

## Teachers in the Crossfire: The Unclear Role of Swedish as a Second Language Teachers in the Language Introduction Programme in Sweden

*Åsa Wedin*

ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2992-0818>

Current e-mail [awe@du.se](mailto:awe@du.se)

This article focuses on the role of the Swedish as a second language (SSL) teacher in the Language Introduction Programme (LIP) in secondary schools in Sweden. Policy analysis is used, with policy comprising of three closely intertwined layers: declared, perceived and practised. The material used consists of official documents, interviews with teachers and principals, and classroom observations. What becomes apparent through these layers is that the SSL teacher's role is both contradictory and ambiguous. On the one hand, these teachers are trained to teach and plan SSL to support L2 students' learning throughout the school day and in different subjects. On the other, neither official documents nor the schools themselves provide SSL teachers space for such agency: the space in which they are given agency is restricted to their own subject. National educational policy to increase knowledge about the educational requirements of recently arrived students has not been followed by sufficient changes in the training of and directives for principals and teachers. Solving these issues requires that all teachers and principals receive relevant training and SSL teachers given more responsibility and training.

Key words: Second language teachers, upper-secondary school, educational policy, agency, teacher roles, Language Introduction Programme

## 1. Introduction

In this article, the role of SSL teachers in the Language Introductory Programme (LIP) at upper-secondary school<sup>i</sup> in Sweden is studied by way of policy analysis. LIP is a transitional programme in which recently arrived students aged 16-20 are taught Swedish as a second language (SSL) and other subjects needed to qualify for mainstream programmes. Thus, the programme comprises of both SSL teachers and teachers of other subjects, and the education is equivalent to secondary school grades 7-9 in compulsory school. SSL in its present form was introduced as a separate subject in 1995 (Hedman & Magnusson, 2018). It has its own curriculum and affords the same eligibility to further education as the subject Swedish. In lower-secondary school, SSL is offered based on a needs assessment of the individual student. In upper-secondary school, SSL is an alternative to Swedish (SNAE, 2011b, rev. 2019; SFS, 2011:185). One difference between the subject Swedish and SSL is that Swedish covers dialects, other Nordic languages and the history of the Swedish language, while SSL covers contrastive language perspectives and has a more extensive focus on language development (SNAE, 2011b, rev. 2019; SFS, 2011:185, chap. 5, §14). Research on the relationship between the two Swedish subjects includes issues of inclusion and equality (for example, Torpsten, 2008; Lindberg, 2009; Bunar, 2010; Siekkinen, 2017; Hedman & Magnusson, 2018), linguistic teaching needs (Elmeroth, 2006; Lindberg, 2008; Economou, 2015) and language ideologies (Sahlée, 2017; Hedman & Magnusson, 2019). However, in LIP it is usually the case that only SSL is offered as the students all have Swedish as their second language.

The role and expectations of SSL teachers are ambiguous in several ways. Research on LIP (Wedin, 2021 b, c; Wedin & Rosén, 2021) has shown disjointedness and contradictions between regulations and expectations at different levels. Here, however, the focus is on the role of teachers in SSL in relation to school management and other subject teachers. The Wedin and Rosén show that although SSL teachers are taught about what second language (L2) students need to learn and how to support them in their learning and development of L2, their responsibility is restricted to teaching SSL in their own lessons. However, the quality of education for L2 students at the school level is the responsibility of the school principal. The Wedin (2021c) points out that although SSL teachers are educated in the importance of supporting students in the development of knowledge-specific language skills in all subjects, teachers in the different subjects are not educated in the characteristics of the subject-specific language in their respective subjects. Rubin (2019) touches

on this when she emphasises that approaches that promote language development in relation to subject knowledge demand time for reflection on the part of the teachers to allow them to create bridges between students' everyday language and subject-specific language.

As SSL in its present form is quite new to the Swedish school system, the professional position of the SSL teacher is also new (SFS 2011:326). While the roles of teachers in subjects such as history, English and mathematics have a long tradition, the role of SSL teachers has yet to be made clear. For example, it is unclear who is responsible for what regarding the quality of the education for L2 students among individual subject teachers, SSL teachers and principals (Wedin & Rosén, 2021).

As a result of the ambiguities and variations regarding the subject SSL, it is interesting to study the role of its teachers in relation to other school staff. Thus, the aim of this study is to gain insight into the role of SSL teachers in LIP in Sweden. The following research questions will be answered:

1. To what extent do SSL teachers have a voice in issues related to L2 students' learning?
2. In what aspects of students' education do SSL teachers have space for agency?

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The study of the role of SSL teachers will be based on a critical theoretical perspective, with a focus on issues of voice and agency. The critical perspective strongly relates to issues of power, which allows for an analysis of the complex and interdependent nature of different layers of policy. *Agency* is here used to mean 'the socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (Ahearn 2001, 112) and, as such, with a nuanced understanding of agency with inherent contradictions (see also Vitanova et al., 2015). The critical perspective on agency means that interest is directed towards the question of who loses space to act in relation to agency and how this space may be recreated. Here, agency is crucial in issues related to the quality of the education for students in SSL, with principals, SSL teachers and other subject teachers as the main actors. Further, the understanding of *voice* refers to who gets to talk and who is listened to. In this study, issues concerning who has a say on L2 students' education are important.

