. Using a life-story approach, the interpretation focuses on lingual skills, lingual identity and citizenship. The study looks at participation in Swedish as a second language and mother tongue education when the subjects encountered the Swedish school system. Participating in those lessons is described as positive. Participating made it easier to improve skills in the second language and mother tongue. Mother tongue skills were transferred to the second-language improvement. It became much easier to continue developing the second language when skills in the mother tongue increased. Language skills were positive for continued learning, linguistic development, development of bilingualism and multilingualism. Through widened linguistic horizons it becomes possible to develop identity as multilingual persons. When skills increase in different languages such as Swedish as a second language and mother tongue, the subjects become aware of their identities as multilingual persons. They become aware of their possibilities of being active, multicultural, global citizens. Their ability to perform in different lingual settings becomes visible.

### Introduction

If one has a foreign or immigrant background, experiences from school and one's understanding of school differ from those of students without a foreign or immigrant background. The proportion of children with a foreign or immigrant background in Swedish pre-school education and the nine-year compulsory school system is about twenty per cent (National Swedish Agency for Education, 2008). The term *foreign background* refers to those with one or both parents born abroad.

Some of those pupils with a foreign or immigrant background meet the Swedish language as a second language. Their skills in one or more first languages are already developed when they come into contact with the Swedish language. Some of them are familiar with the Swedish language, and some meet the language for the first time when they enter the Swedish school. Those children who are not familiar with the Swedish language or meet the language when they enter school have a language situation which can be described as a race against time. In the school they are supposed to learn the new language. At the same time they are supposed to learn all other school subjects with the help of a new language, Swedish, as a second language. Furthermore, they are expected to reach a working level in the Swedish language. They are supposed to be bilingual persons in a multilingual school and global society.

### *Key Position in School*

The Swedish language occupies a key position in the Swedish school. Teaching and communication take place by means of language and through cooperation with others. But in order to be able to benefit from an education within the Swedish system and to be able to develop into bilingual individuals with multicultural backgrounds, the pupils need knowledge about and in both their first language(s) - the mother tongue - and their second language - Swedish. Skills in the first and second languages are needed in school. Because of this, pupils with a first language other than Swedish have the right to be taught and instructed in the mother tongue and in Swedish as a Second Language.

Teachers have to meet this language situation, the learning and educational demands, with carefully arranged and prepared teaching and instruction. The right to succeed in school and to be participating pupils as well as citizens forces schools to develop the necessary education and teacher competence. But despite these developments, studies have shown that pupils with foreign background and Swedish as a second language are less successful in achieving the educational goals both in the nine-year compulsory school and in the upper-secondary school when one compares them with their classmates with a Swedish background (National Swedish Agency for Education, 2002, 2004a,b, 2008).

This phenomenon has been interpreted by Bunar (2001), Bunar & Kallstenius (2007), Lahdenperä (2004) and Torpsten (2008). These researchers have found that one explanation could be that the education does not carry out the multicultural society's demands or meet the pupils' requirements. Other explanations could be teachers' lack of awareness about the pupils' right to be taught in the mother tongue and in Swedish as a Second Language. Furthermore, teachers are uncertain about what these subjects should include. In addition, teachers are uncertain about the pupils' right to instruction or supervision in lessons in their mother tongue and in Swedish as a Second Language and about how they should examine and evaluate skills in the mother tongue and in Swedish as a Second Language.

### **Purpose, Method and Research Process**

The overarching aim of this investigation is to interpret second-language student teachers' encounters with the Swedish school, regarding first and second languages and language learning. Using a life-story approach, the interpretation focuses on lingual skills, lingual identity, citizenship and second-language learners' learning memories. I investigate and examine an empirical context whereby one can report memories from experienced learning by interpreting student teachers' written and oral narrated learning memories. In order to achieve the overarching aim, the following questions are specified:

- (1) What aspects are mentioned in second-language student teachers' narrated life stories concerning the mother tongue, Swedish as a Second Language and language learning?
- (2) What aspects are mentioned in second-language student teachers' narrated life stories concerning lingual skills, lingual identity and citizenship?

The investigation starts in social and educational environments which involve the Swedish compulsory school and its steering documents. Three trainee student teachers who have learnt Swedish as a second language participate in the study. By written and verbal communication the students related their learning memories as aspects of their life stories. They encountered the Swedish school in the 1990s and told their learning memories in 2007. The students' life stories are collected in the form of three letters and three in-depth group discussions in which I acted as discussion leader.

