

# Basic literacy

Teaching adults with Swedish as a second language

LITERATURE REVIEW



*Skolverket*



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# Preface

**AN INCREASING NUMBER** of adults with Swedish as a second language lack basic reading and writing skills. Consequently, the Swedish National Agency for Education, in partnership with Dalarna University, has prepared this literature review, in which we discuss basic literacy for adults with Swedish as a second language.

Lacking a school education does not necessarily mean that you have no relationship with texts. Adults have extensive experience of everyday, social and occupational situations in which texts occur and are used. By taking a resource-oriented approach and an adult-oriented approach in the teaching, we can pave the way for a relevant, meaningful period of education.

To ensure it helps produce functional adults in Sweden, the teaching needs to be based on the students' knowledge and experience and also on the needs we all have as adults in everyday, social and occupational situations in terms of reading, understanding, producing and communicating with printed and digital texts.

This literature review shows the current research into written language teaching in adults with little or no school education. The review gives an overview of the field of literacy and the historical and theoretical basis of written language teaching.

The task of making this compilation was given to Professor Åsa Wedin, along with Jenny Rosén, Sori Rasti and Samira Hennius at Dalarna University. The authors who have written the review take independent responsibility for the content and the conclusions drawn.

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CHAPTER 1

# Introduction



# 1. Introduction

In this literature review, the Swedish National Agency for Education has gathered the current knowledge about basic literacy, focusing on written language teaching for adults who have previously had limited opportunities to learn to read and write and are studying Swedish for immigrants in municipal adult education and Swedish as a second language at basic level in municipal adult education<sup>1</sup>.

*Literacy* is a broad term that covers numbers, characters, symbols and images and how students link these to writing. It involves various activities in connection with reading and writing. Throughout, the text stresses an adult-oriented approach<sup>2</sup> and a resource-oriented approach in interaction with this group of students. This very heterogeneous group of students is often ascribed a high need for support and education to compensate for their lack of previous schooling (Sandberg, Fejes, Dahlstedt & Olson, 2015) instead of a position as competent adults. In this review, the focus is consequently on the resources these individuals have in the form of previous knowledge and experience. This means that the education and support provided during the teaching must be provided in dialogue with the students, and they should be treated as competent adult individuals by teachers and other staff. A central feature of this approach is also the relationship between literacy and identity as language use can create, reinforce, reproduce or recreate identity in many ways.

The literature review begins by providing, in chapter two, a brief survey of traditions of written language teaching, covering both reading and writing, which are relevant to the area, and a brief history

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- 1 See Appendix 1 for a description of the method used to collect material for the literature review.
  - 2 However, this text does not discuss adult education methods in general. See, for example, Hård af Segerstad, Klasson and Tebelius 2007, and Fejes (2013b) for further reading.

of the teaching of Swedish for immigrants in Sweden. Chapter three presents a historical and theoretical basis of written language teaching of adults with little or no school education. Chapter four looks in greater detail at research into basic reading and writing learning for adults. Chapter five deals with teaching of reading and writing with a particular focus on research into literacy, power and identity. Chapter six highlights didactic aspects related to treatment of students and assessment of basic written language teaching. The concluding chapter seven summarises the review, followed by an extensive list of further reading.

## Terms and definitions

As terms and definitions instil meaning in the world around us – and also create categories – it is important to highlight the use of terms and definitions in this text (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Hacking, 2005). Categorising and grouping, for example by placing people in groups that may be called immigrants, second language learners, people with little education, etc. is always problematic as it creates an oversimplified image of people, who cannot be reduced to just one quality. A group such as *second language learners*, for example, includes both children and adults of various ages with a wide range of experience. At the same time, for purely linguistic reasons, we need to use terms and definitions of various kinds to be able to communicate with each other at all. Consequently, it is important to reflect on the terms we use. When we group people under a label, it is important that they are not reduced to just belonging to one category. We need to understand the complexity of every individual. A second language learner belongs to a range of other groups such as football players, mothers, students, engineers, etc. Therefore, it is significant for adults to be given a number of different definitions to highlight the abilities and qualities the individuals in the group may have. At the same time, it is essential not to conceal the specific needs people placed in a certain group may have.

The terms and definitions that occur in the field of literacy include *illiterate*, *initial literacy training*, *literacy* and *mother tongue*. These terms are used initially in this literature review and need an explanation of how they will be used in the text.

### **Illiterate and initial literacy training**

A common term used to describe the very heterogeneous group that this literature review covers, i.e. adult second language learners with little or no school education, is *illiterate*. It is also common for *initial literacy training* to be used about teaching aimed at adults who are learning to read and write for the first time. Categorisation of individuals as illiterate is problematic in several ways, partly as it conceals the experience of writing that the individuals have although they lack formal schooling, and partly as it reflects an approach to reading and writing based on individuals being either able or unable to read and write. In reality, writing can be used in very different ways, and these different ways are associated with power, with certain forms being given more status than others.

Use of the term *illiterate* also creates an image of an apparently homogeneous group. This involves concealing the fact that the group consists of individuals with very different backgrounds and experience of written language, in which some have no schooling at all but still have some experience of writing, although not with the Latin written form (see also Rosén, 2013b). The group of *illiterates* is sometimes described as including everyone with short school education, for example shorter than four years. However, length of school education is not a reliable measure of ability to read and write. There are many people who never had the opportunity to go to school but still developed high-level written language skills.

The term *illiterate* reflects a simplified understanding of the use of written language and a deficiency-based approach to the learner. Consequently, in this document, we have decided not to use the term. We use other circumlocutions that better describe the very heterogeneous group of individuals concerned – for example: *adults who previously had limited opportunities to learn to read and write*. It

may seem easy to use the short term *illiterate*, but this conceals the complexity of individuals and the group, and we are led astray into believing that it is a homogeneous group, which is not the case. This also means that the term *initial literacy training* is irrelevant.

### **Initial literacy training and literacy**

Instead of *initial literacy training* and *initial literacy teaching*, this literature review uses the term *literacy* to highlight the fact that written language development involves much more than just learning to decode writing. *Literacy* is used to describe the use of writing, i.e. reading and writing, as a phenomenon (see also Wedin, 2006), and both terms are used synonymously in Swedish. Literacy means knowing not only how to read and write a specific text, but also how to use this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts. With literacy, the focus is on people's practices, i.e. the contexts in which they use reading and writing. When, in the text, we talk about the *skill* of being able to read and write, we often need to show that it involves complex, varying competencies. These skills include much more than just the basic technical ability to decode writing and convert numbers into writing, and reading and writing are not specific distinct skills, and reading and writing often take place in parallel. To highlight this, in this text we use the terms *written language skills*, *written language competence* and *written language teaching*.

### **Mother tongue**

Another term that is problematic in this context is *mother tongue*. Describing a mother tongue as a language that an individual has learned at home is based on a simplified view of languages as discrete units. This description is based on the fact that people who come to Sweden are expected to have developed a language at home and in their surrounding community, a mother tongue, and are then expected to develop Swedish as a second language. However, research has shown that people's language use is much more complex and cannot simply be described with terms such as mother tongue and

second language (Bagga-Gupta 2012; 2014; Paulsrud et al., forthcoming).

Many people who come to Sweden have previously developed varied language competencies, including many different varieties, and their language development in Sweden can be seen more as an extension of previously developed linguistic registers. For the sake of simplicity, the term *mother tongue* is used in this review to describe one or more languages that students studying Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level know well.

Another aspect in relation to mother tongues or the linguistic resources that students bring with them to Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level is that the status of a language or linguistic variety is variable. As increasing numbers of people migrate for various reasons, they face new challenges in that their languages, education and work experience are not given the same value and status in the new country. The Dutch researcher Jan Blommaert (2010) believes that the value of people's linguistic capital, in the form of resources and their value and status, is not always the same and that it changes on relocation to new places. In Sweden, knowledge of the Swedish language is often a necessary resource for participation in education, the labour market and the community. This means that, for adult individuals who migrate to Sweden, knowledge of Swedish is central to their ability to participate in various environments as adults. This also includes the basic ability to use writing for various needs. However, individuals are not always aware of the linguistic requirements made for participation in various contexts, for example a specific occupation or specific education. Consequently, it is important to take a resource-oriented approach in which the students' previous experiences and knowledge are assessed and form the basis of the teaching, and to talk explicitly about the requirements and expectations of the individual and by the individual.

CHAPTER 2

# Written language traditions



## 2. Written language traditions

This chapter presents a few traditions of written language teaching that can be expected to influence what happens in the teaching. It also provides a brief history of the development of the teaching of Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level.

People who participate in the teaching at these levels come to it with a variety of experiences in relation to writing. Both teachers and students have different experiences of literacy. People's experiences also comprise different customs for and perceptions of how to learn to write. These different experiences of literacy affect how both teachers and students create meaning based on what happens in the classroom. Adult second language students have previous knowledge and experience that affect how they will develop written skills in Swedish, and teachers have different experiences of teaching reading and writing. Consequently, a few written language traditions that are common among students and teachers in Swedish for immigrants teaching will be described here. Three traditions can principally be seen as particularly important in this context: 1) the Swedish school tradition, 2) religious written language traditions and 3) the Swedish tradition of popular education. When international written language research is discussed in chapter four, it will be clear that there is a preponderance of Anglo-Saxon traditions, which differ in certain respects from the teaching in Swedish adult education.

### The Swedish school tradition

The written language teaching in the Swedish school tradition can be said to have its roots in the Lutheran Protestant teaching of the catechism in Sweden from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Reading the catechism was a development of reading religious texts in the Catholic tradition, which were in Latin and were primarily



read by learned men in the Catholic Church. The catechism was a document consisting of simplified Bible texts with a commentary, and it was printed in Swedish to permit it to be read by ordinary people. Initially, it was ministers and parish clerks, i.e. the people who looked after the church building and its fixtures and fittings and managed the bell-ringing in the church, who provided the teaching. Responsibility for the teaching itself gradually passed to the head of the family, while the minister and parish clerk held household examinations by going from house to house and checking reading skills and knowledge of the religious message (Wedin, 2010; 2011). The results were recorded in household examination rolls, many of which are still preserved today.

The Swedish common people, i.e. the general population, can be seen as not only able to read in the latter part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Isling, 1991) but also as able to teach reading. The reason for the focus on reading and not on writing was quite simply that the interest of the governing class lay in ensuring that the common people could absorb the religious message and read other official decrees, while they had no interest in them being able to express themselves in writing (Wagner, 1990, p. 24; Isling, 1991, p. 141).

The fact that the common people learned to read was not something that changed their daily lives in any great way or gave them any wider democratic rights. It simply meant that people could read what they were expected to read. Learning to read became a civil duty, like going to church. The change was that they could read what was available to be read, which was initially largely limited to the catechism.

Responsibility for teaching his household members to read gradually passed to the head of the family. When primary school was introduced with compulsory attendance in 1842, the Swedish people in general can be seen as already not only able to read but also able to apply various strategies for teaching others to read. It is generally reckoned that the ability to read in Sweden declined with the introduction of primary school (Wedin, 2011). The teaching that had previously taken place at home was replaced by school teaching that was based on the students being able to read. Infant school, years 1–2,

was introduced at the end of the 1860s as preparation for primary school. In infant school, pupils were to learn basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics before they started primary school. Training colleges were gradually also set up for the schoolmistresses at these infant schools and it can be said that this was when teachers first began to be trained to teach reading and writing (see Isling, 1991, among others).

The Swedish tradition of teaching written language therefore has strong religious links and a focus on reading. The first method used was probably imitation, where a person able to read read aloud and the pupil repeated what they had said. The teaching methods for early written language development that dominated up to the end of the 1960s were based on the early traditions. This meant that the main focus was on reading by learning individual letters, then syllables and short words, then simple sentences and finally short texts, i.e. the teaching tradition that has come to be called cognitive psychological. It also means that it was assumed that pupils would learn to read before they learned to write. In the 1970s, a teaching method was developed in Sweden by Ulrika Leimar (1976). Called 'läsning på talets grund' (LTG) (speech-based reading), it was influenced by Anglo-Saxon methods that are usually called *whole language*. In this method, the teacher uses the pupil's own language as the starting point. They dictate stories together and the pupils write their own texts with the help of the teacher. The learning of individual letters is generated from the texts produced individually and jointly. Much of the teaching of adults in basic reading and writing in various parts of the world from the 1980s onwards has been based on teaching methods using such methods, including many reading campaigns in South America inspired by Paolo Freire, with the emphasis on functional use of writing in that case.