Policy analysis is used with policy perceived in accordance with Spolsky (2004) as comprising three closely intertwined elements or layers: 1) language management, 2) language beliefs or ideology and 3) language practices. Hornberger and Johnson (2007) also argue for a layered view of policy, using the onion metaphor (see also Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). This means that policy is treated as a multi-layered phenomenon where all layers should be taken into account. The three levels have been further developed by Bonacina-Pugh (2012):

- 1) Language management, which according to Spolsky (2004, 11) refers to explicit formulation and proclamation of plans about language use, commonly through a written document – what Shohamy (2006, 68) has called ‘declared language policy’.
- 2) Language beliefs or ideology, ‘what people think should be done’ (Spolsky, 2004, 4). Bonacina-Pugh (2012, 215) suggests the term ‘perceived language policy’ for the investigation of creation, interpretation and appropriation of policy.
- 3) Language practices, which Spolsky (2004, 14) defines as ‘what people actually do’ and what Bonacina-Pugh (2012, 214) calls ‘practiced language policy’.

As the focus in this study is on the role of SSL teachers, the layers will mainly focus on education, with issues of language as a central part. Thus, the three layers used will be as follows:

- 1) Declared policy of language and education (management)
- 2) Perceived policy of language and education (attitudes)
- 3) Practiced policy of language and education (practices)

These three elements are treated as intertwined layers, and the analysis of each layer will focus on issues of voice and agency. This is then the basis for answering the research questions.

### **3. Methods and Material**

This study is part of a larger project on recently arrived students in Swedish upper-secondary school<sup>ii</sup>. Linguistic ethnography (Copland & Creese, 2015; Martin-Jones & Martin, 2017) was used in the larger project as a methodological framework to study students’ language development, disciplinary literacy and social inclusion. The material used here was gathered over two academic

years in an LIP at one of the four project schools; it consists of interviews with 3 school principals and 7 SSL teachers, as well as observations in 22 lessons in SSL classrooms and 41 in the classrooms of other subjects. In addition, official documents at the national level and course syllabi from teacher training programmes at two universities were used.

*Declared policy of language and education*, the management level, was studied through an analysis of official documents at the national level and course syllabi used in the training of SSL teachers. The official documents chosen were the Education Act (SFS, 2010:800); the School Ordinance (SFS, 2011:185); the Swedish curriculum for upper-secondary school (SFS, 2010:2039; SNAE, 2011a, rev 2019; SNAE, 2011b, rev. 2019); a report from the Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE) on SSL in grades 7-9 (SNAE, 2018); the Swedish curriculum for compulsory school, preschool class and school-age educare (SNAE, 2011a, rev. 2019); and two reports from the School Inspectorate (2010, 2020). The reports from the School Inspectorate were used as they have an evaluative role, and thus indirectly a governing role. Course syllabi for SSL teacher training programmes from two universities, comprising 90 ECTS credits, were also used. The subject qualification requirement for upper-secondary school teachers is 90 ECTS credits, while the subject qualification for lower-secondary school teachers is 45 ECTS credits (from 2018, 60 ECTS credits, Ministry of Education, 2016), which is therefore the case for LIP teachers. The two universities chosen were among those who have offered education for SSL teachers for more than 20 years and have a good reputation in the field.

For the second layer, *perceived policy of language and education*, interviews were conducted with seven SSL teachers and three principals, all of whom have worked in LIP with L2 students exclusively. All interviews were individual, conducted by the researchers and took between 35 and 70 minutes. They were audio-recorded and transcribed. One of the teachers was interviewed twice. The qualifications of the interviewed SSL teachers are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: about here

The third layer, *practiced policy of language and education*, was studied using material from observations of 22 lessons from the classrooms of 6 SSL teachers and 41 hours from 9 teachers in other subjects. Material used was as follows: fieldnotes, video recordings (60 min), photographs, and collected

artefacts, such as handouts and worksheets. Here, the number of teachers qualified in their subject and meeting the requirements of their position was similar to what was reported in the statistics from SNAE (2019). Among the nine interviewed and observed SSL teachers, four met the requirements. However, none had fewer than 30 ECTS in SSL, while six of the other subject teachers did. Table 2 provides an overview of the observed classrooms.

Table 2: *about here*

The analysis was carried out layer by layer through content analysis that involved identifying expressions and situations where issues of agency and voice appeared. Ethical issues were considered throughout the study to make sure that no one was harmed. All of those involved were carefully informed and their consent obtained. Video recordings only included those who gave their consent, and the camera was not directed at students' faces. All data were stored securely throughout the research process in accordance with the project data storage plan. Data are presented in ways that avoid the identification of participants, and pseudonyms are used for individuals.

## 4. Findings

The findings of the content analysis will first be presented layer by layer, starting with the declared policy at the management level, followed by perceived and practiced levels. In the analysis of the three layers, focus is on expressions and situations where issues of voice and agency in relation to SSL teachers appear.

### 4.1 Declared Policy of Language and Education

The findings from the analysis of declared policy will start with the content of official documents, followed by the content of course syllabi. According to the Swedish Education Act (2010:800), the school principal is in charge of the management and coordination of education. This includes adapting education to students' varying needs and ensuring that teachers have the opportunity to receive necessary in-service training and to collaborate across subjects when necessary. According to the curricula (SNAE, 2011a, rev. 2019; 2011b, rev. 2019), teachers are responsible for teaching and working with students' parents or guardians and with other teachers to ensure students receive support in the development of their language and communication so that they can achieve the

educational goals across subjects. According to the curricula (SFS, 2010:2039; SNAE, 2011a, rev 2019), SSL students should increase their knowledge about and skills in Swedish and develop and build trust in their own linguistic and communicative ability. In upper-secondary school, they should also reflect on their multilingualism and understand the functions of Swedish in communication, thinking and learning.