### *Learning Memories, Life Stories and Social Constructions*

This empirical context involves narrative analysis of experienced learning memories in terms of aspects of life stories. Three students' life stories are considered as social constructions which both influence and are influenced by their context. A theoretical starting point is life world, life story, memories, knowledge and understanding of another person through Merleau-Ponty's (1997),

Dominicé's (2000) and Bengtsson's (2001, 2005) ideas about narrated life events and construction of life. Another theoretical starting point is Foucault's (1993, 2002, 2003) discussion concerning meaning, power, normality, diversity and social constructions. Links are made with Swedish curriculum research theory and formulation in steering documents by reasoning about ideas of what is important to pass on to future generations. In this context, attention is drawn to the importance of the wording in these steering documents. In this way, the Swedish curriculum theory research tradition is linked with the life-story approach.

#### *Interpretation and Presentation*

The stories are interpreted with the help of two theoretical prisms (Torpsten, 2008). They are presented and discussed in different stages by reasoning about language and the creation of meaning, as well as culture, cultural capital, similarities/differences, compensating/completing, limited participation/full participation and citizenship, and the encounters with teaching in the mother tongue and in Swedish as a Second Language. A narrative analysis is carried out in a spiral of understanding by means of deconstruction and reconstruction. Results from this analysis are presented thematically.

#### **Educational Ideas about Equal Education and Changes with Time**

An overarching educational ideal of equality of standards in education in Sweden's state schools has been formulated in the compulsory schools' curricula. The social ideals with reference to equality, cooperation and goals concerning pupils' right to make themselves masters of Swedish as a second language and options to develop or not develop the first language and their culture are formulated in the steering document texts from 1980, Curriculum for the compulsory school system (Ministry of Education and Science, 1980) and from 1994, Curriculum for the compulsory school system, the pre-school class and the leisure-time centre (Ministry of Education and Science, 1994). The same ideals are expressed in the syllabus supplement from 1985 as well as in the syllabi from 1995 and 2011 (Ministry of Education and Science, 1995, 2011). Ideals which have linked both curricula and syllabi can be summarised as equality, choice and cooperation. This is part of the compulsory schools' fundamental value system which, in addition to these ideals, includes the value of an education in democracy. The educational ideals which place compulsory education in an educational value context can be summarised as equality of educational standards in the obligatory school where all young citizens participate.

Because of this, the documents can be understood as parts of a social context where ideas of equality - having the same worth and the same access to schools and jobs - are expressed as important. Each child's right to maintain and develop both her first language and her culture is manifested as an important social and educational value to pass on to young children in a school for all young citizens.

Educational ideals, both expressed in the overarching parts of the curricula and concretized in the syllabi, have changed with time. What can be called breaks, areas of tension and contradictory ideals can be discerned. Over a period of time both the curricula and syllabi express movements towards restricted participation, compensation and uniformity. But reverse movements towards full participation, complementation and differences are expressed as well. In an earlier syllabus (Ministry of Education and Science, 1995) a contradiction can be brought to light. The contradiction is that both monocultural and multicultural ways of looking at culture, what is crucial for success, and what is important to pass on to the coming generations of second-language pupils are expressed.

#### *Changes, Interruptions and Areas of Tension*

In the overarching parts of the curricula, the formulated educational ideology can be understood as having changed from similarity in a monocultural school towards diversity in a multicultural school. In the first compulsory school, Swedish was the only spoken language. Later on there were both pupils who spoke Swedish as their mother tongue and those who spoke Swedish as a second

language. Because of this 'language and cultural turn', changes in value formulations concerning equal education were necessary. And equal education was formulated as diverse education in 1980 (Ministry of Education and Science, 1980). Educational starting points should be pupils' needs and requirements. This development towards diversity as equality was interrupted and reformulated in 1994 (Ministry of Education and Science, 1994). And a tension is visible. The reformulated educational ideals can be understood as having returned to similarity when it comes to pupils' culture and languages. Another change is that the concept of equality of standards has changed from uniform, similar, and compensatory education (Ministry of Education and Science, 1962) to equality of opportunity and complementary education.

These changes highlight a picture of a monocultural and uniform school which has changed ideologically into a multicultural and diverse one with respect to an education based on equal standards.