A characteristic feature of written language teaching in Swedish schools both historically and today is the emphasis on essayistic reading and writing, i.e. reading literary texts and writing stories. This means that, in many cases, reading and writing are linked to narrative genres or subject-specific writing in the various school subjects,

primarily in the later years of compulsory primary and secondary school. However, teaching in reading and writing is rarely linked to everyday functions such as completing forms, sending emails or writing a CV, which clearly shows that this teaching is designed on the basis of the experience and needs of children.

Written language teaching for children is based on the assumption that it will be followed by many years of schooling. However, the teaching of reading and writing in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level needs to take an adult-oriented approach instead. The students are adult individuals who are in a completely different phase of life in which they are expected to participate in the labour market and the community. However, this does not mean that adults need only work on functional literacy, i.e. forms, CVs, sick notes, etc. The creative, aesthetic and identity-creating aspects of reading and writing should also be included.

Some Swedish for immigrants teachers themselves have experience of learning to read and write in other countries and may therefore have experience of traditions other than those described above. They may also have experience of learning to read and write in Swedish as a second language as a child, young person or adult. These teachers make a particularly valuable contribution to the teaching with their various experiences of early written language development and various forms of written language teaching.

## Christian and Muslim religious written language traditions

Many of the students in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level come from written language traditions with a strong influence from Christianity and Islam. Reading religious texts is a central element of both religions, dominated by the central text, the Bible in Christianity and the Koran in Islam. In both mission schools and Koranic schools, the learning of letters has traditionally been the dominant point of departure for written language teaching and pupils have been taught individual sounds

which have subsequently been combined to form syllables and simple words. Basic reading and writing is taught in many places as part of Christian missionary activities. This was previously dominated by a teaching method in which individual vowels were first presented. For many languages, there are five, a e i o u, and they were often learned by choral repetition (Wedin, 2004). There are still many classrooms worldwide in which children in year one rattle off their vowels: a e i o u.<sup>3</sup>

The teaching of the Koran is also dominated by choral repetition and a teaching method that begins with individual letters, but as it is based on Arabic, the letters are consonants. Vowels in Arabic primarily have a grammatical function, and meaning is largely carried by consonants. In both missionary and Koranic teaching, it is common for pupils to practise writing individual letters and then combine them into words. As both methods are strongly linked to a religious text, the main purpose in both cases is primarily understanding of the religious text and not reading and writing in themselves. Both the Bible and the Koran are considered God-given to some extent, with the result that literal interpretation is important and creative writing is usually not encouraged in these contexts. The Koran is read in Arabic in many places, regardless of the language used by the pupils themselves.

As secular schooling is organised and children begin to learn to read and write in school, the religious teaching centres usually switch to a greater focus on the religious message. In Sweden, for example, Sunday school run by the Church of Sweden and other forms of education in various religious societies have been very important for basic Christian teaching but have not been particularly focused on written language development.

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3 We should stress here that the letters <o> and <u> are not pronounced as in Swedish, i.e. not as <o> in *sko* or <u> in *ful*. They are pronounced as [o] in *kol* or [u] in *sol*. The Swedish use of these letters differs from the rest of the world here. It is important for teachers whose first language is Swedish and who learned to read and write in Swedish to remember this.

## The Swedish tradition of popular education

A strong tradition of popular education has been developed in Sweden, largely outside but parallel to the official school system. Abrahamsson (1992) describes the development of adult education in three stages:

1. the major popular education period 1860–1960,
2. the development of general adult education 1960–1982,
3. the new market for adult education 1986–1991<sup>4</sup>.

Swedish adult education therefore has its roots in a tradition of popular education (Fejes, 2013a), which makes it relevant to discuss this tradition. It can be said to have been based on the early primary school and the later junior secondary school, but also has roots in the Swedish labour movement, farmers' movement, religious communities and, to a certain extent, sports movement. National educational associations such as the Workers' Educational Association (Arbetrörelsens bildningsförbund (ABF)), Vuxenskolan (literally adults' school), Medborgarskolan (literally citizens' school) and Studieförbundet (literally study promotion) were founded in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and organise study circles and other activities that are regarded as providing popular education. Radio and TV have also been of great importance to popular education by offering educational programmes. As early as in the 1940s, Swedes were able to learn languages via the radio and many learned the basics of languages such as English, German, French, Spanish and Italian using educational programmes broadcast on the radio and TV. Folk high schools were developed as an opportunity for further education after compulsory primary and secondary school and offered an alternative to Latin school, to which only a few students were admitted, and

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4 Abrahamsson's text was published in 1992 and therefore the *new market for adult education* stage extends to 1991. However, this development towards the marketisation of adult education continued in the 1990s and then the 2000s (see, for example, Rosén 2013a about Swedish for immigrants).

were subsequently an alternative and supplement to upper secondary school.

The predominant educational approach in Swedish popular education is strongly linked to John Dewey's ideal, *learning by doing*, and also to Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Gustafsson, 2009). However, written language teaching within this tradition has presumably been primarily in three areas: support for individuals with a low level of reading and writing, encouragement to read literature and Swedish for immigrants. Many people who had difficulties learning to write and write in standard school have received help in folk high schools. Reading literature and creative writing have also been encouraged there via writing courses and book groups. Reading and writing in Swedish have been part of various courses in the Swedish for immigrants educational area. There has been no major overall organised activity to teach people to read and write for the first time. In some cases, the teacher may have been trained to teach at primary school and thus have had training in teaching children to read and write in their first language. In other cases, the teacher may have based their approach on their own experience as a child or other teachers' experience and traditions.

When the number of foreign workers migrating to Sweden increased in the 1960s and 1970s, teaching in Swedish for the immigrant workers was organised via the educational associations, primarily ABF (Rosén, 2013a; Yalcin, 2010). The teaching methods and study material for Swedish for immigrants were developed within the framework of the various educational associations until Swedish for immigrants was brought under municipal control in 1986 (Rosén, 2013a). It can be said that the teaching of Swedish for immigrants today largely developed from this tradition.

Increased migration creates new challenges for the Swedish education system and its various actors. As indicated above, education in the Swedish language for people who migrated to Sweden for various reasons and do not speak Swedish developed from the mid-1960s in various educational associations and subsequently in municipal adult education at basic level and Swedish for immigrants. Although

some education in the Swedish language had been organised earlier, it was only after the Riksdag decided in 1965 to fund free teaching of Swedish for immigrants<sup>5</sup> that the then National Board of Education and the educational associations were given the task of arranging pilot schemes for Swedish teaching. Since then, the organisation and content of Swedish for immigrants education have been changed a number of times in a three-way struggle between the objectives of educational policy, labour market policy and social policy (Rosén 2013; 2014; Lindberg & Sandwall 2007; 2012).

### **Basic written language teaching in adult education**

The objective of adult education, as described in the Swedish Education Act (2010:800 Chapter 20, Section 2), is for adults to be supported and stimulated in their learning and given the opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills in order to reinforce their position in the labour market and the community and to promote their personal development. Adult education can therefore be said to have three functions:

1. a compensatory function, prioritising those who have had the least education,
2. a democratic, civil function
3. a labour market function (Fejes, 2015).

The objective of education at basic level is to give participants the knowledge they need to participate in the community and the labour market and to enable them to continue their studies. This places great demands on the education courses, and the objectives can be understood in terms of an individual objective, a democratic objective, a growth policy objective and a distribution policy objective (SOU 2013:20 p. 55). However, what constitutes the basic skills in reading and writing that are needed to participate in the community and the

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5 In 1967/68, the foundations were laid for 'general' adult education in the form of local upper secondary adult education courses (Government bill 1980/81:203, p. 4).

labour market is a complex and also political question. On an international plane, there is research that highlights and critically discusses the relationships between written language teaching in various types of adult education, democratisation and active citizenship (see, for example, Kerfoot 1993; 2009).

In a Swedish context, this complexity also becomes clear in a historical perspective in which both Swedish as a second language at basic level and Swedish for immigrants have undergone a number of changes in terms of organisation and content. Municipal adult education at basic level was added as a type of education in 1977, and its purpose then was to give adults with little education the opportunity to develop basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. In 1982, adult education was given its own curriculum (Lvux 82) but with school coming under the control of municipalities in the 1990s, municipal adult education at basic level was combined with stage 1 of adult secondary education (komvux) and became basic adult education (GRUV).

Initial literacy teaching for adults in municipal adult education at basic level, i.e. basic teaching in reading and writing for students who had not previously had the opportunity to learn to read and write, was directed primarily at the immigrants category and was subsequently expanded to include all adults needing basic reading and writing teaching, regardless of national affiliation (National Board of Education, 1988). This teaching developed parallel to Swedish for immigrants and was integrated with Swedish for immigrants in 2007. Questions concerning inadequate reading and writing skills among adult immigrants in Sweden, sometimes called illiteracy, have come to be highlighted increasingly in recent years.

The fact that Swedish for immigrants education constituted a separate type of education and whether this was a problem has been discussed since the 1980s. When Swedish for immigrants education was integrated with municipal adult education from 2016, new opportunities arose. An important objective of this was a clearer, more efficient, more flexible educational track for newly arrived adults. This opportunity will be improved by means of coherent study



paths adapted to the target group. The overlap between Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language has been removed to reduce the study time. The students should not repeat what they have already done in Swedish for immigrants. Consequently, the first basic learning of reading and writing now only takes place in Swedish for immigrants. This requires that all teachers at all levels of Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level have good knowledge about literacy and how they can work to create a good learning environment for the adult students who previously had limited experience of reading and writing.

The changes introduced in municipal adult education in 2016 are based on two commissions of inquiry: *Municipal adult education at basic level – a review for greater adaptation to individuals and efficiency* SOU 2013:20 and *Swedish for immigrants - freedom of choice, flexibility and adaptation to individuals* SOU 2013:76. These commissions of inquiry again drew attention to the need for individualisation and flexibility in the courses, and this was then highlighted in the proposal made in the Government bill *Increased adaptation to individuals – more efficient Swedish for immigrants and adult education. Bill 2014/15:85*. The change involved Swedish for immigrants ceasing to be a separate type of education and becoming part of municipal adult education. A problem that is described in the documents is that it takes newly arrived adults in Sweden too long to enter the labour market. As a consequence, adult education needs to be reformed to reduce the education time. At the same time, the process of learning a second language takes time and involves not only linguistic aspects but also issues of inclusion, participation and identity. This will therefore be discussed in chapter four.

## Summary

The following aspects were discussed in this chapter:

- different traditions, with a particular focus on the Swedish tradition of popular education, of importance to classroom teaching of adults organised within the framework of Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level,
- different traditions of reading and writing that teachers and students bring with them to the teaching,
- students' and teachers' expectations of how to learn to read and write and the contexts in which this should take place,
- teachers' and students' customs and attitudes concerning how reading and writing are used, in which contexts, by whom and for which purposes.

This knowledge is relevant as it affects how teaching is organised and implemented. As a result, the next chapter will discuss the conditions and requirements for learning basic reading and writing.

CHAPTER 3

# Learning basic reading and writing

– conditions and requirements



# 3. Learning basic reading and writing

## – conditions and requirements

This chapter will present the conditions and requirements for adults to learn basic reading and writing. Luke and Freebody's model (1999) for written language competence is presented and a few aspects of the Swedish writing system that may cause students problems are briefly described, as well as how Swedish is written in comparison with other written languages.

### Written language development – an adult-oriented approach

Learning to read and write a new language as an adult is a very serious challenge. This is true of all learners of a second language, but for those who previously had no opportunity to learn to read and write, the challenge is naturally even greater when they need to do so in a language they do not yet know. Speech is the basic form of language and it may be assumed that all children with social relationships and without serious functional challenges learn the language(s) spoken by people in their environments (Wedin, 2011). However, learning to read and write is much more abstract, and most people need some form of organised support to learn them, for example formal teaching. All the experience an individual already has of using writing in their home, in their community and in their occupation is of great importance in this context (Heath, 1983; Kabuto, 2011; Prinsloo & Breyer, 1996).

Unlike a child, an adult learner has many different types of knowledge, in particular much more developed cognitive abilities. This means that he or she can assume challenging tasks such as learning to read and write in a much more conscious manner than a small child

is able to do. While a child finds it difficult to look at itself and its actions from outside itself, an adult is able much more consciously to understand connections, make plans and, for example, consciously train a specific skill to eventually achieve an objective. This is of great importance, particularly for initial written language development, and in cases in which students have simple or basic written language skills. This is particularly true in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level, where the adult has to learn early written language skills in a language he or she does not yet know well, Swedish. Consequently, it is important for the teacher of Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level to be able to teach on the basis of the experience and knowledge the individual students possess. This concerns, in particular, trying to create opportunities for the initial written language teaching to take place in a language that the student knows, that which is often called the student's mother tongue. It is important here to point out that many people who come to Sweden as adults know several other languages. Mother tongue here should therefore be taken to mean a language the student knows well. When the teacher is able to offer the adult opportunities to make use of previous knowledge and experience and to learn based on their metacognitive ability, i.e. the ability to think about their own situation, the conditions can be created to simplify the serious work involved in developing basic reading and writing skills in their second language, Swedish. The initial development of reading and writing skills is easiest in a language the student already knows. When a person has developed basic written language skills in another language, it is easier to learn to read and write in the second language, Swedish.