Teaching in the subject SSL in lower-secondary school is to be offered ‘if necessary’ and to replace Swedish, upon decision by the principal (SFS, 2011:185, 5 chap, §14). However, in upper-secondary school SSL is optional (SFS, 2010:2039, SFS, 2012:402). As reported by SNAE (2018), perceptions about which students should study SSL vary among SSL teachers and principals, depending on how the subject is understood and how teaching is organised. In the report, which is based on interviews with teachers and principals, SNAE concludes that SSL education is not of equivalent quality for L2 students and is not always based on students’ needs.

In a recent report on SSL in lower-secondary school (School Inspectorate, 2020) (30 schools were reviewed), the problem with principals’ management in terms of SSL is further highlighted. In addition, the report finds that there are problems in the assessment of who should study SSL, which consequently risks the quality of students’ education. One problem underlined in the report is the low rate of qualified teachers in the subject: only 48 % compared with 73.2 % in general for grades 7-9 (SNAE 2018/19). The report also addresses problems concerning the lack of support for teachers who are not qualified, as well as the absence of routines. Thus, principals are identified as agents with a high level of responsibility, who, in many cases, demonstrate weaknesses in their role when it comes to SSL.

In an earlier report on 21 schools and 21 preschools in 9 municipalities, the School Inspectorate (2010) focused on the importance of supporting students’ development of Swedish and knowledge in all school subjects and, by extension, of employing approaches that promote language development in all school subjects. The report showed major shortcomings in SSL, such as low awareness of students’ backgrounds and levels, as well as a lack of multilingual and intercultural

perspectives. In many cases, SSL mainly consisted of skills training without contextualisation with other school content.

An overview of the qualifications of SSL teachers is presented in Table 3, which provides a summary of content in course syllabi for 90 ECTS credits in SSL at the two universities shown in Table 3.

*Table 3: about here*

The courses at the two universities are similar in terms of content. The main content of both concerns language development and sociolinguistics (19 ECTS at both<sup>iii</sup>), language structure (15 ECTS at both), literary studies (15/22.5 ECTS), and assessment (11/6 ECTS). Both universities also include educational aspects (7.5/6 ECTS), literacy development (7.5 ECTS at both), and second language research (7.5/11 ECTS). Moreover, the courses include the topic subject-specific language (7.5/3 ECTS), which is offered at University A in the form of a separate course and at University B as part of a course on language use. This topic is also – to some extent at least – included in some of the other courses at both universities. This shows that SSL teachers receive training in teaching and learning within the framework of SSL, including training in what students are required to learn both in Swedish and in other subjects.

In terms of issues of the voice and agency of the SSL teacher, it becomes clear from national policy documents and the university SSL course syllabi that SSL teachers are responsible for their teaching, as might be expected. However, decisions concerning which students should study SSL, how the teaching should be planned and organised, and how to work with other subject teachers (and whether SSL teachers have voice and agency in these cases) are made by the school principal. Principals often may not have training in L2 student learning and language development. However, SSL teachers will always have such training because it is included in their university education.

In the 2020 School Inspectorate report, one problem that was highlighted was the low rate of qualified SSL teachers and the lack of support and professional development for those who needed it. As the principal is responsible both for hiring teachers and for their professional development,

the agency of the principal is clear. This means that for qualified SSL teachers to fully employ their professional skills, principals must understand the importance of having qualified SSL teachers and offer them space for agency. Not reflected in a School Inspectorate report from 2010 was the role of other subject teachers when it came to L2 students' development of language and knowledge. While the topic is included in the training of SSL teachers, it is not commonly included in the training of subject teachers (Hermansson et al., 2021; Wedin & Rosén, 2021).

The content analysis of these documents makes clear an ambiguity regarding the declared role of SSL teachers, as the management role of the principals does not correspond with SSL teachers' understanding of what L2 students need to learn in various languages while at school. Also unclear is who is responsible for the development of students' language and knowledge in other school subjects – something that was highlighted as important in the 2010 School Inspectorate report.

#### ***4.2 Perceived Policy of Language and Education***

In the findings from the analysis on perceived policy through the content analysis of interviews, there are discrepancies between what SSL teachers and principals say. The SSL teachers complained about a lack of support from management and how their knowledge of L2 students' learning and language development was disregarded by principals and other subject teachers. They explained they had tried to argue for the importance of competence among other subject teachers in the Language Introduction Programme, about language development approaches and about the inclusion of students' various languages, while simultaneously referring to their own education and research. Hella, one of the SSL teachers who had 90 ECTS credits in the subject, called for management that ensures teachers have some multilingualism competence. Furthermore, she appealed for high competence among SSL teachers, explaining it is a "catastrophe" that some of the SSL teachers had only 30 ECTS credits. Both she and another teacher, Ellen, argued for the importance of subject teachers knowing about the approaches that promote language development. Hella referred to earlier work in another school where she had been assigned to arrange in-service training for her colleagues in other subjects. Likewise, Ellen conveyed this topic was something that she had brought up for discussion among school colleagues; but when this was put this to management, they were ignored. She reported, 'It still feels like multilingualism, generally speaking

(...), at the management level is not permitted the space it should be. You could say that it is made invisible.' Similarly, Hella referred to how she felt when their attempts to make changes were not listened to by management: 'It's like banging your head against a brick wall'.