Social values such as equality, choice and cooperation are part of the compulsory school. For this reason, the goal of educating pupils and passing on fundamental values through the teaching in the compulsory school reflects an area of tension between contradictory ideals. The contradiction is that both the importance of individual choice and the importance of the creation of togetherness through uniformity are emphasised. It has been thought important to pass on values concerned with both creating solidarity in society and individuality. What is also clear is that in the compulsory school pupils with a first language other than Swedish make up a group for which it has been very important to formulate a special education. At the same time, deficiencies in the wording make it clear that the idea of equality of standards in a school for everyone is the same as the same education for everyone. Equal education is not different education with its starting point in pupils' needs and differences.

There is an area of tension between the curricula from 1994 (Ministry of Education and Science, 1994) and the syllabi from 1996 and 2000 (Ministry of Education and Science, 1995). The syllabi that are in effect now aim at pupils becoming like the majority culture and having the ability to speak the language of this culture in a way which breaks away from the ideal of full participation. The contents also show a break with the idea of the individual's freedom of choice and the possibility of him/her having an influence on the educational content. The individual's freedom of choice and the possibility of influencing educational content are formulated in the curriculum which is now in effect (Ministry of Education and Science, 2011). Another area of tension has come to light in the present syllabus. When the content of the subject is studied with the help of the two theoretical prisms, a picture of contradictory ideals emerges. The picture is both of a subject with its focus on a history of literature approach with exclusive emphasis on what is Swedish, and of a subject that can be described as an experience-pedagogic democracy subject where the experiences and needs of individual pupils are starting points and the focus is on awareness for understanding. The syllabus is, therefore, contradictory because it has both a monocultural and a multicultural focus.

#### *Mother Tongue and Swedish as a Second Language*

Mother tongue teaching has a history of nearly thirty years as a school subject. Swedish as a Second Language has a history of nearly forty years as a school subject (Torpsten, 2008).

There were no specific writings concerning children with a foreign background, pupils with another mother tongue than Swedish or multilingual children in the first curriculum from 1962 (Ministry of Education and Science, 1962). Since the second curriculum from 1969 (Ministry of Education and Science, 1969), there have been formulations that can be understood as Swedish as a second language or multilingualism. The importance of developing multilingualism is expressed in the supplement from 1985. And the importance of developing the mother tongue as well as multilingualism has been expressed since 1995 (Ministry of Education and Science, 1995). Pupils' continued development of their mother tongue is essential for reaching multilingualism, for improving knowledge and for success in school. Good skills in one's mother tongue make it easier to learn other languages and to develop knowledge in other subjects (Ministry of Education and Science, 2011).

In the syllabus for the subject Swedish as a Second Language, the wording has changed since 1969 and 1980 (Ministry of Education and Science, 1969, 1980). At that time, 1969 and 1980, the subject was characterised by limited knowledge and limited participation in both school and society. In contrast, the contents of the 1985 supplement and the 1995 and 2011 syllabi focused on the acquisition of knowledge and full participation (Ministry of Education and Science, 1995, 2011). A break with these changes becomes clear in the syllabus from 2011 (Ministry of Education and Science, 2011) when a contradictory ideal in the form of both a monocultural and a multicultural focus emerges.

Over a period of years, formulations have been changed from support for immigrant children (Ministry of Education and Science, 1969), to Swedish as a foreign language (Ministry of Education and Science, 1980), and to Swedish as a second language (Ministry of Education and Science, 1995, 2011). According to the first formulations, immigrant children should have a restricted vocabulary, reach familiarity with phrases and grammatical structures, have good pronunciation, and be able to speak and understand simple everyday language. Later on the pupils are supposed to learn Swedish so that they could participate in regular class in all subjects. The subject is expressed as an aid to pupils' effort to be multilingual (Ministry of Education and Science, 2011).

### **Presentation of Interpretation Outcome SENSE?**

The narrative analysis of student teachers' learning memories told as life stories shows structures of power as well as of meaning. Great pressure was put on the students to learn Swedish. They sought togetherness. The analysis shows balance between new and old. Earlier experiences and old skills were useful. Gaining competence in switching languages and a sense of belonging were other results. A different mother tongue, bilingualism and diversity were seen as something different, as adequate, and as a resource. In the following, the outcome of this interpretation is presented thematically.