A small child who starts school has many years of schooling ahead in which to develop advanced reading and writing skills. However, for an adult, this development needs to be as fast as possible. At the same time, an adult has other duties and responsibilities such as supporting themselves and their family and taking responsibility for children and older family members. It can be said that an adult needs to read and write long before he or she has actually learned to read and write. It takes a lot of time and practice to develop written language

skills, particularly if this cannot be done in parallel in the learner's strongest language and in the second language. Consequently, the teacher also needs to be able to create opportunities to practice reading and writing in contexts that are applicable to individual students. It is of particular importance for the teacher to link the written language teaching to individual students' lives and needs. At the same time, it is necessary to create motivation in the students so that they can apply all the energy that is needed. As a result, the teacher needs to demonstrate opportunities that developing reading and writing skills may generate.

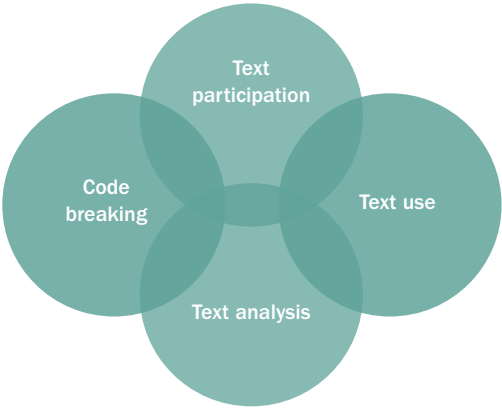
This is extremely important for adults who had no great need to use writing in their former lives. We will discuss this in further detail in chapter five. Some aspects of written language development that relate purely to written language will be presented in the following sections.

### **Luke and Freebody's resources model**

A model for describing written language skills that has come to be used increasingly in written language teaching is Alan Luke's and Peter Freebody's *Four Resources Model* (1991). The model illustrates four central skills in reading and writing: *code breaking*, *text participation*, *text use* and *text analysis*. These skills highlight essential parts of written language skills. Code breaking, for example, involves the ability to decode letters and written text into sounds and numbers and thoughts into writing, and also to know spelling rules and other writing standards, develop viable handwriting and, for computer work, use a keyboard, control a mouse, use touch screens, etc. However, pure code breaking does not mean the ability to understand read texts and use texts for various purposes and in various contexts. This requires the ability to understand what has been read and interpret its content, create meaning, and the ability to express yourself in writing so that what you write has the intended meaning. This places great demands on adults, who are, of course, expected to be skilled in advanced forms of reading and writing. It also requires the development of reading and writing strategies.

However, Luke and Freebody (1999) stress that it is not enough to be able to understand and interpret the written text and express yourself in writing. They also emphasise that individuals need to develop the ability to take a critical approach to texts. This is true of all types of text, but is perhaps particularly clear in digital contexts, where information can be spread virally with extremely little scrutiny. This means that an adult user of written language is required to be able both to take a critical approach to written texts of various types and also be aware of the potential effects of what they publish via digital media themselves.

**Figure 1.** The Four Resources Model (Schmidt 2013:47)



This illustrates the importance of written language teaching stimulating the development of all four skills, or resources, from the very start (Wedin, 2010). Many people who cannot yet read and write at all have already started to use digital media and therefore need to develop critical abilities straight away, so this is not something that can wait until later phases of the development of written language. When using written language in various contexts such as contact with public authorities, as a parent and in the community, it is also important to be able to take a critical approach to various types of text and not assume that everything that is written is true. People encounter mass media texts and commercial texts of many different types that

are designed to influence us as readers and recipients of the texts. It is important here for individuals to consider whether the texts match their own interests and what they perhaps want to distance themselves from. As parents, in particular, adult learners need to be able to understand their own children's use of writing via digital media of different types.

One interpretation of Luke's and Freebody's model (1999) may be that written language teaching for adults who previously had no opportunity to learn to read and write should begin with the needs of the students. This may mean that management of digital media, such as communication via text message, and contacting public authorities digitally should be incorporated in the teaching at a very early stage, perhaps even earlier than writing with a pen. In research into children who learn to read and write by using a keyboard (see, for example, Hultin & Westman, 2014), children are encouraged to write their own stories. Where adults are concerned, it may be more relevant to participate in social media, be able to handle digital functions such as using a bank account or write texts based on study visits or work experience.

## How Swedish is written

It is important for teachers of Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level who teach written language at basic level to know not only the Swedish system of written language but also how it relates to writing in other languages and other systems of written language of which the students may have experience. If possible, it is also a great advantage if the learner is given the opportunity to also have basic written language teaching in a language that he or she already knows.

The fundamental principle of the Swedish system of writing is that it is phonetic, which means that a sound corresponds to a letter and vice versa. However, this is not consistent. Many sounds that are written are not pronounced. For example, <Det är en hund> is generally pronounced [denhund] (it is a dog). There are also inconsistencies in the spelling of different sounds – compare the j-sound in jul, hjärta, djungel – and some letters do not have their own sound (for example,



compare the pronunciation of c/s/z in *cirkus*, *sol*, *zebra*), while <x> is pronounced with two sounds. In addition, only certain parts of the prosody, i.e. stress, intonation and length, are represented in writing. Double consonants are usually only used for stressed syllables in words, regardless of sentence intonation, while stress is not represented at all (compare the pronunciation of *anden* in *Han ser anden lyfta över vattnet* (he sees the duck fly over the water) and *Han fick tre önskingar av anden i lampan* (he was granted three wishes by the genie in the lamp)). This may cause difficulties with both reading and writing. The spelling of vowel sounds can be particularly problematic as, for example, the letters <u> and <o> are pronounced [ɤ:] and [u] (as in *hus* and *sol*), while, in most other languages with the same letters, they are pronounced [u] and [o] (as in the German *Mutter* and *Sonne*). The irregular spelling and pronunciation of o/å and e/ä create further difficulties for learners. For example, consider the spelling and pronunciation of the å-sound in *kollkål* and the ä-sound in *hemlighet* and *hämna*. The fact that some of these phonetic phenomena are also difficult to learn to pronounce make it all even harder for students to learn Swedish.

Many other Swedish spelling rules are also irregular and therefore not easy to learn, for example the spelling of the m-sound in *damm* and *dam* or the k-sound in *byggt*. Therefore, it is important for teachers of Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level to know not only Swedish writing but also both Swedish phonology and Swedish spelling rules. (For a more detailed description of the principles of Swedish writing, see Wedin (2010)).

### **How Swedish is written from a contrastive perspective**

Students who study Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level have previously encountered writing in various forms and also different orthographies, i.e. different written languages. This means that they may have knowledge and experience of other forms of writing that are important to the development of their knowledge of Swedish as a written language. Consequently, a few important features of Swedish writing will be described here

in comparison with other written languages (for a more detailed description, see Wedin, 2010). Some students may have experience of other phonetic written languages such as Bangla, Hindi, Thai, Greek or Cyrillic, which use different characters. Other students may have experience of word-based writing, primarily the Chinese writing system but, to some extent, also the Japanese. For those who have attended school in China, it is an advantage to start school education with Latin characters as a basis for the children (Ingulsrud & Allen, 1999). Other students may have experience of syllable-based writing, for example Japanese written language, which uses both syllable characters and Chinese characters. Arabic and Hebrew are written with phonetic characters based on consonants. This is because the consonants in these languages are the core, the word stem, while vowels have primarily a grammatical function.

All previous experience of written language that learners possess is important and should be used in the development of written Swedish. If the teacher is able to base the teaching on the learners' previous knowledge of writing, their development of written Swedish is greatly facilitated.

## Summary

This chapter discussed what the high demands placed on adults in respect of reading and writing in our society mean for students of Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level. The following aspects were highlighted in the text:

- Advanced skills in reading and writing Swedish are required to participate in the community, everyday life and the labour market.
- By creating teaching that is based on students' previous knowledge and skills in respect of language, reading and writing, better conditions are created for the students' literacy development.
- Basic written language teaching needs to be closely linked to students' everyday needs, both to permit them to develop the skills they need in their everyday lives and to motivate them to devote a great deal of time and become committed to learning.



CHAPTER 4

# Research into basic written language development for adults



## 4. Research into basic written language development for adults

This chapter will present research relevant to teaching in literacy in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level. Such studies need to be searched for in various fields as there is not much research in this specific field. For example, there are no research studies with a direct didactic focus, into working methods in the classroom, into the use of previous language skills and into the use of digital media.

In a review of relevant research (see Appendix 1), the following topics can be discerned:

- Writing and written language teaching
- Literacy and power
- Literacy and identity
- Literacy and gender
- Writing and written language communities
- Basic written language development in Swedish as a second language.

These topics all have relevance for literacy teaching in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level. Therefore, the presentation here will be based on them. A general overview of research into writing and written language teaching will be presented first. Research into literacy will then be discussed in relation to two aspects that are of particular importance to adult literacy: power and identity. Written language communities, a term developed from

the term *communities of practice*, is presented in relation to adult reading and writing. Finally, other research and knowledge of relevance to teaching of basic written language development in Swedish as a second language is discussed.

## Research into writing and written language teaching

In the research into and school traditions of school teaching in Europe and the USA, two different traditions of written language teaching have been prominent in recent decades. These traditions are based on different theoretical assumptions. One tradition has a cognitive psychological basis, while the other has a sociolinguistic and/or sociocultural basis. The first perspective, i.e. the cognitive psychological one, which is also the one with the longest tradition in Sweden, focuses on the form of the writing itself and the various components of the writing, in particular the relationships between sounds and letters, and also on handwriting, spelling and reading speed. On the basis of this perspective, students are expected to learn to read and write by learning individual letters, combining them to form syllables and simple words and then combining words to form phrases, sentences and entire texts. This perspective can be said to have a behavioural theoretical basis and is called *phonics* in English (in Sweden literally synthetically oriented written language teaching) (Hultin & Westman, 2014).

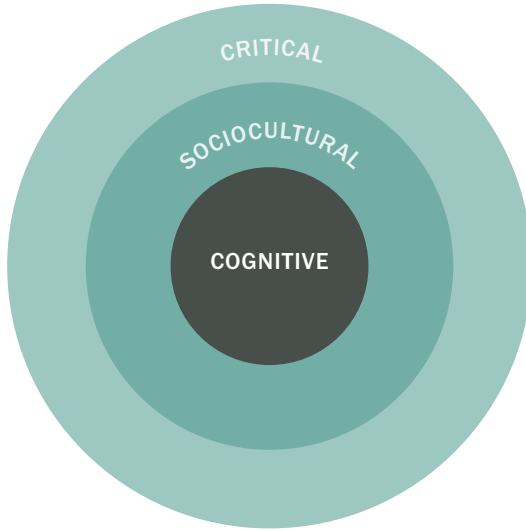
The other perspective, the sociolinguistic/sociocultural one, has been more dominant in English language contexts. In this perspective, the teaching is based on the whole, the text or the sentence, which is broken down into parts, and is therefore called the analytical method or *whole language*. In Sweden, this perspective was represented by, among other methods, 'Läsning på talets grund' (LTG) (speech-based reading) (Leimar, 1976). The focus here is on students' own language and reading and writing in authentic communication. This perspective has since been developed within the sociocultural perspective that is based on Vygotsky's studies, in which terms such as

*zone of proximal development, mediation and scaffolding* are important (Vygotsky 1978, [1934], 1999). The zone of proximal development stands for what a student is in the process of learning, that which is directly above what he or she already knows. By means of scaffolding, the expert, for example the teacher, can facilitate the student's development of the new knowledge. Knowledge is mediated, i.e. communicated via various media such as speech or writing but also in the form of images, film, music, dance, practical demonstration, etc.

On the basis of scholarship and tried and tested experience, the teacher must support the student in their learning by creating good learning conditions. The theoretical basis used by the teacher affects what happens in the classroom but not necessarily how the learning takes place. The fact that teaching takes place in a certain way is no guarantee that students' written language will develop as intended. In a study, Liberg (1990) was able to show that successful learners use both analytical and synthetic methods in their written language development and that reading and writing involve both analysis and synthesis. She was also able to show what is also known from other language teaching research, that different learners learn in different ways and that teaching should therefore create conditions for individual students to use learning strategies that suit their own learning (Liberg, 2006; see also, for example, Tornberg, 2009; Lightbown, 2013). These two perspectives are sometimes seen as opposed, but they can also be regarded as more or less comprehensive.