Astrid also complained about not being listened to, mentioning how she had argued that students who already met the requirements for some subjects, such as English or mathematics, should be given opportunities to progress by taking courses at the upper-secondary school level. Her suggestions, however, went unnoticed. Christina claimed that she had asked for support to work with other teachers and study guidance assistants who help students in their mother tongue. She added that although there once had been a staff study group at the school to talk about language development approaches, it had only met just the once. (In the transcript, – indicates incomplete thoughts and (xx) indicates when something said is not audible.)

Excerpt 1.

C: Det var på två skolled-, två generationer bort kan man säga med skolledare. [småskrattar] Då skulle vi göra det här och vi delades in i grupper och det blev kanske ett tillfälle och sen så blev det inte mer än det. Och sen –

I: Liksom det har ingen priori-, prioriteras inte i –

C: Nej men som det mesta här är det ganska rörigt, så att säga. Och det tror jag också är att vi har liksom en skolledning som är ganska grön när det gäller andraspråkselever och språkintroduktion (xx) som inte riktigt förstår.

C: It was two princi-, two generations away one could say with principals. [laughs a little] Then we were to do this, and we were divided into groups. And there was perhaps one occasion, and then it didn't become more than that. And then –

I: Sort of no priori-, it wasn't prioritised in –

C: No, but like most things here things are sort of rather messy. And I also think that is because we have, well, school management that is rather inexperienced when it comes to second language students and language introduction (xx), and that doesn't really understand.

The above denotes signs of resignation on the part of the teachers. We understand from Christina that there had been a high turnover of principals at the school. Although SSL teachers positioned themselves as competent and knowledgeable when it came to their students' needs, they felt their voices went unheard. Arguing for the importance of knowledge about language development among their colleagues, they expressed frustration about how their knowledge was not being used beyond their own classrooms.

Two of the three principals, P1 and P2, were interviewed during the first part of the study, while P3 was interviewed in the last year. P2 was responsible for the entire secondary school, while P1 was responsible for the Language Introduction Programme for the first year. P1 then left for another job and was replaced by P3. Late during the third school term, P2 also left for another job, and P3 remained as the only principal of the programme. Both P1 and P3 had a teaching degree (lower-secondary school), while P2 did not have a university degree. Of the three, only P3 claimed to have some training in the field of L2 students and their educational needs: this was a short in-service training course.

During the interviews, the principals did not say much about teachers. And when they did, they did not distinguish between the diverse roles of staff: for example, teachers of different categories such as SSL teachers, other subject teachers and mother tongue teachers (teach the subject called “mother tongue”). Furthermore, the principals did not distinguish between teachers and study guidance assistants in mother tongue as a subject. As mentioned, the assistants worked parallel with teachers to support students in need of help with their Swedish. There was confusion when it came to the categorisation of staff, as made apparent when P3 – talking about study guidance assistants – referred to them as follows: ‘reception teachers – I might say mother tongue teachers. This is what they’re called on paper, but here they also work with a reception group, those who are most new with us’. Consequently, P3 had appointed assistants who did not have a teaching degree or SSL teacher training to teach the most recently arrived students. None of the principals talked about the importance of all teachers being competent in the field of second language development, approaches that promote language development in their subject teaching, or the need to support students’ subject-specific language. Only P3 mentioned how all teachers need to learn how to ‘build students’ Swedish’.

A discrepancy becomes apparent with regard to perceived policy between official documents and SSL teachers, on the one hand, and what principals say, on the other. Though both management at the national level, through documents, and SSL teachers highlight the need for teaching competence among all teachers who work with recently arrived students, the principals pay little attention to teachers’ competence and competence needs. In particular, the lack of awareness of

the differences between SSL teachers and study guidance assistants is striking. Official documents and SSL teachers express the need for subject teachers to have knowledge about L2 learning and language development approaches in their subjects, something that is barely reflected in what principals say. Thus, the frustration shown by the SSL teachers is in relation to the principals' lack of understanding on this issue. The voice that SSL teachers try to use is not listened to, and they are not given the space for agency that they wish to claim when they reference their knowledge.

#### ***4.3 Practiced Policy of Language and Education***

In our analysis of practised policy with a focus on voice and agency in relation to SSL teachers, we first present an overview of teaching and learning practices in the lessons (for a more detailed analysis of various classroom practices, see Wedin and Bomström Aho, 2019; Wedin 2021a, b, c, d). Two themes from these lessons will then be analysed in more detail.

As mentioned, all students were L2 learners of Swedish and, as such, did not yet meet the requirements for mainstream programmes. SSL teachers were trained to teach such students, even though not all had attained the required 45 ECTS credits. None of the other subject teachers reported that they had participated in more than one workshop or lecture on L2 students, multilingualism or L2 education, and none conveyed that they had learned anything about language development and the language specific for their subjects. Consequently, there was a significant difference between SSL teaching and teaching in other subjects.

