

Article

Social Inclusion Through Multilingual Assistants in Additional Language Learning

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate and explore the deployment of adult migrants' first languages (L1s) by multilingual assistants (MAs) in additional language (AL) learning for the opportunities they afford to include students. The context is Sweden's Swedish for Immigrants programme, in which a teacher team appointed MAs to support their students' efforts to learn Swedish. In this context, MAs are multilingual school personnel employed to support the students in their Swedish language development by, among other means, using the students' L1s. The ensuing research study set out to investigate and develop MA and teacher roles in promoting Swedish language development through L1 use. The quest to include the students permeated this investigation. Action research provided a framework for the teachers to study their classroom interaction with MAs as a basis for professional development. Group interviews complemented video data. Different dimensions of inclusion and Bakhtin's thinking about other-orientedness offer theoretical support. The results are presented as four cardinal contributions made by MAs with significant potential to include adult migrants in AL education. The teachers' conception of dialogic activity specifies inclusion as a transsubjective enterprise that, through instructional restraint and translanguaging space, allows students to explore language and achieve progressively coherent responsive understanding. The MAs' socioemotional work of reassuring, affirming, and imparting faith in student capabilities to communicate in and learn Swedish posits inclusion as an equilibrium between the demands of instructional situations and the psychological fortitude to manage them. MAs key role in contextualizing content illustrates the way inclusion can be realized by transferring language form and content to the students' personal experiences, extensive knowledge, and everyday communicative realities. The teacher's plan to entrust the MAs with the task of making their formative feedback accessible to students projects inclusion as increasing students' capacity to regulate their AL learning themselves.

Keywords

additional language; dialogue; inclusion; language use; multilingual assistants; second language learning

Issue

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1. Introduction

"I want to take everything into my own hands but I can't. I get so angry, but I can't." These words represent the crushed hopes of adult migrants who have mastered life in one or more environments but are debilitated by another. Because language plays a key role in experiences of (not) belonging and isolation, language teaching programmes are one of the first national resettlement priorities (Abdulla, 2017). Sweden's national state-funded Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) language pro-

gramme aims to give adult migrants with another mother tongue than Swedish foundational, functional knowledge of the Swedish language (National Agency for Education, 2018). SFI comprises a three-entry level language educational system ranging from courses for students without formative school experience on study path 1 to a course package for students with academic backgrounds on study path 3. Study path 1 students who may lack literacy skills, study orientations, and the confidence to tackle educationally challenging tasks frequently struggle to learn an additional language

(AL; St John & Liubinienè, 2021). Moreover, the quality of SFI has been the target of sharp criticism for reasons such as a low level of individualized teaching, limited opportunity for students to influence course content and approaches, as well as insufficient pedagogical challenge (School Inspectorate, 2018).

Determined to improve their students' chances to succeed, a study path 1 teacher team decided to introduce "mother tongue" use into their beginner Swedish courses by appointing multilingual assistants (MAs). In this context, MAs are multilingual school personnel employed to support the students in their Swedish language development by, among other means, using the students' first languages (L1s). The MAs were fluent in the main L1s represented among their students, namely Arabic, Somali, and Dari. The teachers stressed that "one must understand to learn," that mother tongue use "is a way to express one's potential. One has so much in the language one thinks best in or thinks in" and that with an interpretation of mother tongue use newly arrived adults become visible whole persons in their own right rather than cutout AL learners. The teachers also recognized the severe limitations on their explanatory *reach* because of not being able to speak their students' L1s.

While the appointment of MAs was a constructive pedagogic response to a critical educational problem, the teacher action introduced its own set of professional challenges. There was a growing sense that, just as one teacher put it, "a good multilingual pedagogy does not simply involve the appointment of multilingual assistants." The fact that the MAs lacked formal pedagogic training, were not well-versed in the steering documents, and were unfamiliar with school talk was a situation the teachers maintained would make finding effective roles particularly challenging. Once the question of using the students' home language became pedagogically possible, how these different languages should be deployed vis-à-vis Swedish and what pedagogical competence was needed to realize an effective translanguaging pedagogy with MAs on board became burning issues.

This article focuses on the use of students' L1s in processes of AL learning and particularly on MAs as facilitating such use. In AL teaching-learning, the exclusive use of the target language as a pedagogical ideal has historically been a pivotal issue both embraced and contested by AL scholars and teachers (Prada & Turnbull, 2018). Since an application of this pedagogic persuasion risks denying AL learners primary sense-making capabilities both in and between learners, AL education is fundamentally about social inclusion. Indeed, an orientation to the research data suggested the fruitfulness of a study on L1 practices in AL instruction for untangling some aspects of inclusion. The aim of this study is therefore to explore the way the adult migrant students' L1s are used by the MAs to support the students in their AL learning and development. Subsequently, this study aims to describe what dimensions of inclusion an exploration of L1 use made by MAs in AL instruction makes visible.