It is possible to talk about a narrow approach to reading and writing, with the focus on different skills such as spelling, decoding, etc., and a wider approach in which writing is regarded as part of practices in social and cultural contexts. Since 1980, the latter approach has come to assume a more prominent place in research, particularly in contexts with adults who have not had great opportunities for formal education. Many studies have been carried out in various parts of the world into written language practices or *literacy practices* (see, for example, Street, 1993; Barton & Hamilton, 1998) and into how and for what purposes people use writing, in which languages and with which written languages. The need to develop critical approaches





**Figure 2.** Different approaches to literacy: a) cognitive, b) sociocultural and c) critical.

to reading and writing were also emphasised in these contexts. Particularly in contexts in which digital uses of writing are discussed, the emphasis is on the importance of being able to take a critical approach to what is available online and to critically think through the potential effects of one's own writing. This view of writing and written language development is called critical literacy (see, for example, Luke & Freebody, 1999; Janks, 2010) and can be seen as a further expansion of the sociocultural approach (see figure 2).

As the figure shows, the different approaches can be regarded as more or less comprehensive, so that the *cognitive* is limited to various types of competence and skill such as ability to spell, reading speed, etc. The *sociocultural* approach includes this but also social and cultural aspects of reading such as customs and attitudes related to writing. The third approach includes these two but also adds a critical approach. The critical approach, critical literacy, can be said to have been developed from the tradition of teaching reading that was

founded by Freire (1972) and was pursued to help liberate oppressed people in South America. No great importance is attached in either of the first two approaches, the cognitive and the sociocultural, to the question of the language in which reading and writing take place and whether this is a language that the student knows. When the focus is on adult immigrants, this question is central.

Important questions to be considered here are:

- In which languages do the reading and writing take place?
- How does this relate to the individual learner's previous language experience?
- What opportunities exist to offer the initial written language teaching in languages that the individual students already know?

In recent times, a number of studies have been carried out focusing on previous written language experience in adults with little or no previous education and in adult immigrants. This research has been based on theoretical approaches close to the sociocultural and critical approaches above. This can be seen as natural as these are the approaches within which the adults' use of written language is considered holistically in relation to their personal universe and own needs. These are also the approaches that offer opportunities for a wider view of prior knowledge and make it possible to discuss the choice of language, i.e. which language or languages is or are used in the literacy practices in which the adults participate. Many of these studies have focused on people in vulnerable situations and people who have not succeeded at school for a variety of reasons. The next section presents a few Swedish studies based on these approaches.

### Swedish research into basic literacy teaching

In a 1990 study, Elsie Söderlindh Franzén (1990) investigated how immigrant participants in municipal adult education at basic level with previous work experience experienced their educational situation and the factors that influenced their experiences. The focus of

the study was primarily on social and cultural factors that influenced the participants' situation as "job seekers with specific difficulties rather on their situation as students with possible learning problems" (Söderlindh Franzén, 1990, p. 25). The study showed that there was a difference between the students' view of their situation and the surrounding community's view. For example, some of the students did not consider that their education was particularly short, and using their own measures this was true, but not for ordinary people working in occupations such as tradesmen, shop assistants and housewives. However, Söderlindh Franzén writes the following about the surrounding community's view of the students:

Swedes see the immigrant participants in the study, or rather the category they represent, 'adults with little or no formal education', as rather poor and helpless. Their capacity is reduced to one dimension: formal educational background expressed in the number of school years. Under this dimension, they are deficient according to Swedes, and this deficiency tends to overshadow everything else. (1990, p. 120).

The fact that, in their encounter with the Swedish education system, the focus was on their lack of formal educational background, means that the diversity of their experience from work and other types of training and education is rendered invisible when prior knowledge is reduced to 'number of school years'. At the same time, the study also shows that the deficiency approach in the view of students in municipal adult education at basic level led to the perception that the teachers were unable to demand too much from them and the teaching should proceed slowly with only a few hours of teaching and no formal checks on knowledge or homework (Söderlindh Franzén, 1990, p. 137).

An ethnographic study by Inga-Lena Rydén (2007) illustrated how three adult immigrants with no formal schooling or only brief formal schooling and limited experience of writing handled situations in their new country, Sweden, that required reading and writing, and the important of social networks and different strategies in these

contexts. Like previous studies, Rydén shows how social networks created opportunities to handle written language events in everyday life and navigate the new environments the three people in the study encountered in Sweden. Based on the social networks, the participants developed new strategies for handling writing, while developing their literacy, which two of the respondents found very difficult and demanding. Both Rydén and later Qarin Franker stress a resource-oriented approach in their encounter with the participants, in which their language, knowledge and experience resources are made use of. In her dissertation *Litteracitet och visuella texter – Studier om lärare och kortutbildade deltagare i sfi (Literacy and visual texts – Studies of teachers and participants in Swedish for immigrants with little education)*(2011), Franker focuses on images and visual texts in relation to literacy teaching for adult immigrants with little education. In her dissertation, Franker illustrates three studies (2004, 2007, 2011a) on literacy and visual texts (i.e. containing both writing and images) in Swedish for immigrants in which the aim was to “widen the research into literacy and initial literacy teaching from focusing on reading and writing of verbal texts to also include visual texts and to illustrate how adults who have no (or very little) formal school education perceive these texts” (2011b, p. 12). Franker’s study (above all 2007) show the need for Swedish for immigrants teaching that treats the students as competent adults.

Franker also shows how the participants’ reconstructions of visual texts are influenced by their linguistic, educational and cultural repertoires as well as by graphic, visual and textual design. She draws the conclusion that linguistic competence, formal school education and knowledge of the current discourse are necessary for the ability to make independent interpretations of images and visual texts.

With Ingrid Skeppstedt, Franker also compiled the report *Alfabetiseringsutbildning i Norden 2007. Slutrapport från KAN-projektet: kartläggning av alfabetisering i Norden (Initial literacy training in the Nordic region 2007. Final report from the KAN project: assessing initial literacy in the Nordic region (2007))*. The report compares initial literacy teaching in the Nordic countries in terms of organisation,

political decisions, scope and responsibility. The report shows that Denmark, Norway and Sweden have established second language training that includes initial literacy (or reading and writing learning) for adults, while Finland has integration training instead, comprising second language learning that includes reading and writing training (Franker & Skeppstedt, 2007).

## Literacy and power

Literacy development is a process embedded in various types of power relationship. This is particularly relevant as the starting point for this review is to look at written language use from various perspectives, cognitive, sociocultural and critical.

Writing is always used in a social and cultural context in which there are power relationships (Bagga-Gupta, 1995; Wedin, 2004; Barton & Hamilton, 2005; Street, 2009) and the term *social domain* has sometimes been used to define these different contexts that can be seen as distinct in terms of both time and place. If we consider Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level to be a social domain, there are certain written language activities linked to the domain. However, the linguistic activities within a domain are not uniform. For example, there are temporal boundaries between the time for teaching and the time for breaks and between different types of teaching. The written language activities we do in breaks may therefore be different from those we do in the teaching. Consequently, there are no absolute boundaries between different domains, for example, between school and home, and it may often be that a student takes the school domain home when doing homework and the home domain to school by sending a text message to their children. Although the term domain has been criticised (Salö, 2012), it constitutes a useful tool for highlighting how use of written language changes according to place, time and activity. Norlund Shaswar (2012, 2014) uses the term sociotextual domains to highlight how social factors are linked to the use of texts in various domains. She says that “sociotextual domains are characterised by the fact that they

contextualise social textual activity that reflects social relationships, identities, aims, objectives and social expectations” (Norlund Shaswar, 2014, p. 23). This means that texts and domains are affected by each other.

When people use writing, power aspects are always present. A division between *status planning*, *corpus planning* and *acquisition planning* (Cooper, 1989) is often used in studies of language planning (i.e. planning and regulating language use). This may also help us understand relationships between literacy and power at national level. Status planning is about the status given to different languages in a society. A clear example is the Swedish Language Act (2009:600), which establishes that Swedish is the main language in Sweden. The national minority languages were also granted extended rights. Within a specific school, there are both clearly expressed and unspoken rules about the status of different languages. This may concern the written languages that are visible in the school environment and also the languages that must or may be used in breaks and lessons. The status of different languages is also highlighted by their being compulsory or optional languages at school, with specific syllabi, such as English, Swedish and modern languages. There may also be similar conditions in the workplace, and certain companies have their own language policies.

The status a specific language, and thus also a specific written language, has in a specific context changes both over time and between different places. The capacity for free creative narration, which is often rewarded in Swedish schools, has no status in many religious contexts, where literal reproduction of texts that are regarded as God-given, is what is valued instead. Therefore, whether a person’s written language skills are regarded as a resource or not depends on ideological and contextual factors. However, it can be said in general that privileged written language practices such as the type of reading and writing that usually dominates in school constitute greater economic and political resources than practices that are standard in everyday domains such as the home.

For many students in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level, migration to Sweden means that previously privileged uses of writing, for example in a specific occupation or in religious contexts, lose their status and therefore no longer constitute the same resource for the individual. Students who lack previous formal education have also had access to domains in which writing is used for various purposes in ways that may no longer be regarded as a resource in Sweden. For example, selling vegetables in a market in Kabul involves a number of written language events that require a number of skills from the individual but no longer constitute a resource in a Swedish food store (see, for example, Street, 1984). Consequently, it is not only the language and the written language that are different between a market in Kabul and a Swedish food store but also the sociocultural context of how vegetables are bought and sold.

*Corpus planning* is about regulating the language itself, for example in the *Swedish Academy Glossary (SAOL)*, grammars and various documents establishing language standards, and involves standardisation and language planning activities which also affect the status of a language. For adult learners of a second language, this means, among other things, that they need to be able to use the Swedish language in speech and in writing in a manner that is adapted to the recipient. When using writing in communication with, for example, public authorities, their children's school or their employer, adults need to be able to use standardised written language well. Acquisition planning, finally, is about how teaching is organised so that people have the opportunity to develop different language skills, which is also closely linked to the status of different languages. The main language used in Swedish schools is Swedish, and all students are expected to develop knowledge of English and possibly another modern language, as well as their mother tongue. Swedish, Swedish as a second language and English are compulsory subjects in compulsory primary and secondary school, while, for example, a different mother tongue is a voluntary subject which is often taken outside the ordinary school day (Laino, 2012). Adults with a mother tongue other than Swedish who

lack basic knowledge of the Swedish language are, however, entitled to learn Swedish in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level. When public authorities decide to focus on improving written language training for people who previously had little opportunity to use writing, this is an example of acquisition planning.

From a historical perspective, the opportunity to use written language as a resource was the privilege of the elite in many parts of the world. In many contexts, writing was used by the Church and the State to control people, for example in the teaching of the catechism in Sweden mentioned in chapter two. Who learns to use writing and which different types of writing they learn are therefore a matter of power and thus also of which opportunities are offered to whom to participate in a society. To be able to participate as a full citizen of Sweden, you need to have advanced written language skills. It is not enough to have 'broken the code', i.e. to have worked out the connection between sounds and letters. People have to be able to use text to create meaning and be able to critically examine and also produce both printed and digital writing. This usually takes place in Swedish, the new language, in Sweden.

## Multilingual written language use and power

The question of power becomes particularly relevant in contexts in which people use different languages and therefore writing in different languages, and perhaps also in different written languages. However, power should not be understood as predetermined and static. Power can be negotiated and power structures can be influenced. Michael Foucault (1993; 2008) said that power should not only be seen as oppressive and limiting but also as productive as it is through power processes that we create our social environment and make it meaningful. Foucault's later works concern relationships between power and knowledge, and how they are intimately connected and cannot exist without each other. Foucault writes the following about education (1993, p. 31):



Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse. However, we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle lines of social conflict. Every education system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it.

As asserted in the quotation above, education should be regarded as an instrument for influencing the discourses to which different groups of people have access in a society and what is construed as knowledge and competence (cf. Andersson & Fejes, 2005, in respect of validation of prior knowledge and skills). The term *discourse* can be understood as language practices in the form of rules and regularities in how people categorise and talk about the world. In everyday contexts, we usually talk about conversations. This means that our knowledge about the world is always communicated via language. By talking about something, we reproduce or change certain power relations.<sup>6</sup> Blommaert (2005) states that discourse can be said to be what changes the world around us so that it becomes culturally and socially meaningful for us. Foucault (1993) stressed that access to different discourses in society is not equally distributed and that education has thus become an instrument to manage this. People's opportunities and restrictions in society are thus linked to their language resources.