In all lessons, students were allowed to use their various languages and had access to the Internet on individual laptops. Most students used their private mobile phones alongside their laptops. On the Internet, they had access not only to translation tools and search functions such as Google and Wikipedia, but also to teaching aids in the form of reading services and textbooks in other languages. For science, they used educational films relating to some of the topics they were studying that provided both spoken and written text in several languages. Furthermore, study guidance assistants in some languages provided support for several lessons. However, the multilingual software was not accessible in all languages used by the students. Thus, while most students could use their linguistic resources in several ways, a few students had minimal resources in the languages they knew well. For example, one Wolof-speaking student could only make limited use of resources in

English and Swedish, two languages that he had not yet mastered. Some Tigrinya-speaking students complained that the resources available to them were of low quality; consequently, they tried to use English with the help of fellow students.

Teachers did most of the talking in class (Swedish), while students mainly listened, read and wrote. Students' language-use varied between subjects. In SSL, there was more discussion between teachers and students, and student activities were varied and offered a range of opportunities to use Swedish. Some examples of activities in SSL were working on text structure in various text genres, reading followed by discussions, analysing language, interviewing each other in pairs, and reading and writing texts in groups followed by whole-class discussion of the texts. Lessons in other subjects generally followed a uniform pattern: a short initial teacher presentation, generally 5-10 minutes, followed by students' individual work with exercises. In most of these classrooms, any dialogue between teachers and students was limited. When study guidance assistants were present, they helped students; in other cases, students mainly relied on digital resources and each other.

That the SSL teaching focused on oral and written language development among students may come as no surprise; however, it is striking that teaching in other subjects followed a rather stereotypical pattern with little variation. Only limited explicit language focus was observed during these lessons, apart from occasional explanations of single concepts in relation to the topics, such as *frequency* and *ions* in science, *the equation of a line* in mathematics, *climate* in geography and *liberal* and *legislation* in social studies. These words were explained by the teacher, and few cases were observed where students were asked to explain or use the concepts, apart from in relation to assessment. When working with exercises, students had access to textbooks, which were simplified versions of regular textbooks aimed at students with learning disabilities. Little use of extra material such as more advanced texts or films was observed. In the few cases when films were used outside SSL, they were simplified films designed for the grades 4-7.

The teaching of two topics that occurred both in SSL and in other subjects shows the potential for collaboration between teachers. These topics were *healthy food*, taught in one SSL class and in

chemistry, and *climate*, taught in another SSL class and in geography. The teachers did not collaborate; and when explicitly asked as to why not, they responded that they were unaware that they were teaching similar topics.

The first topic, healthy food, was taught in chemistry, using the eat-well plate model (a Swedish model for eating healthily and achieving a balanced diet) and in SSL together with the text genre factual prose/text. In SSL, students read some texts about healthy food and then discussed, with the focus on the characteristics of the text type. Important features of the text type were demonstrated by the teachers and practised by students before they individually wrote their own factual texts based on the given text characteristics. Later that same school term, the chemistry teacher wrote central concepts, such as *tallriksmodellen* (the eat-well plate model), *kolhydrater* (carbohydrates), *fetter* (fats), *proteiner* (proteins) and *vitaminer* (vitamins) on the whiteboard. She explained the words briefly and then handed out papers with explanations of the concepts. Students were then to describe the eat-well plate model in a written text using these words. They did so mainly using the Internet, and their texts to a great extent resembled the explanations they had found there. The texts that were handed in were then used as assessment of that teaching section. This is one example where students learned how to construct the text in SSL, with the teacher not educated in the subject natural sciences. The writing in the subject chemistry, meanwhile, focused on separate concepts under the umbrella concept the eat-well plate. Thus, the SSL teaching did not focus on the concepts that were highlighted by the chemistry teacher, while in chemistry, the focus was not on writing itself, and students merely copied explanations from the Internet and showed little use of the skills they had acquired earlier in writing in this genre. The writing thus became two isolated topics, and there were no visible signs of students making connections between the subjects.

The second example resembles the first – that of climate. In one geography lesson, the teacher started the lesson by talking about the climate and its relation to weather, and about climate change. The teacher showed two short films, one about weather and climate, and the other about the rotation of the sun. The film had a clear focus on Sweden and was aimed at students in grade seven. The teacher did not refer to where in the world the students came from and gave them exercises (a collection of handouts) and referred them to relevant pages in the textbook. Students were made

to write single words, short phrases and sentences, which they could often find in the simplified textbook. The work in SSL on a similar topic in the following term was on climate zones. Key to this work was the SSL textbook, which included this theme. Students did various activities relating to this theme, such as learning techniques to increase their vocabulary, reading a factual text (about climate zones and vegetation) and writing keywords. There were discussions related to the text on such subjects as rainforests, deforestation and palm oil, during which students learnt about such concepts as *coniferous* and *deciduous forest*, and *subtropical* and *polar climate*. Together, they watched films on the topics and individually watched films of their own choice (some were dubbed into other languages). Moreover, they interviewed each other and practised drawing conclusions based on given information. During the work, the SSL teacher related several times to the students' earlier experiences of climate and vegetation. Therefore, in both the geography class and the SSL class, the focus was on concepts and explanations of phenomena in relation to these. However, while the geography lesson included a short presentation, a film and written exercises (question-answer), the SSL lesson centred on students' earlier experiences, and it included variation in language use and study technique.

Two aspects stand out from these observations in relation to the role of SSL teachers. Firstly, the teaching in the SSL classrooms was varied, language-focused and included study techniques. Conversely, the teaching in other subjects mainly involved short teacher presentations and students working with exercises based on basic-level text. Unsurprisingly, variation and language focus is expected in language classrooms with qualified SSL teachers. The more stereotypical teaching practices in the other subjects may be a result of these teachers not being educated to teach this particular group of students. That is, they lacked knowledge about approaches that promote language development in their subjects. Thus, they may believe the stereotypical approach is reasonable and applicable for these particular students.