2. Action Research

The investigation this article reports was conducted by teachers in partnership with a university researcher through a methodological design that aligns with action research. Inspired by action research's commitment to empowering teachers to tackle their own professional problems by researching their own practices, the participant teachers were engaged in studying their own work with MAs in the classroom to strengthen the likelihood of relevant results (Stenhouse, 1975). Action research envisages teachers as capable of taking systematic responsibility for improving their own practice in cooperation with researchers rather than relying on external sources of expertise for professional development. In this ethos, the participants in this study endeavoured to conduct classroom research together by taking active and complementary roles in planning and realizing the various phases of the action research (Bergmark et al., 2022).

Initially, the teachers video-filmed a series of MA-supported lessons to make visible current practices of role distribution, interactional patterns, and language use. They then analyzed this data by accounting for and critically evaluating the character and outcome of the recorded events, documenting their responses in teacher protocols. This reflective process led to several important observations that could be translated into pedagogical plans to improve teacher practice. For example, that communication in the classroom was one-way, that MA's orientation to student groups tended to be monologic, and that students were responding to instruction in Swedish and making contributions in their L1s that the teachers were not able to take up constructively (see Section 5). The teachers then implemented their action plans which generally gave the MAs more central roles and sought to maximize the advantages of their multilingual competences. Finally, the teachers conducted a second round of video-filming to observe and gauge the effects of their changed practice on the students' opportunities to participate in learning activities. Working together, researcher and teachers compared the learning environments documented in the two sets of video recordings to evaluate the pedagogic advantages of the new practices. The outcome was a locally relevant review of the teacher action plans and rich feedback on how they might be further improved in ongoing professional development (McNiff, 2013).

To capture a summative and meaningful picture of the teachers' views and evaluations, group interviews were conducted after the action research phases. The nine teachers were interviewed in three separate groups of three and the four MAs, from Iran, Kurdistan, and Somalia, in a fourth group. Each group interview lasted an hour and was sound recorded. In the interviews, the participants were invited to describe and discuss the pedagogical actions they took, their reasons for them, and their impact. Patton (2015) describes the process, common in qualitative analysis, whereby sense is made

of data by condensing substantial stretches of written material into a few elemental themes. Accordingly, the interview data was transcribed in its entirety as a basis for a coding of categories which were then collapsed into more general representative rubrics. These are presented as cardinal contributions made by the MAs that analysis foregrounded as decisive for student inclusion in this context.

3. Inclusion and Dialogue

The various ways in which inclusion is defined and analyzed afford a handle on the conditions that need to be fulfilled before the claim can be made that inclusion in any situation has been achieved. There is widespread agreement in the field of special education needs that an educational setting on its own is an inadequate definition of inclusion in that simply placing a pupil in need of special support in a regular class without providing such support will generate exclusion (Nilholm, 2019). This brings “pedagogic inclusion” (Ahlberg, 2013) into focus that may be realized by adapting the learning environment through, for example, adjusting teacher collaboration and providing the kind of pupil support that makes learning goals achievable (Dyson & Millward, 2000). “Cultural inclusion” is prevalent in discourses on norms, meaning-creation systems, prejudice, and stigmatization that are as applicable to schools as they are to societies. That the differences between children should be considered as *assets* rather than as *problems* is an ideal that some scholars have treated as an essential part of inclusion albeit difficult to realize (Göransson et al., 2011; Nilholm, 2006).

More recently, assessments of pupils’ inner emotional states by using instruments such as the Perceptions of Inclusion Questionnaire as a way to measure the quality of inclusion have engaged researchers (DeVries et al., 2022). A student perspective has distinguished social inclusion, emotional well-being, and academic self-concept as central to the success of inclusive education (Zurbriggen et al., 2017). Social inclusion entails participating in social interaction in and outside the classroom as well as the competence to maintain relationships with peers. Emotional well-being refers to a sense of belonging to and feeling positive about school. Academic self-concept addresses the amount of trust pupils have in their ability to achieve academic tasks and goals.

Dialogism treats inclusion as other-orientation in that it assumes the notion of “self” and “other” as mutually constitutive (Bakhtin, 1981). Reframing inclusion *dialogically* entails the recognition that individuals do not develop or make sense of the world on their own but do so in response to and *interdependently* with others. All human action is a response to someone or something else (Bakhtin, 1986). In and through responding we are obliged to make sense of another’s position by apprehending the meaning of the other, accounting for it, and bringing to bear our own perspective to influence and

further the chain of communication. Indeed, Linell (2009, p. 186) maintains, “we become responsible, because we have to respond to other people.”