The US researcher Nancy Hornberger has developed a model that she calls *continua of biliteracy* (2003) to analyse how writing is *situated*, i.e. what place writing is ascribed or offered in multilingual contexts, and power aspects are central to the model. Hornberger defines biliteracy, which could be called multilingual literacy (Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000; Rosén & Wedin, 2015), as “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing” (1990, p. 213). Hornberger thus focuses on the fact that multilingual communication also involves writing as part of its

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6 Cf. the sociohistorical and sociocultural approach introduced in the next section.

linguistic diversity. The model (Hornberger, 2013) consists of four sets of continuum that are embedded in each other. The continuum model illustrates what is traditionally ascribed less power and what is ascribed more power in the following four continua: a) *development*, b) *content* c) *media* and d) *contexts*. Within each continuum, the power relationships are highlighted as follows:

- a) **Development** comprises the individual's language development, for example learning to read and write and develop this competence. Development includes the following continua of power relationships: reception – production, oral – written, and first language – second language. The former, reception, oral and first language are ascribed less status and power, while production, written and second language are ascribed more power.
- b) **Content** is the content of what is expressed. The following continua are highlighted in content: minority – majority, vernacular – literary, and contextualised – decontextualised. Here too, the former, minority, home and contextualised, are ascribed less power as elements linked to everyday contexts, while majority, literary and decontextualised are ascribed higher status.
- c) **Media** is the media used. The continua that are highlighted are: simultaneous – successive exposure, dissimilar – similar structures, and divergent – convergent scripts. Similar structures are usually linked to higher status, while dissimilar structures, such as simultaneous use of different languages and media, are ascribed lower status.
- d) **Contexts** is the contexts in which the reading and writing take place. Contexts highlights the following continua of power relationships: micro – macro, oral – literate, bi(multi)lingual – monolingual. Contexts at macro level, which are monolingual and literary, are those usually ascribed higher status.

All four continua are interlinked, and when users have the opportunity to use the full register, multilingualism is favoured in both writing and speech. The greater the extent of the continua involved,

the greater the opportunities for multilingual written language participation and expression.

The fact that power aspects are central in an analysis of multilingual literacy is highlighted in the model in that the four different continua contain three sets of relationships in themselves. In each relationship, one end of a continuum represents that which is usually associated with low status, while the other end is associated with high status. The use of continua highlights both the flexibility of the various phenomena and how different power structures intersect. The model therefore shows how multilingual literacy relates to several power aspects. From a power perspective, Hornberger believes that it is particularly important to highlight the aspects that are often ascribed low status. This applies equally to research and teaching.

The model is used to highlight the complexity of the written language practices in which people are involved, and Hornberger emphasises the development of a diversity of practices so that writing is used both in everyday contexts in practices that are often ascribed low status and in more school-oriented contexts in practices that are regarded as more valuable and can, for example, generate high pay, good study results and access to power in different contexts. In written language teaching for adults who previously had limited opportunities to learn to read and write, it is important to incorporate diversity so that people's different ways of using writing are observed and supported. This is discussed in further detail in chapter six.

## Literacy and identity

Questions concerning the relationship between language and identity have long interested researchers, and identity processes have become increasingly important in second language research, in particular, in recent years. Identity issues are of particular relevance in relation to teaching for adults who have not previously had opportunities for extended school education and/or have not previously had the opportunity to learn to read and write. As in a number of studies concerning children's literacy development, learning to read and write also

involves becoming a reading and writing person, while using writing in identity-creating processes in relation to others. It is also central for adults to perceive reading and writing as part of their identity, that, as part of the learning process, they see themselves and are also perceived by others as reading and writing individuals. While previous research was based on identity categories such as woman, low level of education or young person and studied how identity issues affected second language learning or language use, more recent research has been based on a more dynamic understanding of identity in which identities are not seen as fixed and there is emphasis on identity as a process. Learning to use new languages involves such identity processes that include the students' previous experience and also possible identities in the new society; who they can be and who they can become.

Identity is basically about the question "who am I?", but also who I have been and who I can become. We usually continue the statement "I am" with a number of different categories that characterise what we are or want to present ourselves as: I am a teacher, I am Swedish, I am a man, I have little education, etc. Depending on the context and the recipient, the categories available for use vary. Learning a second language in which written language development is included involves not only acquiring vocabulary and grammatical structures. It also involves becoming someone in and through the new language. Part of what you initially learn in a new language involves positioning yourself: "My name is Maro" or "I come from Somalia". These categories, that we can also call identity positions, are expected to say something about ourselves as a certain type of person (Hacking, 2005). This means that people have a common, shared understanding of what and how, for example a teacher or a student is.

By using language (including writing) in a certain way, we create, reinforce, reproduce or recreate certain identities. I can introduce myself as a teacher to my students but if I then, when writing instructions for a task for the students, use a linguistic variety that is associated with youth language, a conflict occurs or a negotiation in respect of my identity position as teacher. There are specific ways of using

language in both speech and writing that are common in the relationship between a teacher and a student.

This 'way of being' can be seen as a combination that includes:

- speaking and writing in a specific way,
- acting and interacting in a specific way,
- using facial expression and body language in a specific way,
- dressing in a specific way,
- feeling, believing and valuing in a specific way, and
- using certain objects, tools and technologies in a specific way  
(Gee 2000, p. 100).

However, there must also be shared understanding of this combination so that it is also confirmed and responded to in the dialogue with others, which in turn highlights the importance of social interaction in identity processes. When we are new participants in a context, we may lack knowledge about how we are certain sort of person in this context.

A newly arrived adult student may have a university education and identify themselves as well-educated and knowledgeable. The student has a lot of experience that the teacher should make every effort to use as the basis to make the teaching and training as good as possible. In adult education, the student encounters new standards in which the ways of being and using language in speech and writing that are part of the individual's identity as a well-educated person are no longer given any status and are thus no longer confirmed. For the individual, this may be experienced as a crisis or conflict and it may be important, as a teacher, to make clear to students the relationships between language use and identity.

Learning Swedish as a second language in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level therefore also involves the students developing knowledge about social linguistic and communication standards that are required to become a member of

various communities in Swedish society (cf. Kanno & Norton, 2003; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

## Literacy, identity and gender

A large proportion of the students in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level who have little educational background or have had limited opportunities to read and write are women<sup>7</sup>. However, similar research focusing on men's identity in relation to second language learning is limited. On the other hand, there are a number of studies that have focused on how relationships within families change in connection with migration (for example Darvishpour 2002, 2008). Darvishpour (2008) turns away from these one-dimensional explanation models focusing on culture and advocates instead an intersectional approach to understanding conflicts. This involves cultural, gender-related and socioeconomic factors interacting with each other. Conflicts in a family may therefore be understood in relation to:

- power distribution and interaction within the family,
- the family's acceptance and understanding of the changes in their environment and its potential for acceptance,
- the family's socioeconomic situation in the new country and their environment's attitude to the family.

Three conflicts are therefore common among families who have migrated to Sweden. The first involves one partner in the family playing an extrovert role, forming a new network and becoming more independent, while the other partner becomes more isolated and is regarded as ignorant in the new society. The second type of conflict involves a shift of power between the woman and the man that creates instability. The third type of conflict may be understood as a

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7 See the National Agency for Education's website: <http://www.skolverket.se/statistik-och-utvardering/statistik-i-tabeller/utbildning-i-svenska-for-invandrare/elever-och-kursdeltagare>

generational conflict between children and adults, whose inclusion in the new society is out of phase. Although the research into changed power relationships and potential conflicts in families that have migrated to Sweden does not directly concern basic written language teaching, we can assume that they affect students' commitment to and participation in this teaching.

A number of studies in recent years have highlighted the importance of identity, second language learning and written language use with the focus on women to also elucidate the learning of a second language from a gender perspective. One of the first studies that highlighted the relationship between identities and the learning of a second language based on a dynamic understanding of identity was Bonny Norton's study *Identity and Language Learning* (2000). Norton criticises second language research for lacking a theoretical framework for identity within which the relationship between the language learner and the context can be understood. In her ethnographic study, Norton followed five women with different backgrounds who had recently immigrated to Canada and begun studying English. Her study showed that the interaction in which the women had the opportunity to participate was characterised by inequalities based on gender and ethnicity and the language that was used was usually a form of social control. A 'natural language learning environment' was thus not stimulating. It was more an environment characterised by inequality in which the women struggled to find networks in which they could use and develop their English.

The importance of motivation to learning a second language has been highlighted by researchers. However, Norton (2000) criticised an approach that viewed motivation separately from power and maintained that the connection between motivation and commitment to the teaching must be discussed. Like Cummins (2001), she talks instead about *investment*. Norton's studies of women in Canada showed that high motivation did not necessarily mean successful second language development. This was affected instead by the unequal power relationships between the learners and the speakers of the target language. As motivation is often regarded as an individual quality

without taking into account the power relationships in which people are embedded, the term investment highlights instead the often ambivalent, socially and historically created relationships between learners and the target language that have affected their desire to learn and use the language. As we stated above, learning a language therefore involves not only learning a new language system of words and grammar. It should also be seen as a *process* in which learners create and negotiate meaning about who they are and their relationship (who they are and can be) with the world around them. This means that an investment in the target language is also an investment in the learner's identity – an identity that is variable in time and space (Norton 2000). If learners decide to invest in the learning of a language, they do so based on an understanding of increased symbolic and material resources (Norton, 2010). While motivation is primarily seen as a quality inherent in the learners, investment shifts the focus to social relationships, opportunities for participation and identity processes. Instead of asking whether a learner is motivated to learn a language, the question should instead be what is a learner's investment in the target language's practices, both in the classroom and in society in general. Talking about investment instead of motivation is particularly relevant in interaction with adult learners where we need to plan written language teaching so that the importance of writing in the students' everyday lives is highlighted.

Another North American researcher who studied the learning of a second language and identity creation in adult immigrant women is Doris S. Warriner (2004, 2007, 2010). She studied the target group's learning both in the educational programme in which they were included and in the various workplace practices in which they participated (Warriner 2010). Warriner highlights how the educational programme in which the women were included prepared them for certain specific identities (low-income workers) and that, despite ambitions to continue to study and choose their occupation, they were locked into low-income part-time work which, in turn, placed them in a marginalised and financially uncertain position.



Julia Menard-Warwick's study of an educational programme in the English language and literacy in the USA (2009) has a similar finding. Focusing on gender and identity creation, the study shows how the participants' experience of being a woman from their 'homeland' and in the USA is central to their learning of English. The result shows that learning English must be understood in relation to women's identity creation as immigrant women in a certain context with a certain history. The study shows that the learning of a second language should be based on the participants' previous experience and resources, of which gender is an important aspect.

Learning and identity creation with a particular focus on gender is also analysed by Ellen Skilton-Sylvester, who studied participation in teaching of English as a second language (ESL) among women who immigrated to the USA from Cambodia (2002). Skilton-Sylvester's ethnographic study followed four women's learning of English both in and outside the ESL classroom. Her study shows that the classroom should be seen as part of the students' 'reality' instead of making a distinction between the classroom and the reality outside. The four women's identity negotiations in relation to family (mother, daughter, spouse, etc.), working life and cultural affiliation affected their learning of English, both in the classroom and outside.

In a Swedish context, several similar studies have been carried out focusing on people with limited experience of formal education, several of which on the basis of gender. These Swedish studies are presented in the remainder of this section.

Marie Carlson's study *Svenska för invandrare – brygga eller gräns* (Swedish for immigrants – bridge or border) (2002) was the first study of Swedish for immigrants education which takes an educationally critical and social constructivist<sup>8</sup> approach. The purpose of the study was to contribute increased understanding of the encounter between a 'group of immigrants with little education' and the Swedish school system in the form of Swedish for immigrants and

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8 In a social constructivist approach, life is studied as being socially constructed in interaction with people.

this centres around various actors' understanding of knowledge and learning. The study shows that the education was characterised by an approach based on seeing the students as inadequate, and the students had few opportunities to influence the organisation and content of the teaching. The women in the study also stated they felt that were treated as children or seen as 'stupid' in their encounters with Swedes. For the participants, studying Swedish for immigrants meant a social situation in which they were given the opportunity to participate and could develop their self-confidence. While the students were boosted by the education, there were also negative aspects, in particular concerning notions of gender equality; the female students were ascribed qualities such as traditional and passive. Carlson writes (2002, p. 241):

The women's stories show how gender and identity are related in various ways to the language they are in the process of learning. They talk frequently about their main responsibility for the family, for which they need the Swedish language in their contact with various institutions such as schools, day nurseries and healthcare institutions. The benefit and joy conferred by Swedish for immigrants are primarily derived from greater self-confidence as a result of greater opportunities to act in various social arenas. Involvement in the public sphere in connection with various everyday tasks also enhances their 'everyday power'.