#### *Power Structures, Meaning and Language*

When the student teachers encountered the Swedish school they could not participate. They did not understand the teaching or any communicative signals. But they wanted to understand and be understood. They wanted to belong and to interact with classmates. Because of that, great pressure was put on them to learn Swedish. In this situation, the Swedish language seemed to be the key to success in education and for feelings of togetherness with others in the school. In order to understand, be educated, express themselves and obtain a sense of belonging, togetherness and cooperation they tried hard to learn Swedish as a second language. Good skills in Swedish meant opportunities for the students to interact, socialise, understand the education and communicate.

Furthermore, the student teachers wanted to establish themselves quickly according to the prevailing language norms by acquiring Swedish in the school's social context. They were offered education in Swedish as a Second Language when they encountered the Swedish school. And by learning Swedish as a second language, they tried to adjust to the demands of becoming good Swedes. In this way they would be able to display both their new and their old knowledge. The ability to express themselves in Swedish in the same way as others meant possibilities for the students to assert themselves and be heard. In accordance with Foucault's (1993) reasoning about normality and meaning, it became possible for them to fit into the standard of normality in the Swedish school. It became possible to find meaning and balance between the new and the old.

But learning Swedish as a second language quickly had a disadvantage. The student teachers felt that their skills in the second language improved at the cost of skills in their mother tongue, and this led to an imbalance between the old and the new language and structures of power. In the student teachers' encounters with Swedish as a second language, it was important for them to receive a lot of encouragement. They tell us in their stories that second-language pupils could be motivated more than they were by teaching in and about the second language. One mistake in their education was, however, that instruction and the offered learning activities were focused more on their inadequacies and mistakes rather than on their abilities and skills. In accordance with Foucault's (1993) discussion about education and normality, pupils' diversity should be corrected

through teaching and tuition. Second-language pupils would become normal and better able to fit into the standard.

From a perspective where meaning is constructed through language, those who have the ability to express themselves have precedence when it comes to the preferential right of interpretation. In this way, those who speak the majority language have an advantage over those who do not speak the majority language or who speak a minority language. The structures of power can be maintained by not listening. It was important for the students to be listened to and not be the ones who stuck out from the crowd. By learning Swedish as a second language, their ability to be listened to increased. The structure of power and meaning was changed.

#### *Increased Language Awareness*

In the Swedish school the students were offered education in and about their mother tongue. In their stories they tell us about the opportunity to take part in mother tongue teaching and tuition in school. Furthermore, they highlight mother tongue education as positive for their continued linguistic development. It became much easier to continue developing their second-language when skills in their mother tongue improved. In accordance with Bengtsson (2001, 2005) and Merleau-Ponty (1997), this can be understood in terms of an increase in their total language awareness. In mother tongue lessons, the student teachers met both teachers and other pupils who spoke the same mother tongue. Their earlier experiences were made use of in the classroom. They could understand and be understood. They participated and were listened to.

Naturally, it is easier to express oneself in one's mother tongue than it is in a second language. The mother tongue has a foundation of knowledge and another kind of fluency compared with the second language. In the mother tongue lessons the teachers' starting point was the pupils' own experiences and skills, their needs and capabilities. In these circumstances, the students recognised mother tongue education as important.

#### *Language Acquisition and Cognitive Development*

Skills in languages are transferred when new languages are to be learned. In these interpreted student learning memories, mother tongue skills are visualised that are transferred to their second language. Because of this transference, acquisition of the second language becomes easier. In accordance with Cummins & Schecter (2003), good skills in the mother tongue have positive effects on cognitive development as well. In this situation, students developing and using their mother tongue enable both a way of preserving old skills and a way of feeling a sense of belonging. In accordance with Foucault (2002), and in what one can call a 'we'-relationship which was not 'being the other', the student teachers could find connections to the past.

The degree of interaction between pupil and teacher is important for the success or failure of pupils in their language acquisition. The most successful situation is one in which the teacher's organisation and teaching strategies lead to a learning environment where the pupils feel accepted by their teacher and everyone has a voice. In this way, the pupils can have a strong sense of belonging both to the learning environment and to society in general (Cummins & Schecter, 2003). Whether language diversity - for example, a different mother tongue - is seen as a deficiency, a right or a resource is crucial for the second-language pupils' development. In accordance with Cummins & Schecter (2003), and from an inclusive perspective, different languages and multiculturalism are seen as resources rather than just as individual rights or deficiencies.