The second aspect is the potential for improving teaching through collaboration between SSL teachers and other subject teachers. This is, however, not a question that is commonly possible for teachers themselves to address, particularly in the case when only SSL teachers are educated to teach L2 students. Here, changes at the organisational level are required, as not all the students in

each SSL class take chemistry or geography. Thus, collaboration between the teachers would demand changes with regard to both the grouping of students and the schedules of teachers, and would entail action at the management level. At the same time, incentives for such collaboration are needed, and it becomes clear from this case that those who have the required knowledge also need to have voice and space for agency.

#### ***4.4 Contradictory Roles of SSL Teachers***

A contradictory and ambiguous image appears with regard to the role of SSL teachers in the analysis of the different layers. On the one hand, SSL teachers are educated to teach SSL and to plan education throughout the school day and in different subjects in ways that support L2 students' acquisition of both language and knowledge. On the other hand, they are not given space for such agency in official documents or at the local school level. The space in which they are given agency is restricted to teaching in their own subject.

Furthermore, it is contradictory that SSL teachers teach and are trained to teach knowledge-specific language, which in this article is exemplified by healthy food and climate zones, while other teachers are not taught the characteristics of the specific language used in their respective subject. At the same time, SSL teachers are not listened to when they highlight the other subject teachers' need for such knowledge. Because knowledge and the language to express that knowledge are closely related, collaboration between teacher categories demands that all understand this need.

Thus, there is a clear contradiction with regard to knowledge and space for agency for SSL teachers, which is expressed in their frustration. When it comes to teaching approaches and organisation at the school level, SSL teachers describe not being listened to and lacking space for agency – something highlighted both by SNAE (2017, 2018) and the School Inspectorate (2010, 2020). Furthermore, this contradiction resembles the ambiguity that appears at the national level, in official documents and in what SSL teachers are taught at university. This adds to the mismatch between the teacher training of SSL teachers and the expectations placed on them.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

Similar to findings by Hedman and Magnusson (2019), this study on the role of SSL teachers through the analysis of layers of policy makes visible ambiguities regarding their role and the teaching of knowledge and language in different subjects. One question that arises is: Who should have knowledge about the subject-specific language in each subject? It is obvious that principals need to have sufficient knowledge about what L2 students need to learn, and they need to be able to organise education in ways that supports these students – support that they are entitled to receive. This shows the importance of knowledge at the management level that will enable the organisation of necessary collaboration. It is, however, also obvious that teachers in other subjects need to understand the characteristics of the language specific to their subject and that they have both an understanding of and knowledge about the linguistic characteristics of the language specific for their subjects. In this case, subject teachers who do not have such knowledge appear restricted in their teaching and thereby lower the educational level.

The analysis at the practised level also makes visible the difference between knowledge-specific language and subject-specific language. Although SSL teachers are taught characteristics for knowledge-specific language, they lack deeper knowledge in the more subject-specific language, which is a necessity for subject-specific teachers. That all teachers need to be aware of how language is used in their respective subjects is something that has been highlighted in research as being important for all students and necessary for L2 students. As has been shown by the Wedin and Bomström Aho (2021), such knowledge is not often included in the education of principals and teachers of other subjects. The frustration expressed by SSL teachers is a result of having competence without being listened to or without being given space for agency. At the same time, many teachers and principals face a situation for which they have not received training.

Thus, a key link is missing among the three layers of policy – a link that is needed to give L2 students equal opportunities when it comes to academic success. For SSL teachers, this becomes an issue of the teacher's role: Is their role to be teacher of their subject only, or should they have other professional roles? The first alternative would imply that part of their training would not be necessary – that is, the part about what L2 students need if they are to learn throughout the school

day and in all school subjects. This would then result in an absence of such knowledge in schools: knowledge that is crucial for the equal-education opportunities of L2 students, particularly those who have arrived most recently. The second alternative could be to create a role for SSL teachers similar to that of special needs educators, who in Swedish schools not only teach students who need special teaching but also have an advisory role in relation to other teachers, and thus a role at the management level. A change in the role of SSL teachers could include such an advisory role in relation to second language students in terms of both the organisation of education at the school level and in relation to other subject teachers. In this study, one of the teachers, Hella, remarked how in a previous school she had been given the responsibility to train her fellow subject teachers. However, currently in Sweden, there is a significant difference between SSL teacher training and special needs educator training. Education for SSL teachers is mainly at the bachelor's level as part of the standard degree in teaching, while the training of special needs educators is at the master's level and, in addition to a degree in teaching, includes topics such as leadership and educational development. Thus, to enable more relevant use of SSL teachers' competence at the management level, SSL teacher training needs to be supplemented with training in educational leadership.

Collaboration between teachers of SSL and other subjects would affect the organisation and timetabling of classes, which shows the importance of awareness about such needs among principals. As reported by the School Inspectorate (2010, 2020), there are schools that provide L2 students with quality education. In these schools, the knowledge about what L2 students need to learn appears foundational to their entire schooling. Perhaps, the relatively new professional role of SSL teacher – which is still not clearly defined, as these findings demonstrate – is the reason this is not more commonly the case.