Like that which is emphasised in this literature review, Carlson's study highlights the importance of the studies in Swedish for immigrants being made meaningful for the participants based on their daily lives. The women in the study used both Swedish and Turkish for reading and writing, sufficiently to be able to get by in everyday life.

Berit Lundgren's study *Skolan i livet – livet i skolan: några illiterata invandrarkvinnor lär sig tala, läsa och skriva på svenska som andraspråk* (School in life – life in school: some illiterate immigrant women learn to speak, read and write Swedish as a second language) (2005) also studies a number of students categorised as immigrant women with little education and illiterates based on an ethnographic and

sociocultural approach. Lundgren's study is based partly on a socio-cultural approach and partly a second language and gender approach in order to generate knowledge about "how some adult illiterate immigrant women experience their situation when simultaneously learning to speak, read and write Swedish" (Lundgren, 2005, p. 14). None of the women in the study had previous experience of formal schooling, and the study highlights the women's learning both in informal contexts such as at home and formal contexts such as at school. The study highlights relationships between spoken and written language and how this should be linked to the students' experience and needs, and Lundgren writes (2005, p. 175):

That which becomes apparent based on the situations represented above is that the students participate in discussions with commitment when they understand what words mean and are able to link the discussion to their own experience and the content meets a language need. Spoken language, the ability to speak Swedish, affects the ability to express oneself in writing, and written language affects spoken language both structurally and functionally.

The women were single-minded and talked about what they wanted to do to develop their Swedish language skills at school so that they could then use them in their everyday lives outside school. As in Carlson's study, an important driver for them was the desire for autonomy and independence in everyday situations.

In her study *Skriftbruk i vardagsliv och i sfi-utbildning: En studie av fem kurdiska sfi-studerandes skriftbrukshistoria och skriftpraktiker* (Use of writing in everyday life and in Swedish for immigrants education: a study of five Kurdish Swedish for immigrants students' history of use of writing and writing practices) (2014), Annika Norlund Shaswar investigates how five Swedish for immigrants students use writing in relation to their previous experience of written language. The result shows that the students' interests and experience were concealed in the education, which was largely organised around tests instead. There was therefore little scope for adapting the education to boost the students' identities and thus also motivate them to learn Swedish.

All the studies presented above investigated the development of a second language and written language use and written language teaching in a second language in relation to gender, class and identity. The studies highlight the need to understand the development of a second language in general and written language development in a second language context specifically in its social, cultural and ideological contexts. They also emphasise the importance of linking written language teaching to the women's experience and everyday needs, and also, as in Warriner's study, the importance of not excluding the possibility of developing more advanced and critical literacy.

### Writing and communities of practice

A basic assumption of the sociocultural approach that was discussed earlier is that learning is a social activity with the focus on our participation in various communities. The term *communities of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) is sometimes used in this approach to highlight learning in the form of active participation. A community of practice comprises a group of people who come together via a common activity and a shared objective, for example in the form of a sports club, teachers at a school or a professional community. We are involved in several communities of practice and they are also interwoven. The staff at a school may constitute a community of practice, but the head teacher is also part of a community of practice with other head teachers in the local authority and, for example, teachers of Swedish as a second language are part of a national literacy network. Participation in communities of practice also involves identity processes such as those discussed in the previous section. Examples of common identity positions in the communities of practice represented by Swedish for immigrants teaching are identities such as 'second language teachers', 'immigrants', 'illiterate' and 'with little education'. The sociocultural approach is based on an assumption that people create meaning within the framework of practices, which are processes through which we experience the world and which give it meaning (Wenger, 1998, p. 51). These practices contain various

traditions and standards for how writing is used. Communities of practice also contain power relationships that impede and enable certain types of written language use (Barton & Hamilton, 2005).

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learning involves affiliation to communities of practice in the form of experience, creation of meaning, action and creation of identity. Learning within a community of practice involves socialisation from being a peripheral participant to becoming an active participant in the activities that are central in the community. Socialisation involves the new participant receiving support from more experienced members of the community. Communities of practice include written language activities. An example of a community of practice is in the professional group of bakers, which can be seen as involving practical and physical activities on the one hand and specific written language activities such as reading recipes, calculating and measuring ingredients, proving times, etc. on the other hand. Lave and Wenger, who have developed theories on communities of practice, often use adults' learning of a profession and socialisation as examples of learning as development of affiliation. When we meet new adult immigrants, it is important to bear in mind that their identities may often be linked to communities of practice based on a professional community such as doctors, hairdressers or car mechanics. One of their objectives may therefore be to become part of a corresponding community of practice in Sweden. However, as we highlighted in examples earlier in the chapter, communities of practice are created in specific social and cultural contexts. Consequently, knowledge and experience from having been a baker in one context cannot be directly transferred to a new one.

Although Swedish for immigrants teaching can be seen as a community of practice, it is important to stress that the students need to be able to use writing not only in the teaching but also in their everyday lives and at work. This is particularly relevant for adults as, unlike children, they do not have a long period of schooling ahead of them. Consequently, the teaching must be made meaningful so that the written language that the students develop can be used directly in meaningful situations outside school.

As a result, learning a new language may be understood as a negotiation of participation in certain communities of practice both in the context in question, a classroom community or a professional community, and in society in general. For the individual, becoming a participant in a community of practice means applying a certain way of acting and using language both in speech and in writing. As people, we belong to different communities of practice in the form of our occupations, leisure interests, studies, etc. While they are studying, a student of Swedish for immigrants or Swedish as a second language at basic level forms part of a community of practice consisting of other students of Swedish for immigrants or Swedish as a second language at basic level, and during the education they will hopefully, in various ways, develop into being a participant in a professional community of practice in a workplace, for example by means of work experience in various workplaces or working in addition to studying. In addition to these communities, the student may, for example, be a member of a religious or cultural association which may offer another community of practice of which they form part. In second language research, Kanno and Norton (2003) use the term *imagined communities* to create understanding of identity negotiations and affiliation in the learning of a second language. In their opinion, second language development involves not only participation in the communities of practice that are available for the individual on a specific occasion. It also involves communities that the individual imagines or thinks they are part of.

The term *the imagined community* was introduced to show how the nation is imagined as a community by its members although most of them have never met and will probably never meet each other either (Andersson 1991). In our global, digitised society today, many people are able to communicate with each other regardless of geographical separation. This also creates new opportunities to create communities and maintain previous ones (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Participation in these communities may have an equally great influence on students' actions and investment in their learning of a second language as school (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

Being part of a community of practice involves using writing in certain specific ways and it is therefore important to highlight the students' participation in various communities of practice, including those now, those to which they previously belonged and those to which they see themselves belonging in the future. For adult students, affiliation to a professional community is often important. In the next section, we discuss the knowledge about relationships between literacy and working life.

### Literacy in working life

Knowledge of the Swedish language is often presented as the key for new immigrants to enter working life. However, there are no direct links between Swedish language skills and employability<sup>9</sup> (Rooth & Ålund, 2006; Nelson, 2010; see also Vesterberg, 2011, on working life practice) as other aspects may be of great importance. In addition, the link between a person's second language development and participation in working life is complex as the opportunity to use and develop language at work may vary greatly (Holmes, 2000; Sandwall 2010, 2013; Søgaard Sørensen & Holmen, 2004). Similarly, the requirements for language use in general and written language use specifically vary greatly depending on the workplace and the community of practice in question, as discussed in the previous section. Roberts (2010) thinks that new immigrants experience a double process of socialisation at the workplace, partly in relation to the discourses that exist in the workplace, which all new arrivals experience, and partly in relation to the specific linguistic and cultural practices that make these discourses possible. This socialisation may also be seen in terms of new arrivals switching between formal and informal learning in the workplace. A workplace may be regarded as a community of practice in which a new arrival is socialised by more experienced members.

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9 See Berglund 2009 regarding the term employability.

Seeing inadequacies in Swedish language skills as the only explanation for individuals' subordinate position on the labour market provides only a limited picture, as language resources are closely linked to other categorisations (such as gender, ethnicity, age, class, functional impairment). Monica Heller writes about how inequalities are interwoven (2001, p. 259):

The unequal distribution of linguistic resources is, of course, intimately bound up with the principles of social organization of the community. Gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion and other concepts are all available as bases of social inequality, that is, as ways to struggle over access to resources, and ways to legitimize the regulation of that access along certain lines.

Discussions of how new immigrants can become established often highlight the need for rapid entry into the labour market. However, our globalised society today places strict demands on written language use in all areas of work, including jobs that may be regarded as 'simple low-income' jobs (Gee, 1996; Roberts, 2010). Fejes (2015, p. 14) states that "although education designed to ensure rapid entry into the labour market may seem essential, in particular for the target group of people with little education, we ought to ask whether the knowledge that vocational training offers creates opportunities for the individual to see their position in the social system as well as the tools to be able to question this critically". There is therefore tension between the labour market policy objectives of adult education and democratic and citizenship-related objectives.

There is also tension between a rapid entry into the labour market and the opportunities for the individual to learn Swedish and develop their language skills, which is discussed by Karin Sandwall in the article "‘I Learn More at School’: A Critical Perspective on Workplace-Related Second Language Learning In and Out of School" (2010) and in the dissertation *Att hantera praktiken: Om sfi-studerandes möjligheter till interaktion och lärande på praktikplatser (Managing work experience: on Swedish for immigrants students' opportunities for interaction and learning in work experience placements)* (2013). In



Sandwall's study, the reader encounters four Swedish for immigrants students, one of whom, Merilinka, begins work experience in a pre-school after around 100 hours of Swedish for immigrants teaching in order to learn more Swedish. The study highlights how the opportunities for learning in the work experience placement are relatively limited as Merilinka is not granted access to the staff's community of practice and becomes 'one of the children' at the pre-school instead. Sandwall writes (2013, p. 176):

However, Merilinka realised relatively soon that, by her involvement in the task of "being with children", in principle she only had access to the children's limited language skills and community. Her involvement with the children gave her few opportunities to try and gain access to the social community of the pre-school teachers (cf. Norton & Toohey, 2001).

Sandwall believes that greater integration of the students' experience at work experience placements and in Swedish for immigrants teaching is preferable. In this way she believes that Swedish for immigrants can facilitate the students' entry into the Swedish labour market and guide them in this process, while the teaching should also constitute an arena that encourages the students to reflect critically on their participation in the labour market and Swedish society.

## Summary

This chapter has discussed research into basic written language teaching for adults. The research presented has emphasised the following aspects:

- Written language development and written language teaching always concern issues of power and identity.
- Learning to read and write and doing this in a new language is a serious task that requires commitment and time.
- The importance of well thought-out collaboration between the educational institution and the work experience workplace or other workplace to support the individuals and create opportunities for continued learning of Swedish. For most students of Swedish for immigrants, continued studies are not the primary objective of developing their written language. It is instead to develop a functional level of literacy to be able to gain employment and function at work.

CHAPTER 5

# Teaching of reading and writing



## 5. Teaching of reading and writing

A different method of teaching was used for us from that used in school. This is because we are adults and not like children. In this way, we were respected as adults. (Wedin 2006)

This chapter discusses aspects of teaching literacy that are important to the teaching in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level.

In the quotation above, from an evaluation of a literacy project in Rwanda, one of the project participants states the importance of the teaching method used being closely linked to the practical use of reading and writing in everyday life and of the students not being regarded like children. As the inability to read and write had been associated with shame, many of the participants in the project appreciated in particular that they were treated as the adults they were by the teaching being based on their everyday needs. It is always important for the teaching to build on students' previous knowledge, and this varies greatly among adults in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level. Consequently, issues relating to assessing previous knowledge of relevance to written language development will be discussed first.

### Relationships between speech and writing

As adult students who are to start learning to read and write from scratch can be expected to be able to communicate orally in one or more languages, various relationships between speech and writing that are of importance to written language development will be related to basic written language development. Special conditions apply to students who are unable to communicate orally in any language for one reason or another, for example on account of deafness

or hearing impairment (see, for example, Allard & Wedin, forthcoming). Various opportunities to build on previous language skills, both spoken and written, will be presented in this chapter. Various functions that writing may have in adults' everyday lives are then discussed, given the importance of teaching being linked to students' needs in everyday life.

In this literature review, the importance of treating participants in basic literacy teaching in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level as adults has been emphasised. The basic assumption here is that we encounter adult individuals who have developed different types of knowledge and skills but have not yet had the opportunity to develop more than simple literacy abilities. There may be many reasons for this, and the abilities and knowledge the individual has developed may be multi-faceted, complex and advanced in various areas. One of the challenges faced by the teacher is to try and assess and build on these in the teaching.