#### *Different Mother Tongue, Diversity and Opportunity*

The students tell us that their mother tongue was very important for their development of bilingualism in terms of multilingualism. But not to have Swedish as a mother tongue and to leave the class to take part in mother tongue lessons made them feel as though they didn't belong. In the stories, the students speak about their feelings of being 'the others'. They were looked at as those who were different from their classmates and divergent compared with the norm. In accordance with Foucault (2002), what is outside the framework for what is usual and therefore normal in

school is considered inadequate and deviant. In the compulsory school, a different mother tongue was seen as something inadequate. However, in the Swedish school, having a different mother tongue compared with the norm can also be described as possessing a resource. It can be described as something complementary. In accordance with Bengtsson (2001, 2005) and Merleau-Ponty (1997), the students' linguistic awareness resulted in their widened linguistic and language horizons. When their skills in their mother tongue increased, they became aware of the fact that they could switch between their languages depending on the situation. In accordance with Peterson & Åhlund (2007a, b), the students were able to perform in many different arenas and settings.

### **To Conclude and for the Future**

The overarching aim of this investigation was to interpret how students encounter the Swedish school, regarding first and second languages and language learning. Student teachers speaking Swedish as a second language were asked to tell their life histories based on their immigrant and school experiences. I have investigated an empirical context, where one can report memories of the curricula and syllabi that have been experienced by interpreting the student teachers' learning memories. In the interpretation of those written and oral memories, I used a life story approach and focused on lingual skills, lingual identity, and citizenship and learning memories.

My analysis highlights balance, identity, code changing, differences, bilingualism, diversity and resourcefulness. Equality of standards in education has been formulated in all the compulsory school curricula and syllabi as well as in the social goals concerning equality, cooperation and choice in maintaining and developing the first and the second language, as well as the culture. The compulsory school's fundamental value system includes the value of an education in democracy. These documents and the analysed life stories can be understood as being part of a context where ideas of equality, of everybody having the same worth and the same access to schools and jobs, are important. The pupils' right to maintain and develop both their first language/languages and their culture is emphasised as an important social and educational value to pass on to all young citizens.

In the life stories the student teachers tell us about their memories of not belonging anywhere and how it hurt not to belong. Furthermore, they highlight their multiculturalism in the multicultural society. They know how to live in it because they are the multicultural society. They were not monolingual, they were bilingual. They did not have Swedish as their mother tongue, but instead they had other mother tongues. They received education in their mother tongue and in Swedish as a Second Language when they encountered the Swedish school system.

Within education they were offered a choice to maintain and develop their first language. Mother tongue education in school is highlighted as positive for their continued and life-long learning and linguistic development. Good skills in the mother tongue were transferred to their second language. It became much easier to continue developing a second language when skills in their mother tongue improved. The student teachers' mother tongue was very important in terms of equality and for the development of bilingualism in terms of multilingualism, making it possible for them to develop an identity as multilingual persons.

The student teachers participated in Swedish as a Second Language and mother tongue education when they encountered the Swedish school system. Participating in Swedish as a Second Language and mother tongue lessons was described as positive. Participation in those lessons made it easier to take steps forward in their language development and make improvements in it. Mother tongue skills were transferred to the second language improvement, and it became much easier to continue developing the second language when skills in the students' mother tongue increased. Their skills in their mother tongue and other languages were positive for continued learning and linguistic development. This was very important for the development of bilingualism and multilingualism. Through widened linguistic horizons it became possible to develop an identity as multilingual persons. When skills in different languages, such as Swedish as a Second Language and their mother tongue, increased, the student teachers became aware of their identities as multilingual persons.

The students become aware of their possibilities of being active, multicultural, global citizens. Their abilities to perform in different lingual settings turn out to be visible.

By telling their own learning memories as life stories in interviews and letters, the student teachers have informed me about second language learners' situation in school. The student teachers have learnt about their own lives and maybe something about life in general as well. I have been more prepared to understand a multicultural classroom and bilingual pupils. Probably the student teachers have been more prepared and ready to meet, understand and educate their future monolingual and multilingual pupils. On the basis of this interpretation outcome, I would like to argue in favour of teacher training, continuing teacher education and qualified teachers who address the situation of second language and bilingual pupils in school. I argue for the importance of second language and mother tongue as school subjects and for their connections to success in school. Further, I argue in favour of cognitive and identity development and diversity in school.

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