The importance of approaches that promote language development in all subjects and a focus on both knowledge-specific and subject-specific language is well-known, as exemplified by the 2010 School Inspectorate report and extensive research. In recent decades, numerous in-service training initiatives have been undertaken by SNAE. This demonstrates an educational policy at the national level that aims to increase the skills and knowledge of teachers and principals in terms of what recently arrived students require to perform well at school. However, as this study demonstrates, this has not been followed by sufficient changes in the education of and directives for principals

and teachers. One criterion for change may be to demand that all teachers and principals in LIP receive such training. Another may be to provide all teachers and principals basic training in approaches that promote language development and provide what L2 students need to learn. Yet another may be to extend the education and responsibility of SSL teachers, as suggested here.

### **Acknowledgements**

I want to express my sincere thanks to all involved in this study, students, teachers and principals, who willingly shared their time and experiences. A particular thank to Erika Bomström Aho who was of great help with interviews.

### **Declaration of interest statement**

This is to acknowledge that no financial interest or benefit has resulted from the direct applications of this research.

### **Funding details**

This work was financed by the Swedish Research Council, grant [number 2017-03566].

### **References**

Ahearn, L. M. (2001). Language and agency. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, (30), 109–137.

Applebee, A. N. & Langer, J. A. (Eds.). (2013). *Writing instructions that works: Proven methods for middle and high school classrooms*. Teachers College Press.

Barwell, R. (2018). From language as a resource to sources of meaning in multilingual mathematics classrooms. *Journal of Mathematical Behavior*, (50), 155–168.  
doi: 10.1016/j.jmathb.2018.02.007

Bonacina-Pugh, F. (2012). “Researching ‘practiced language policies’: Insights from conversation analysis.” *Language Policy*, 11(3), 213–234. doi:10.1007/s10993-012-9243-x

Bunar, N. (2010). *Nyanlända och lärande: En forskningsöversikt om nyanlända elever i den svenska skolan*. [Recently arrived students and learning: A research overview about recently arrived students in the Swedish School] (Vetenskapsrådets rapportserie 6:2010.) The Swedish Research Council.

Copland, F. & Creese, A. (2015). *Linguistic ethnography: Collecting, analysing and presenting data*. SAGE.

Economou, C. (2015). *"I svenska två vågar jag prata mer och så": En didaktisk studie om skolämnet svenska som andraspråk.* [In Swedish two I dare to talk more and so on]: A didactic study about the school subject Swedish as a second language] PhD diss., Göteborg university.

Elmeroth, E. (2006). Monokulturella studier av multikulturella elever: Att mäta och förklara skolresultat. [Monocultural studies of multicultural students: To measure and explain school results] *Pedagogisk forskning i Sverige*, 11(3), 177–194.

Fang, Z., & Schleppegrell, M.J. (2010). Disciplinary literacies across content areas: Supporting secondary reading through functional language analysis. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 53(7), 587–597. doi:10.1598/JAAL.53.7.6

Gee, J. P. (2000). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education*, 01(25), 99–125. doi:10.3102/0091732X025001099

Gibbons, P. (2002). *Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning: Teaching second language learners in the mainstream classroom*. Heinemann.

Hedman, C. & Magnusson, U. (2018.) Lika eller lika möjligheter? Diskurser om skolämnet svenska som andraspråk inom det akademiska fältet i Sverige.” [Similar or equal opportunities? Discourses on the school subject Swedish as a second language within the academic field in Sweden]. *Acta Didactica Norge*, 12(1), 1–20. doi: 10.5617/adno.5569

Hedman, C. & Magnusson, U. (2019). Student ambivalence toward second language education in three Swedish upper secondary schools.” *Linguistics and Education*, (15), 1–15. doi:10.1080/13670050.2019.1693956

Hermansson, C., Norlund Shaswar, A., Rosén, J. & Wedin, Å. (2021) .Teaching for a monolingual school? (In)visibility of multilingual perspectives in Swedish teacher education. *Education Inquiry*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2021.1885588>

Lemke, J. L. (1990). *Talking science: Language, learning, and values*. Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Lindberg, I. (2008). Multilingual education: A Swedish perspective. In M. Carlson, M. A. Rabo & F. Gök (Eds.) *Education in multicultural societies: Turkish and Swedish perspectives, vol. 18. Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul: Transactions*, (pp. 71–90). I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.

Lindberg, I. (2009). I det nya mångspråkiga Sverige.” [In the new multilingual Sweden] *Utbildning & Demokrati*, 18(2), 9–37.

Martin-Jones, M. & Martin, D. (2017). *Researching multilingualism: Critical and ethnographic perspectives*. Routledge.

Ministry of Education (2016). <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/departementsserien-och-promemorior/2016/11/en-flexiblare-amneslararutbildning/>

Ricento, T. & Hornberger, N. (1996). Unpeeling the onion: Language planning and policy and the ELT professional. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(3), 401–427.

Richardson Bruna, K., Vann, R. & Perales Escudero, M. (2007). What's language got to do with it?: A case study of academic language instruction in a high school 'English learner science' class". *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 6(1), 36–54.

Sahlée, A. (2017). *Språket och skolämnet svenska som andraspråk: Om elevers språk och skolans språksyn*. [The language and school subject Swedish as a second language: On students' language and the linguistic approach of the school] PhD diss., Uppsala university.

Schleppegrell, M. J. (2004). *The language of schooling: A functional linguistics perspective*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Schleppegrell, M. J. & Colombi, C. (2002). (Eds.). *Developing advanced literacy in first and second languages: Meaning with power*. Erlbaum.