Writing is one aspect of language, and written language is therefore developed like language. Although the focus of this literature review is on writing, it is important to emphasise that writing should not be regarded in isolation and written language teaching should be planned as part of other teaching. Like second language development in general, written language development is easiest if it takes place in a context, in natural interaction with authentic texts that are motivated by the need to communicate (Tornberg, 2009; Lightbown, 2013). It is not always possible to organise all written language teaching in this way, but it is an objective worth striving towards. For an adult student in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level, their own situation in life, with the needs they have in their everyday lives, at home, in the community and at work, is the natural starting point. This will therefore also be the starting point here.

## Assessing previous knowledge

In terms of prior knowledge for written language development, three types of previous experience are particularly relevant: experience of language, learning and knowledge (Wedin, 2010; see also Säljö, 2000). Writing is always expressed in a language. For most people, early written language development represents a major challenge and requires conscious learning. The link to knowledge is also clear, firstly in that learning to read and write involves knowledge in itself and secondly in that writing is used to preserve, transfer and obtain knowledge. Consequently, it is important, when assessing a student's prior knowledge for written language development, to investigate what experience they have in these three areas.

Both previous spoken language abilities and previous written language abilities are important in relation to the first type, experience of language. Even students who, on an initial simple assessment, are perhaps considered to lack written language skills have presumably encountered writing in various contexts and also used writing in various ways. Each student may have previous experience and abilities of varying degrees in relation to many different languages, including several different written languages. Given that the teaching here focuses on written language development in Swedish, the prior knowledge may be described as follows:

1. Able to read and write at advanced level with the Latin alphabet.
2. Able to read and write at advanced level with another alphabet.
3. Able to read and write syllable-based writing at advanced level.
4. Able to read and write word-based writing at advanced level.
5. Able to read and write at a simple level with the Latin alphabet.
6. Able to read and write at a simple level with another alphabet.
7. Able to read and write syllable-based writing at a simple level.
8. Able to read and write word-based writing at a simple level.

This literature review primarily concerns skills in points 5–8 above as the students on which the text focuses have not yet developed skills in reading and writing at advanced level. Written language skills under points 5–8 that can be described as “able to read and write at

a simple level” may vary from very simple, such as recognising individual characters, words and signs, to being able to use writing in simple everyday contexts. This may involve the ability to understand a simple prescription for medicine, to interpret signs and directional signs, to write your own name, to recognise different simple forms or to interpret descriptions on various types of packaging. Many people who may be regarded by others as unable to read and write at all have developed abilities that permit them to handle writing in such simple situations and this has usually taken place outside formal teaching contexts (see, for example, Prinsloo & Breijer, 1996; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000). To assess this type of simple written language skill, it is important for the teacher to ask not only about reading and writing skills in contexts that are directly linked to school and formal teaching. This may, for example, concern the use of writing in religious contexts, and financial contexts such as shopping and selling goods on a small scale are also common written language practices in which people with no previous school education have been active and they have developed the ability to use writing in precisely the situations that are part of these practices. Using writing here need not mean the ability to interpret individual characters and letters, i.e. reading and writing in the real sense of the words. It means the ability to interpret a certain message in a certain context.

As writing is an aspect of language, spoken language experience is also important. If early written language teaching is able to build on previous language skills, learning is considerably easier. Learning to read and write for the first time, particularly learning a new written language, is a major, laborious task and if it can be based on a language that the individual already knows well, the task is considerably easier. Consequently, assessment of prior knowledge for written language development should cover both spoken and written language skills in different languages. To assess knowledge of other languages, people such as mother tongue teachers, educational advisers and interpreters may be important and sometimes it is necessary to use other individuals who know the languages in question. It is important in this situation for the teacher to bear in mind that others

involved may also need to be aware of the importance of assessing such skills that are not directly linked to school. The student may also be under the impression that they know nothing on account of a lack of schooling. Not only in Sweden, but also in many other parts of the world, a lack of school education may lead to stigmatisation and an individual's abilities may be held in little esteem.

The second type of experience, learning, is of great importance in a teaching context (Säljö, 2000; Wedin, 2010). Written language development is often linked to school teaching, and many people expect others to learn to read and write from a teacher in the early years of school (Wedin, 2004). It is also common to expect this learning to take place in a certain way. This may be the method of which you have experience or an image you have formed of how early written language teaching should take place. As mentioned in chapter one, it was common in mission contexts for the teacher to start with the vowels, in many languages a e i o u, in that order, which were then linked to one consonant at a time, ka ke ki ko ku, etc. (see also Wedin, 2004). These syllables were put together to form words that were then combined in simple sentences that became texts. The choral repetition that was common in these contexts resembles other ideas of formal written language teaching that may, for example, be based on Koranic school traditions. The example from Rwanda at the start of this chapter (Wedin, 2006) shows that, as many of the ideas of learning to read and write are associated with the teaching of children, the very fact that the teaching in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level concerns adults is an incentive for ensuring that it is done differently. If the teaching is based on the fact that the participants are knowledgeable adults, with many different types of knowledge and skill, it is natural that it should be implemented in a way that takes this into account.

Developing fluency in reading and writing requires a lot of practice and it is important for the participants to receive support to motivate them to do so. For many, it is important to carry out repeated exercises, for example in writing, whether they write by hand or use a keyboard. Reading also requires a great deal of practice to achieve



fluency. For most people, automation of the various skills required for functioning written language use requires assiduous practice. To achieve this, the teacher needs both to be aware that different learners learn in different ways and to try and support each student in their development of successful learning strategies. Here too it is important for the teacher to be sensitive and able to creatively find ways of encouraging the necessary practice.

The third type of previous experience that is significant for assessment, knowledge, is very relevant to the teaching on account of the close link between knowledge and writing (Säljö, 2000). The importance of writing to the preservation, transfer and obtaining of information makes it essential to most of what happens in the teaching. A teacher who has taught groups that cannot read and write will be well aware of this. In our written language society, writing is used as a natural medium in teaching. This involves writing instructions on the board, making notes on the board and in books of various kinds, and looking for information in documents of various kinds. When the students are unable to read and write, the teacher is forced to employ other strategies to explain, communicate and describe content. In contexts in which writing did not play this central role, other tools were used to preserve and transfer information (Säljö, 2000). Learning by rote is then frequently an important approach, and memory techniques may also have been developed. Important matters such as historical or mystical events are often preserved in the form of poems as the controlled format with its rhymes is easier to remember (Wedin, 2004). Other matters may be preserved in stories that are repeatedly told. In many contexts, people use memory aids such as signs and symbols, and certain individuals may have the role of being the one who remembers. In such contexts, important knowledge is what is remembered, and the ability to remember is important.

In teaching contexts in which few technical tools are used, it is important to know how to use times tables and spelling rules and to look words up in dictionaries and glossaries. Many of us can remember how much value was attached to this kind of knowledge in our own schooling. In our more digitised society today, such knowledge

is less valuable, while more flexible and creative knowledge is important for searching for and preserving information via digital media. The student's own view of their own learning is also important if they are to develop basic written language skills. For each learner, this may involve starting to see new types of knowledge and finding new opportunities for their future life. These opportunities include writing, and the teacher's task may involve showing what writing can be used for as a method for motivating the student to do the laborious work involved in developing good written language skills.

### From speech to writing

People are essentially social beings, and language use is part of social interaction. In our interaction with others, we use various tools that we can call linguistic expressions. Linguistic expressions may be anything that people use to communicate with each other. Linguistic expressions exist along a continuum from advanced forms of writing, such as reading and writing academic texts and scientific works, to reflex expressions over which we have no control, such as blushing, sweating or shaking in connection with various experiences (Håkansson, 1995). Between these two ends of the continuum, we can place giggles, small talk, discussions and lectures. It is clear that we have many different linguistic tools. At the same time, verbal language has a special position, and this is particularly the case when we are talking about writing.

Writing is traditionally seen as standardised. We consider that there are rules that must be followed, for example for spelling and writing letters, and school is precisely the stronghold of this standardised written language. This is one of the most important functions of basic school education. In Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level, the task is different from that in compulsory school. Students in the first years of school must be prepared for their future schooling, which is expected to last for many years, while students in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level are at a different stage of life. Some

may continue to study but most will start various jobs and some are already working while learning Swedish for immigrants or Swedish as a second language at basic level. Many already have vocational training or, for various reasons, have no plans to undergo such training. Consequently, the objective of written language teaching is to develop skills that are relevant to the life the students are living now and are expected to live in the future. At the same time, previous research, as presented in chapter five, shows that it is important for individuals to be given opportunities to continue their education in the Swedish language, in other subjects and via vocational training so that they are not locked into low-income jobs with uncertain employment prospects. The students need to be given opportunities to develop their knowledge of Swedish in a broader context. Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level must be education in which the students can develop their knowledge of Swedish to be able to communicate and play an active part in everyday, working and community life.

This entails the written language teaching in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level focusing on everyday functions for writing. For this reason, not only the types of text that are usually dominant at school should be used but also texts that are more common in everyday life. It is also important to stress that what constitutes everyday functions varies from individual to individual and over time. As a consequence of increased digitisation, many more people have had the opportunity to publish their writing. People can participate in social media of many kinds and write text messages on their mobile, thus reaching many other people via writing in everyday contexts. At the same time, we search for and receive a wide variety of information via digital tools that are often presented via writing, combined with other modalities such as videos, photos and sounds. This means that everyday use of writing has increased dramatically and written language variation has also increased. While individual students struggle with simple forms of writing and reading in the classroom, they may also participate in social contexts via digital media where writing is used in a more varied manner (Basaran,

2016). For example, it is common to use *translanguaging*, which means a combination of several languages being used in a closely interwoven manner in social media where multilingual individuals are involved (Wedin, 2012). This creative use of language often also involves the use of various writing systems and standards that may be far from the official ways of using language advocated in formal school education and official contexts. It is valuable to build on these skills and these written language customs in the teaching.

It is valuable to build on all the experience and customs that the students may have in relation to the use of writing, and in their everyday lives they also make extensive use of less traditional ways of reading and writing. This does not mean that they do not need to develop reading and writing skills of the type that are used in more formal contexts, but when the teaching is based on the ways of using writing with which the students are already familiar and which they are already motivated to use, this supports the development of more formal ways of reading and writing. Therefore, it is relevant to talk about development of competence in reading and writing as an *expansion* of repertoires, i.e. individual students learn to use writing in an increasing number of contexts and for an increasing number of purposes.

For those who have not yet had the opportunity to learn to read and write, there are a few basic differences between speech and writing that the teacher needs to highlight as they may cause difficulties in some cases. These are summarised in table 1 below. This table indicates a few basic features that differ between typical oral and written communication. We should remember here that oral communication may naturally vary from simple forms with the use of just short fragments to highly polished, planned speech. An example of the former may be a dialogue like:

- Look!
- What?
- Nice!

This could be interaction between two friends standing in front of a shop window or watching a football match together. Whatever the situation, it is an example of interaction in which much of the content is contained in the situation itself and in implicit information that the friends share. Examples of planned oral communication may be sermons, prepared speeches and lectures. This comparison is between a typical speech situation in an everyday context, for example in the home, and a typical written language situation such as writing or reading a book.

**Table 1.** Oral and written communication skills. From: Wedin (2011). Slightly modified.

Oral communication	Written communication
Dialogical; the interaction is of great importance	Monological; the structure of the text is importance
Direct response	No response
Discusses what exists here and now, in context	Discusses what exists there and then, out of context
Non-linguistic phenomena are important	More specific words, developed syntax
Active verbs	Specific, extended noun phrases
Focus on content	Focus on both form and content

The table presents a few typical differences between speech and writing that are of importance to early written language development. While speech is dialogical, i.e. people talk to each other, writing is more monological. This means that a person speaking usually elicits an immediate response from the person or persons listening, while a person writing long texts usually elicits no response at all from the reader or only after a long time. A person writing a long text therefore needs to plan the text so that it can be read without asking questions as we often do when speaking. In our everyday lives, we commonly talk about things that are here and now, in the context of the persons involved in the conversation. In speech, it is also possible to use non-linguistic phenomena such as pointing, using gestures and facial expressions, intonation, speaking volume, etc. to convey

a message. This means that we do not need to express ourselves as explicitly as in text. While in text we might write: “The red ball everyone had been looking for was on the table in the corner”, in speech we would point to the ball and say: “There it is!”. Overall, this means that in writing we need to use more exact language, with a more exact choice of words (*creep* instead of *walk*, for example) and sentence structure needs to be more complex, with longer sentences and more subordinate clauses. This also means that connecting words showing the structure of the text are needed to a greater extent, such as: *subsequently*, *however*, *finally* and *at the same time*.