The dynamics of responsivity cohere with the two fundamental aspects of other-orientation namely, “intersubjectivity” and “alterity” (Linell, 2009). To orient to shared assumptions, knowledge or convictions with others makes communication possible and describes communicative efforts to achieve intersubjectivity. It seeks communion for building relationships and inclusion. However, Bakhtin’s thinking implies that a gravitation towards commonality is insufficient to sustain inclusion. A *transsubjective* realization of inclusion builds on alterity, the potentially disruptive but essentially educative and response-evoking counteraction of the other’s perspective as always different from one’s own. The transsubjective aspect of other-orientation, the meeting of two consciousnesses, affords “the principle advantages of outsidedness” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 141) and the opportunity to gain alternative views that can complement our limited perception of the world. Such contrasts are a source of insight for individuals with the prospects of a more holistic understanding of an inclusion that not only tolerates but thrives on human differences (Linell, 2009).

4. Multilingual Assistants

In studies on paraeducators, MAs are portrayed as practitioners with significant potential to include newly arrived youth and adults in the educative processes of their courses and classrooms (Dávila & Bunar, 2020; Kakos, 2022). However, while MA contributions are deemed educationally significant, MAs as practitioners are simultaneously marginalized because of poor pay, poorly defined national role guidelines, a lack of formal pedagogic training, and consequently low status (Dávila & Bunar, 2020; Fritzsche & Kakos, 2021; Kakos, 2022; St John, 2021). Moreover, a tendency among subject teachers and administrators to exclude MAs from pedagogic planning and cooperation because of their unqualified teaching status is seen by MAs as hindering the inclusion of newcomer students (Dávila, 2018; Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006). This paraprofessional support role coheres with asymmetrical power relationships between teachers and MAs both in planning pedagogic approaches and teaching materials (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006) as well as teacher orchestration of turn-taking and tasks in the classroom (Martin-Jones & Saxena, 1996).

Despite the finding that while MA language support was valued their pedagogic competence was devalued (Dávila, 2018), studies show that these two aspects cannot easily be separated. MAs do inclusive pedagogic work because of their translanguaging capabilities. Studies in this field increasingly use the concept of “translanguaging” (García & Wei, 2014) to describe the way MAs use their multilingual skills strategically to support their students’ AL or subject learning. Translanguaging has classroom

roots (C. Baker, 2011) and today implies both discursive and pedagogical practices (García, 2009; Juvonen & Källkvist, 2021). For example, Dávila and Bunar (2020) present MA perceptions of their translanguaging work as operationalizing the tasks of keying into students' prior subject knowledge as a basis for ongoing learning and promoting their emotional well-being. MAs perceived home languages and Swedish as equally important to their translanguaging ideology for supporting students, their inclusion in school, and their multilingual identities. St John (2021) reports that MAs choose students' home languages to illuminate Swedish-medium instruction, elicit students' personal experiences and ideas, raise metalinguistic awareness, and threshold successful student performance in Swedish. Kakos (2022) confirms research findings that translanguaging, drawing on features of, for example, both Arabic and English, is a regular discursive practice in the communication between MAs and their students for supporting learning and personalizing pedagogies with different individuals.

Furthermore, the special set of circumstances MAs bring to the classroom—their tension-filled vulnerabilities, their multilingual proficiency, their in-between teacher and student position—can generate unexpected educative opportunities for minority students (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006). Driven by an existential need to carve out a significant role and counter exclusionary educational practices, MAs capitalize on their linguistic and cultural assets to develop novel pedagogic moves (St John, 2021) and contexts for transformation and inclusion. Kakos (2022) has used the concept of “third spaces” to describe the uniqueness of these discursive, pedagogical environments with the potential to empower students to pursue their learning projects independently. “Third spaces” are safe places for students in which a climate of trust and care can foster meaningful participation, risk-taking, and collaboration in the classroom (Rueda et al., 2004).

MAs do crucial inclusive “meta-instructional” work through student advocacy. Studies stress that MAs' support, operationalized by translanguaging work, goes far beyond linguistic and pedagogic support. Dávila and Bunar (2020) describe how MAs position themselves as advocates rather than as translators, an identity that springs from understanding students and knowing about their lives not simply understanding language. Such understanding is borne out of MAs' own life experiences of AL and culture learning (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006), of having worked through the system, so that they can promote the well-being of students, defend their rights to equality, and open doors for them into the school and local community (F. Baker, 2014).