School Inspectorate (2010). *Språk- och kunskapsutveckling för barn och elever med annat modersmål än svenska*. [Development of language and knowledge among children and students with a mother tongue other than Swedish] Report 2010:16.

School Inspectorate (2020). *Svenska som andraspråk i årskurs 7-9* [Swedish as a second language in grades 7-9]. <https://www.skolinspektionen.se/beslut-rapporter-SFS-2010-800-Skollagen> [The Education Act].

SFS 2010:2039. *Gymnasieförordning* [The upper secondary school ordinance].  
[https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/gymnasieforordning-20102039\\_sfs-2010-2039](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/gymnasieforordning-20102039_sfs-2010-2039)

SFS 2011:185. *Skolförordning* [The compulsory school ordinance].  
[https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skolforordning-2011185\\_sfs-2011-185](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skolforordning-2011185_sfs-2011-185)

SFS 2011:326. *Förordning om behörighet och legitimation för lärare och förskolelärare* [Ordinance on qualification and certification for teachers and pre-school teachers].

[https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forordning-2011326-om-behorighet-och\\_sfs-2011-326](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forordning-2011326-om-behorighet-och_sfs-2011-326)

SFS 2012:402. Förordning om ändring i gymnasieförordningen (2010:2039) [Ordinance of change in the upper secondary school ordinance (2010:2039)].

[https://www.lagboken.se/Lagboken/start/skoljuridik/gymnasieforordning-20102039/d\\_1112629-sfs-2012\\_402-forordning-om-andring-i-gymnasieforordningen-2010\\_2039](https://www.lagboken.se/Lagboken/start/skoljuridik/gymnasieforordning-20102039/d_1112629-sfs-2012_402-forordning-om-andring-i-gymnasieforordningen-2010_2039)

Shanahan, T. & Shanahan, C. (2008). Teaching disciplinary literacy to adolescents: Rethinking content area literacy." *Harvard Educational Review*, 78(1), 40–61.

Shohamy, E. (2006). *Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches*. Routledge.

Siekkinen, F. (Flerspråkiga elever i en enspråkig elevnorm. *Educare*, (1), 27–49.

SNAE (2011a, rev. 2019). *Läroplan för grundskolan och fritidshemmet* [Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the school-age educare].

<https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=4206>

SNAE (2011b, rev. 2019). *Läroplan för gymnasieskolan 2011, examensmål och gymnasiegemensamma mål*. [Curriculum for upper secondary school 2011, degree objectives and common objectives for upper secondary school].

<https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/gymnasieskolan/laroplan-program-och-amnen-i-gymnasieskolan/laroplan-gy11-for-gymnasieskolan>.

SNAE (2018). *Svenska som andraspråk i praktiken: En intervjustudie om hur skolor arbetar med svenska som andraspråk i årskurs 7-9* [Swedish as a second language in practice: An interview Sstudy on how schools are working with Swedish as a second language in grades 7-9]. Rapport 2018:470. <https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=3956>

SNAE (2019). Statistik för alla skolformer läsåret 2018/2019) [Statistics for all school forms School year 2018/2019] <https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statistik>

Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy*. Cambridge University Press.

Torpsten, A. C. (2008). *(Erbjudet och upplevt lärande i mötet med svenska som andraspråk och svensk skola* [Offered and experienced learning in the meeting with Swedish as a second language and Swedish school]. PhD diss., Växjö University.

Wedin, Å. (2021a.) Positioning of the recently arrived student: A discourse analysis of Sweden's Language Introduction Programme. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2021.1913174>

Wedin, Å. (2021b). Teacher professionalism at a time of mobility: Positioning teachers in the Language Introduction Programme in Sweden. *Apples – Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 15(2), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.47862/apples.99557>

Wedin, Å. (2021c). Languaging in mathematics classrooms: Space for students' varied language repertoires in the Language Introduction Program in Sweden. *Nomad*, 26(2), 67-85.

Wedin, Å. (2021d). Ideological and implementational spaces for translanguaging in the Swedish upper secondary school. *Multilingua*, <https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2021-0126>

Wedin, Å. & Bomström Aho, E. (2019). Agency in science learning in a second language setting: Multimodal and multilingual strategies and practices among recently arrived students in upper secondary school in Sweden. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*. 12 (1), 77-84. <https://doi.org/10.26822/iejee.2019155338>Author, & AA, 2021

Wedin, Å. & Rosén, J. (2021) Lärare för andra? Aktörskap, kompetens och yrkesroller på språkintroduktionsprogrammet. [Teachers for others? Agency, competency and professional roles in the Language Introduction Programme] *Pedagogisk forskning i Sverige*. <https://open.lnu.se/index.php/PFS/issue/view/137>

Vitanova, G., Miller, E. R., Gao, X. & Deters, P. (2015). Introduction. In P. Deters, , X. Gao, E. R. Miller & G. Vitanova (Eds.). *Theorizing and analyzing agency in second language learning: Interdisciplinary approaches*. (pp. 1-16). Multilingual Matters.

---

<sup>i</sup> Here, the terms lower- and upper-secondary school will be used for the Swedish grades 7-9 and *gymnasiet* respectively.

<sup>ii</sup> The project XXX *Literacy education at a basic level in Swedish for immigrants* (2020-2022), financed by the Swedish Institute for Educational Research, no 2019/0001.

<sup>iii</sup> The calculations are in some cases based on the estimated parts of whole courses.