5. The Contribution of Multilingual Assistants

How do MAs use adult migrant learners' L1s to support their efforts to learn an AL? What opportunities to include students does MA support illuminate? Four

main aspects of their work are identified as central support strategies that promote the educational inclusion of adult migrants learning the majority language of their new home environments. These are dialogue, socioemotional work, contextualizing content, and making feedback accessible.

5.1. Dialogue

Initial video-filmed MA-mediated classroom interaction showed that communication was predominantly one-way from teacher through MAs to students as the target audience. This unidirectional current meant that students' voices and attempts to respond to the instruction in their L1s were not made communicatively available and were regularly marginalized. Data also documented that MAs did most of the talking in interaction with students and frequently supplied answers rather than creating opportunities for student response and meaningful engagement. A resounding response from the teachers to the question of language deployment was that students' primary languages should be used *dialogically*. Dialogue for the teachers meant engaging students in pedagogical encounters by creating space for their own explorative and responsive efforts to instructional initiative rather than doing thinking and communicative work for them. In the data, dialogue is described as instructional restraint that maintains two-way communication, valorizes the students' voices, and makes room for their own ways of coming to know. Extract 1 comes from an instructional session in which an MA (A) is engaged in making teacher feedback in Swedish on a student's own text accessible to the student (S) via her home language. The aspect the MA and student are discussing is the syntactic structure of a Swedish sentence when time is placed in the initial position (see Extract 1).

The extract documents the way the MA and student collaborate so that the student can reach a trouble spot in her utterance and self-regulate her formulation. This is made possible by the MA's pedagogical strategy of framing but not encroaching on the space in which the student can take charge of correcting her own language production. Her strategies in the context include inviting the student to construct a sentence (in which time comes in the initial position) rather than supplying an example for the student (line 2). The student rises to the occasion. Her example is flawed by the omission of a preposition between “go” and “school” (line 3). Rather than correcting the student, the MA uses words from the example and emphasis to take the student to the threshold of the trouble spot (line 4). Space is created for the student's own learning strategy which includes a spoken-aloud word search (line 5). By screening and eliminating candidate items, the student finds the answer on her own. While the MA locates what needs to be fixed, the student does the fixing and gets the praise she deserves (line 7). This is a dialogic activity in that the MA contests the student's utterance (albeit gently) and orients

Extract 1: To school

- 1 A: plats ett,
Place, one
- 2 A: طيب اذا تعطيني جملة كمان, انت كتبت كثير كويس بس اذا تعطيني جملة على تيد بو بلاس ات
Okay, can you give me a sentence. You wrote well here, but give me a sentence with time in initial place
- 3 S: imorgon klockan halv nio går jag skolan
Tomorrow at half past nine I go school.
- 4 A: går jag—går jag—
I go— I go-
- 5 S: och, på, i skolan, nej till skolan
and, on, in school. No, to school
- 6 A: till skolan
to school
- 7 A: برافو اخر شي عدنا
Bravo! Just the last one to do.

towards her response. It achieves student engagement and is thus pedagogically inclusive.

Working dialogically is described by an MA as to “go round the answer. She [the student] must find the answer herself. The very last, last, last solution is to give the answer directly.” This MA describes the pedagogic practice of circling round a troublesome feature in anticipation of student self-correction. Her pedagogic priority is to wait for students’ responses so that they gain the time to think through and arrive at answers to educational questions through their own efforts. While the urge to fill interactional space is strong, “it is better to find the answer oneself because then it sticks in the mind, when...you figure it out for yourself, it sticks. But when others provide the answer, it sticks a little, but then disappears.” Critical learning opportunity is at stake.

5.2. Socioemotional Work

Accounts of the MA’s pedagogic support underscore and shed fresh light on the centrality of socioemotional well-being for adult participation and learning in the AL classroom. Their voices highlight the insecurities and anxiety emanating from many adult migrants’ low self-esteem and poor self-image that hinder the students’ willingness to tolerate communicative ambiguity and take communicative risks. The MAs describe three basic strategies through which they do inclusive socioemotional work aimed at boosting student confidence in their own ability to cope with classroom communication. The MAs use the students’ L1s to reassure students of their presence, provide check-ups, and show informed confidence in the students’ capacity to contribute to instructional interaction and their own language development.

5.2.1. Accompanying Students

One kind of socioemotional support MAs offer is to assure students that they are with them and will accom-

pany them during tasks. The MAs describe a recurring difficulty they face in the classroom when students insist on an interpretation once the teacher has begun to give instructions in Swedish. The MAs managed this situation by telling the students: “I must listen too. Otherwise, I can’t explain what the teacher has said to you. Can we listen together?” This answer not only solves a pragmatic dilemma for the MAs (“then the students become quieter”) but encourages the students to persevere in their efforts to listen first and rely on their own sense-making strategies to grasp Swedish talk in the classroom. One MA explained: “I also want them to listen really carefully. If they listen to the teacher very carefully, I’m a hundred percent sure that they’ll understand more, but some of them just don’t do that.”

In situations where students ask MAs to tell the teacher about their personal needs or requests from a lack of confidence about using Swedish for the task, an MA confided her revised response:

When I started my work, I told the teacher on behalf of the students, but later I decided that it is better to say “go ahead! Try it yourself! If there are some words you find difficult, I can help you. I’ll stand next to you and I’ll help you. I will support you but please go ahead and try first with Swedish yourself.”

5.2.2. Providing Check-Ups

Another kind of socioemotional work MAs do is to provide safe places for students to check in their L1 their linguistic understanding or construction of a Swedish sentence to encourage them to contribute to the classroom interaction. “Even when they know,” maintained one MA, “they feel uncertain” and dare not speak or answer the teacher for fear of making mistakes. This account describes the self-defeating force of adult students’ doubts about managing to express themselves successfully in Swedish. Knowing what the teacher has

been explaining is not in itself sufficient to overcome student insecurity about taking communicative initiatives in front of others in the classroom. However, in the safety of interaction with an L1-speaking MA, students can check their understanding or test Swedish formulations and gain the confirmation they need to respond to teacher questions or opportunities to participate. The MA continues: “But when they explain for us in their mother tongue and we confirm that what they say is correct, then they feel secure, and they can answer the teacher in Swedish.”

5.2.3. Showing Confidence

A further aspect of socioemotional support is to “show students that they can” find their way to answers, respond to questions, and learn Swedish in the classroom. This strategy targets students’ low sense of self-efficacy (academic self-concept) by affirming their potential capacities to perform and complete language tasks. “Show” (rather than tell) implies, among other things, the pedagogic commitment to collaborate and create the space students need to accomplish the task independently rather than to do it for them. Scaffolding (Stone, 1998) or thresholding (St John, 2021) demonstrates that the MAs’ confidence in students’ ability to meet the communicative demands of the AL classroom is genuine.

While the MAs testify to the power of instructor expectation, their discourse indicates that communicating confidence in student performance cannot be separated from the context of ongoing student support and must be in tune with a student’s proximal level of progress. Concerning the former factor, an MA claimed:

[Y]ou stand by them and say to them: “You can do it, you’re good at this,” even when they can’t do it. [You] tell them: “You are able to do this. I’ll lift you up. You can and you’re clever. I can give you some words if you can’t find them, if you have difficulty with words, but try first.”

Those who seek to encourage adult AL learners can inspire them to persevere and not give up even against ability odds through an unswerving expression of belief in their capability to accomplish a task. However, generating confidence vicariously needs to be accompanied by supportive action that facilitates engagement with the task and makes it doable. Feeding learners words they cannot find so that they are successful confirms instructor confidence.

Regarding the second factor, another MA emphasizes the need for instructor expectations to be informed by the developmental nature of acquiring language competence:

I always ask them to talk: “What’s most important is not whether you speak correctly or incorrectly, but daring to speak, to try.” If you don’t get it right the

first time, you’ll get it right the second or third time. You learn when you make mistakes.

This pedagogic message offers a clear alternative to the stance on making communicative mistakes that can mute the voice of adult migrants in AL learning environments. It reverses the logic. It highlights trying *successively*, despite not getting it right the first time, as a reliable way of getting it *progressively* right. It suggests that, like all feedforward, an instructor’s expectations should be sensitive to a student’s current stage of development. The thrust of these two statements is that what MAs expect and mean when they show students that they *can* is that students *can try* and *try* again to achieve their communicative goals. Their encouragement rests on the conviction that, regarding AL learning, trying with sufficient support is within student reach and that communicative attempts generate the most valuable kind of feedback for development.

5.3. Contextualizing Content

Various strategies to link Swedish language to students’ personal experiences, daily needs, and existing linguistic repertoires stand out in the data as prime pedagogic ways of leveraging AL learning. One contextualization scenario is linked to finding out what students understand about what the teacher has just been saying and serves to demonstrate student understanding, as the following describes:

When I ask students to retell in their mother tongue what the teacher has said, they explain to me in their mother tongue. And when I know that they understand, then I can say to them: “Can you make or build a sentence and say it back to the teacher to show her that you have understood it?”

This account describes different ways of assessing student knowledge, first as an L1 version of teacher instruction for the MA and then as a student-formulated AL sentence that offers feedback on student understanding for the teacher. The two languages work in complementary sequence with L1 serving to declare (and even develop) student knowledge about the language and AL demonstrating (and even strengthening) it. Here, the ultimate proof of student understanding is in the speech performance that makes explanation of complex, abstract thinking unnecessary for the students or the MAs. At other times, the purpose of soliciting students to formulate their own sentences is to consolidate their learning (see Extract 1).

Another form of contextualization considered by a teacher as particularly valuable for student speaking is described as follows:

She [an MA] urges the students to speak to me as the teacher. She says to the students: “Tell the teacher

that you need to go to the toilet.” “Oh, how interesting. Tell the teacher what you did over the weekend!” It seems as if she assesses the student’s ability to....I think you can say this in Swedish and so she gives the student an extra nudge.

To relate one’s own experience or real-life concerns in an AL to others in the classroom has long been heralded as an authentic and effective communicative learning activity (Swain, 1985). By encouraging students to tell the teacher in Swedish what they have already shared with the MA in their L1s, students can focus on strategically adapting and “pushing” their current AL competence to report content they know and own. This task provides an opportunity to root emergent AL knowledge in learners’ lived experiences. The description makes clear that showing belief in the students’ potential to manage the communicative task in Swedish is also an integral part of the threshold conditions that launch student AL performance.

At a group level, one logical application of the teachers’ stance on the learning benefits of contextualization was the decision by a teacher constellation to gain student voices via the MAs about those everyday situations in which students need to talk about certain themes such as food but lack the linguistic ability to do so. The pedagogical idea was to use the information the students supplied as a basis for planning a series of language lessons. This strategy sprang from the students’ difficulty in understanding the connection between the language teaching at SFI and the practical use of language in their daily lives. A teacher described the change of tactics in

the following words:

The students are somewhat confused by this opportunity to exert influence. It’s not completely natural for [students] to grasp that what we do at SFI is something they own, something that they can use in another setting. On study path 1, we need to help them quite a lot to make the connection...and to think: “In which context can I use the exercises we’re currently working on?”...Previously, we fished for words [that] would be useful to [them]. Now, we tried to elicit what the students experienced, or in which contexts they use language related to—in this case—the theme of food. In which context do they need to talk about food? “When have you felt that you were inadequate? When do you speak about food in your own language?” We wanted to identify contexts, not only words.

This citation is all about student influence over the learning content of their language education. The pedagogical shift from words to contexts is explained as a concerted effort to enable students to understand the communicative value of their coursework for situations beyond the classroom. Contexts are categorically more comprehensive than words with greater scope for students to help teachers identify and teach life-relevant language. An example of one of these critical contexts is local government offices and hospital settings, which make heavier communicative demands on speaker competence. A student elaborates (see Extract 2):

Extract 2: Difficulties in public offices

S: الصعوبة بس بالسكات مثل ماقال الاخ اهننا, بالسكات بالبنك بالدوائر الحكومية, بس تلقى صعوبة بالسوق لا نقدر تتسوق نخلص نحكي شوية ليتا ليتا بس بالدولتر شوية شغلات تصعب علينا

The difficulties are in the tax office as she just said. Tax offices, banks, government agencies. But we don’t have difficulties in the town when we shop. We can manage ourselves and talk a little but it’s only in the public offices where the conversations are difficult.

5.4. Making Feedback Accessible

In this study, initial action research confirmed the experience of one teacher constellation that study path 1 students struggled to make sense of the formative feedback the teachers provided on the students’ written work. This feedback was delivered as a checklist of syntactic aspects such as word order and tenses used by the students in their texts with teacher assessment. Underlying the use of this tool was the rationale that when students become aware of what their needs are in relation to particular learning goals, they can more readily take charge of meeting these needs and attaining these goals (Dann, 2016). Without understanding the teachers’ feedback, the value of their assessment was lost to the learners.

To enable students to understand and use the checklist evaluation, the teacher constellation decided to

entrust the MAs with the task of making teacher feedback accessible to students. The teachers insisted that two conditions were necessary to ensure the success of this pedagogical task—that the MAs should be sufficiently prepared and that the task should be carried out dialogically. The first condition was addressed by an intensification of supervision in which the “why,” “what,” and “how” of the student checklists were specifically attended to. The second condition was realized in and through the students’ L1s. The teachers were adamant that the use of the students’ strongest languages was vital for enabling them to grasp the abstract thinking the checklist demanded and witnessed with wonder the way “a hindrance disappeared immediately, [the MAs and students] could communicate freely.” For the teachers, dialogic activity was important because, as one of them explained, when one can respond verbally and interact

intelligibly with others, “there is a greater chance that things become *a part of my thinking*.”

The following fragment illustrates some of the teachers’ pedagogical ambitions and thinking. It is from a classroom event supporting a dialogue between a student and an MA about a teacher’s feedback on the student’s written production. The syntactic feature in focus is the function of capital letters and full stops in Swedish writing (see Extract 3 below).

The translingual interaction in this extract is characterized by shared turn-taking, questions (from the MA) with answers (from the student), and a sequence of utterances that build coherently on one another. The MA is encouraging the student to explain the occurrence and function of a capital letter and a full stop. Use of Arabic allows the student to explain these syntactic items in her own way (lines 1, 3, 5) and with considerable precision (lines 7, 9, 11). The MA’s suggestion that the student uses Arabic (line 4) indicates that the MA wants to be sure of understanding what the student understands. A further observation is that these two interactants achieve greater clarity around the issues by thinking together and co-authoring the explanation. For example, the ambiguity of “at the beginning” in line 5 is made specific by the MA in line 6, which the student then builds on in line 7 to produce a correspondingly specific explanation of the way a sentence is ended. The MA’s less-than-clear question in line 8 is clarified by the student (line 9) who, prompted to continue (line 10), provides a prospective description of what full stops mean (full stops bring writ-

ers to the thresholds of new sentences; line 11). These L1 interactional features are dialogic in that they engage MA and student in co-exploration and co-thinking about aspects of writing. They operationalize pedagogic inclusion. One participant is not more or less included in the action than the other.

6. Discussion

All these four contributions appear to promote an experience of educational inclusion among adult migrant AL learners and are realized predominantly by the use of the students’ L1s. In that they are seen to support students effectively in their AL learning processes, the deployment of students’ L1s for these purposes—to develop dialogue, to do socioemotional work, to contextualize content, and to make feedback accessible—may be perceived as “cardinal inclusions.” Together these contributions seek to make sure that adult migrant students do not miss out on their educational opportunities and rights. At the same time, they make visible different dimensions of inclusion.

6.1. Dialogic Inclusion

Dialogism clarifies that educational inclusion is jointly constructed by the instructor and instructee interactively, not something professional educators do for (adult) students. Inclusion is actualized in that the participants’ turns at talk are mutually constitutive pedagogical

Extract 3: Capital letter and full stop

- 1 S: Star, bokstav الحرف الكبير
Big letter. It means capital letter
- 2 A: طيب ايتم يكون عدنا حرف كبير
Okay, when do we need a capital letter?
- 3 S: Första, Första او بعد البونكت
First, first. Or after the full stop
- 4 A: قول لي بالعربي första يعني
Tell me in Arabic
- 5 S: يعني بالاول لازم يكون حرف كبير في الاول
At the beginning there needs to be a capital letter
- 6 A: بدلية الجملة
The beginning of the sentence
- 7 S: بدلية الجملة واذا عملت مثلا خلصت الجملة حطيت بونكت احط ...
The beginning of the sentence, and if I end the sentence, I put a full stop
[...]
- 8 A: مو ضروري يكون اسم
Not necessary that it should be a name?
- 9 S: لا مو اسم يعني اي حرف لازم يكون كبير بعد النقطة
No, not only names. I mean whichever letter must be capital after a full stop
- 10 بعد النقطة
After the full stop
- 11 S: اي بعد النقطة يعني كأنه انت في بداية السطر. لانه فصلتي
Yes, after the full stop, you’re almost on a new line. You’re disengaged.

moves in and through, by example, question and answer pairs, participants building on each other's contributions and co-authoring explanations. For both teachers and MAs, working dialogically means exercising instructional restraint that allows adult migrant AL learners to explore language, reason collaboratively, and achieve progressively coherent responsive understanding so they can find their own way to answers. L1 is seen to be a cardinal educational includer because being able to speak and respond meaningfully with others feeds and (re)forms the very contours of consciousness and learning. A dialogic perspective on classroom data reveals that pedagogic inclusion is served by both intersubjective and transsubjective processes. The MAs invest in intersubjectivity by using the students' L1s to align with students' socioemotional states, understand what students understand, give them their voices, and affirm shared ground as a prompt to go further. They also use students' L1s to contest student speech performance enabling students to reflect on and remedy insufficient performance independently. Crucially, L1 use is a cardinal includer because, with the opportunities it affords adult migrant students to respond meaningfully to others and become responsible for their AL learning, it is a fundamentally humanizing medium.

From a dialogic perspective, inclusion does not simply mean instructional accommodation. If it did, poor grades would always be the teacher's fault. Dialogism casts inclusion as essentially a mutually constitutive, transsubjective enterprise that offers both parties the opportunity to respond constructively and venture creatively in relation to ways of attaining learning goals. While participants expect forthcoming responses and even orient their utterances towards certain kinds of response, inclusion is also envisaged as an open-ended affair that offers choices and novel courses of action rather than ready-made and finalized answers. A relational perspective on inclusion must be rescued from interpretations that highlight instructor responsibilities over and above the responsivity and responsibility of the instructee. Dialogism also contests a categorical perspective because it tends to sideline pedagogic possibilities and the voice of the categorized.

6.2. Socioemotional Inclusion

According to the MAs, the socioemotional needs of adult AL learners with limited schooling regularly prevent their participation in AL instruction. Much of the MAs' advocacy work, accomplished in students' L1s, revolves around reassuring students by accompanying them, confirming students' initial attempts to use target language independently, seeking to boost students' self-esteem, and alleviating their anxiety about making mistakes. This evidence aligns with the research into the subjective aspects of inclusion (DeVries et al., 2022). For example, the MAs' strategy of accompanying students in their attempts to use Swedish promotes their social

inclusion by facilitating their participation in classroom interaction. In seeking to launch student speech performance in Swedish by first certifying the quality of their Swedish sentences is to boost students' academic self-concept. The MAs' socioemotional work in this study also relates to the research concept of "third spaces" (Kakos, 2022). The "third spaces" of the participating MAs are pockets of intuitive pedagogic action borne out of the MA's unique personal qualities in which students can gain the psychological fortitude they need to manage the demands of instructional situations. They are places of safety and encouragement for students, made possible by MA command of their students' L1s. These "third spaces" appear to be important means of enabling students to transition from talking about the AL in their home language to talking the AL, that is, transitioning from declarative knowledge to procedural performance. An emphasis on socioemotional work illuminates inclusion as an inner subjective experience, a private perception of belongingness, impacted by an array of psychological factors within an individual. It foregrounds the importance of seeking the student's assessment of their socioemotional states and affirms that unless a student *feels* included, other kinds of claims that inclusion is occurring collapse.

6.3. Contextual Inclusion

Contextualizing language in the lives of the learners bears the power to include students in classroom activities because it makes AL learning more meaningful and increases student motivation to engage with it. In this study, MA use of the students' L1s facilitates several contextualizing scenarios for assessing student understanding, encouraging student AL speech performance, and enhancing the relevance of instructional content. Such practice is inclusive because it makes learning tasks and goals achievable. Concerning student AL communication, to root language use in the personal interests and situations of the students is pedagogically strategic because it breaks down the activity from the demand to engage with a cluster of questions (why? what? how?) to more simply: "How can I say this in Swedish?" Moreover, contextualizing content can strengthen the connection between what is new or emerging linguistically with what is already meaningful and known. The teacher-initiated, L1-operationalized, strategy of identifying language to study that relates directly to the AL learners' everyday lived experience draws in student collaboration and influence at a relatively early stage of their study and learning paths. Self-determination generates motivation among students to persist in their learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985) because they become stakeholders of the classroom work and see a strong correspondence between lesson focus and their communicative needs in the community. Contextual inclusion beams up inclusion as a pedagogical commitment to making the learning environment accessible, meaningful, and worth investing in.

6.4. Formative Inclusion

Providing students with knowledge about how they can take greater responsibility for self-regulating their learning, in this case with the use of their L1s, is an act of educational empowerment and inclusion. The checklist feedback that the MAs made accessible to students in their L1s was based on the assumption that emergent adult bilinguals have significant reserves of L1 metalinguistic awareness which can be activated and transferred to promote autonomous AL learning. The MAs used the students' L1s to point out which syntactic aspects of their L1 grammars were transferable to the AL and which were not. In the quest to include adult migrants, the pedagogical practice of using what students already have, whether personal experience, prior knowledge, or metalinguistic awareness, stands out as vital. Here MAs have translanguaging capabilities to draw forth such personal assets and abilities so that they can be used by students to take greater charge of their AL learning. A prerequisite of this inclusive action is the recognition of the adult AL student as not simply a learner without AL knowledge but as a knowledgeable and resourceful language user with a repertoire of semiotic resources that can be harnessed for AL learning. Dávila and Bunar (2020) report the view that teachers can make it difficult for multilingual students to feel comfortable with the fact that learning a new language takes time. Making teacher formative feedback intelligible and challenging through collaboration with MAs is not exercising "power over" learners but offering them the "power to" accelerate and strengthen their development autonomously. It can also encourage students to persevere with AL learning and perceive the resources they have as advantages for self-directing their progress. Generating formative knowledge with students projects inclusion as increasing students' capacities to regulate their AL learning themselves.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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