There is a clear grammatical difference in how the content is expressed between everyday speech and long written texts. While everyday conversation is often characterised by active verbs such as *jumps*, *plays*, *leaps*, *smells*, etc., much of the information in long texts is in noun phrases. Long phrases such as *soil erosion*, *magma movement* and *the police’s urgent search* may be used for what, in everyday speech, would be expressed through active verbs instead: *the soil was eroded*, *the magma moved* and *the police searched urgently*.

This means that the development of written language skills also entails purely linguistic development. As basic written language development requires so much energy and time, it is important for language development itself to be supported over this time. Speech is the natural medium here. Therefore, written language teaching needs to be combined with other language teaching via speech. A fundamental rule is that speech should lead language development, and that written language development should be based on previous spoken language competence.

Finally, a not insignificant difference between speech and writing is that a person speaking often does not need to distinguish between the content and what is said. If you have learned to speak as a child, speech is so close to thought that you do not necessarily separate the two. However, when you learn to read and write, you need to be able to switch focus between the content and the form itself. The fact that the word *cat* is written as it is has no direct link to the actual meaning of the word. The fact that we use the letters /c/, /a/ and /t/ is

something that is part of agreed standards. To be able to listen to the sound and work out how it should be expressed in writing, you need to be able to focus on the form itself, first the sound and then any spelling rules and how it should be represented in writing, i.e. how it should be written. To help children understand the need to focus on form, rhymes are often used. The fact that *cat* and *hat* rhyme but not *hat* and *bonnet* is because of form, not content. Most adults presumably have no need of this. This knowledge is something they will have learned in other forms. Songs and poems with integrated rhymes are common in oral form, for example. For the teacher, it is still good to be aware that it is important for people who are learning to read and write to understand the importance of focusing on form in language.

### Common functions in the adults' everyday lives

To support students in the demanding work of developing literacy skills that function well in their own lives, it is desirable for the teaching to be linked to individuals' needs for writing. If they have previously not been very used to reading and writing, it may help if the teacher can demonstrate some of the possibilities that advanced literacy skills may offer. The following are some of the areas of application in which adults often use writing and to which it may therefore be valuable to link the written language teaching: finance, religion, memory, information, citizenship, learning, experience, emotion and aesthetic use.

In relation to finance, writing is often used together with what is usually called *numeracy*, i.e. in combination with figures and numbers. This may, for example, involve requesting funds, managing bank accounts or signing financial agreements. It may also involve keeping some form of simple bookkeeping for a family's finances, for a small company or business of some kind or planning the repayment of a loan to a bank or a private individual. Financial transactions and plans generally often involve some form of writing with a combination of figures and written text. The written text may consist of single words or longer descriptions or agreements.

For many people, the religious use of writing is common. They may read the Bible or the Koran, or it may also involve simpler documents such as religious pamphlets, stories, prayers and songs. Letters and communications with a religious connection are also common, for example in connection with festivals and events such as weddings and funerals. Decorative use of religious messages in writing is also common. In Islam, for example, it is common for Mohammed's name or the central phrase Basmala ('In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful' in Arabic) to be written in calligraphy. In Christian contexts, extracts from the Bible are often used for decorations. These texts are frequently used in ways that have special religious importance, and they are frequently read literally so that a person reading them is expected to try and understand what the original meaning was.

Many people use writing to remember things they consider important in their lives. This may involve personal diaries, family albums or family documents in which valued memories are recorded. It may also involve dates of birth or other important events. Some people note down what they see as important events in the world around them in some form of memorandum book (see Wedin, 2004 and 2005 for more examples). Notebooks or calendars of various kinds have been common for this purpose, but this has increasingly become digital. The increasing level of digital photography might take over parts of this function. In general, we can expect that this and other functions for writing will be developed and changed by the use of digital tools of various types.

A new function to learn for those who cannot yet read and write is the use of writing to save, process and search for information (Wedin 2004, 2010). In this connection, digital media have taken over many of the functions that paper and pen previously had. Many people use writing as a strategy for learning. When they want to learn something, for example a number of new words in a language, writing is one way of memorising the words. The traditional vocabulary lists in which students write certain words several times over are one example of how writing can be used for learning. Many people who are used



to studying use writing as a way of processing information and their thoughts. Writing down what you 'know' generates new ways of thinking.

Searching for information is an important way of using writing. Digital media have revolutionised this function. The enormous volume of information that is available via the internet and is searchable for anyone with suitable equipment highlights the importance of written language teaching also including critical skills. Searching for information online requires the ability to take a critical approach to both sources and contents. In the same way, writing online and thus disseminating information also requires a critical approach to the potential effects of what you are publishing.

As a new immigrant to Sweden, you must register with the public authorities. Forms have to be completed. ID documents have to be obtained, etc. All of this involves the use of writing in formal, official and sometimes also digital contexts in which you need to comply with predetermined standards. Depending on the country of which you were previously a resident, you may experience this as major or minor changes but for everyone it means the need to learn to use relatively advanced ways of using writing soon after arrival in Sweden. Those who have previously had no opportunity to learn to read and write also quickly need to be able to write their name, address, personal identity number, names of family members, etc. For practical reasons, it is therefore important for students to be helped with this as soon as possible. It may help for someone to write down important information that the individual can keep with them and simply copy, for example their address, which may sometimes be as difficult to speak as it is to write. Having it written down on a piece of paper that they can show in situations where they need to give their address can be a valuable aid.

Parents are also expected to be able to use writing in many different contexts. Weekly newsletters are sent home from school, the children are given homework that involves reading and writing, they have to report sickness absence to the school, often by text or email, etc. As designations such as 'illiterate' often have a stigmatising effect, it

may also have a negative impact on children if their parents are therefore regarded as less able to support their own children (Martin-Jones and Jones, 2000). Consequently, it may be particularly important for parents of schoolchildren and certainly also of pre-school children, to receive help with how they should exchange information with the school and the teachers.

For those who are not already able to read and write, it may be significant for the teaching to show them the possibilities that writing may entail. Using writing for learning is one such possibility. It may be good to demonstrate the importance of repeatedly practising writing something, not just for the writing itself but to learn something. It may also be necessary for them to be shown the wide range of knowledge, stories and information available in various ways via writing from books, magazines, brochures, websites, portals and apps (Wedin, 2015; Basaran, 2016). Websites and social media related to country of origin, religious affiliation or similar may be interesting to many people. News sites from their home region may be interesting, or information pages on historical events or something else they may be interested in. The internet and social media can be used in this way to stimulate students' written language development.

Written language use in connection with cultural life, entertainment or spiritual experiences should not be undervalued. There is often a tendency to focus on functional written language use in teaching for adults, but it is important also to highlight writing in the form of songs, music, poetry and literature. Digital media may be a useful source for this, giving students the opportunity to find what interests them. The internet is a tremendous resource in particular when it comes to finding material in a language the student knows but the teacher does not. Calligraphy, which is particularly prominent in Islam and Chinese writing, can be used to advantage as motivation for practising handwriting. The importance of writing for handling emotions should also not be underestimated. Many people find that writing a diary or other narrative forms are important ways of handling emotions, memories and dreams. This can be stimulated in various ways in teaching by writing logbooks or thoughts, encouraging

written narrative, etc. Letter writing, with paper and pen or digitally, may also be important in this respect.

## Summary

This chapter has discussed various aspects of teaching literacy that are important to the teaching in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level. The following aspects have been highlighted:

- The need for teachers of Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level to have good knowledge of language and how language is developed.
- To be able to plan teaching that offers good opportunities for written language development, the teacher needs to carefully investigate each student's previous language skills and experience, including those that involve writing.
- By basing the teaching on the students' previous knowledge and relating the teaching to their needs, and by providing support for further development, the teacher can create teaching that benefits the students' development of skills in reading and writing.



CHAPTER 6

# Treatment, assessment and teaching



## 6. Treatment, assessment and teaching

This literature review focuses on the knowledge that is important for a teacher's planning and implementation of teaching in reading and writing for students of Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level who have not previously had opportunities to learn to read and write and who may have had some opportunities to use writing before.

This chapter will describe specific examples of how teaching for this group can be organised to support the development of skills relating to the use of writing that is relevant for the students in their everyday lives. A basic review of the knowledge available in this area has been presented, both research and tried and tested, well-documented experience. The review has been based on an adult-oriented approach and a resource-oriented approach. This means that the students in focus have primarily been regarded as adults with many varied competencies, and the objective of the review has been to show how these competencies can be used as the basis for written language teaching, i.e. teaching that aims to develop skills in reading and writing.

Based on this review, there are primarily a few factors with positive effects on the teaching that deserve to be given particular emphasis and have the capacity to summarise the main message of the text. They are presented here under the following headings: 1) attitudes and treatment in the teaching, 2) assessment of previous knowledge and experience, 3) learning environment and teaching method, 4) written language encouragement and 5) previous language skills in combination with digital tools and media.

## Attitudes and treatment in the teaching

A positive attitude to the students and treatment that shows them respect as the adult, competent individuals they are is essential to the success of the teaching. The following points deserve particular mention:

- The multi-faceted knowledge that the students take with them to the teaching must be respected and made use of, including knowledge in languages and dialects other than standard varieties.
- The students must be made involved in and given the opportunity to influence the teaching.
- The teacher must be aware of their own expectations of the students, who have little or no previous school education, and how the teacher will manage the teaching.

## Assessment of previous knowledge and experience

The importance of the teacher making use of students' previous knowledge and skills of relevance to written language teaching has been emphasised throughout the review. This includes not only previous written language skills but also, for example, spoken language skills, attitudes and customs in relation to writing and learning. The following aspects are worth particular consideration:

- The teacher must use interpreters, educational advisers, mother tongue teachers/assistants or others who speak a student's previously learned language to gain a good idea of the student's knowledge, customs, skills, attitudes, etc. The result of the assessment must then be used as the basis for the teaching by functioning as bridges between previous knowledge and the new knowledge that is to be developed.
- For students who have not previously gone to school, it is particularly important for the teacher and the assessor, as well as the mother tongue teacher/educational adviser, to be able to ask

questions in such a way that knowledge that is not directly associated with school education is also revealed.

- The teacher must attach particular importance to finding students' strong sides and special abilities to be able to make use of them in the written language teaching.
- The teacher's knowledge of differences and similarities between the students' previously learned (written) language and Swedish writing may make it possible to provide support where it produces the best results. The teacher can use someone else's knowledge (for example an educational adviser's) to provide support.

## Learning environment and teaching method

The actual learning environment that the classroom represents is important, but home and the surrounding community also represent learning environments that should be taken into consideration in relation to written language development. This is particularly important for adults who are not primarily learning to use writing in their future schooling but want to use it in their everyday and working lives. The following points are essential for the teaching:

- The teaching must represent a positive learning environment that boosts the participants' self-esteem and their confidence in their own abilities.
- The teaching must respect the fact that different students learn in different ways. There is no 'best method'. The teacher's ability to organise the work and highlight different students' needs is the central factor.
- Continuity among teachers with experienced, well-trained teachers with a positive attitude to their students is very important to the outcome.
- The teacher must work to create an inclusive working method.



- A reasonable level of requirements and expectations, combined with support, has a positive effect on the students' knowledge development.

## Written language encouragement

One of the most important factors for student's development of skills in reading and writing is the time they spend and the commitment they show to reading and writing. To encourage students to read and write, it is important for the teacher and the school to:

- fill the students' teaching with written language activities that are meaningful to them,
- offer an environment that encourages written language in which writing is used in its context, i.e. in which what the students read is authentic and stimulating and what they write has natural recipients,
- encourage written language use outside the teaching as well,
- work consciously to develop the participants' spoken and written language in Swedish, both in and outside the teaching,
- encourage the students to read and write voluntarily,
- provide the students with the help they need to improve and perform well in written language development at an increasingly high level,
- realise the danger of sticking to simple reading and writing tasks such as copying and tasks in which the students enter single letters or words, when there are tools for coping with the more challenging exercises that the students need to advance their reading development.

## Previous language skills in combination with digital tools and media

The review has emphasised the importance of building on previous language skills. It is easier, for example, if early written language development can take place in a language that the student already knows. The following are a few examples of how teaching can build on previous language skills, both spoken and written, and how continued written language development can stimulate the development of multilingual written language development in combination with the use of digital tools and media:

- The students are encouraged to do creative writing in their mother tongue and second language. The texts are expanded using digital tools and media of various kinds.
- Students and teachers can create digital multilingual glossaries with images together.
- The students create films, sound files and/or websites to communicate the results of their projects to generate new knowledge, create literature and art and react to social reality.
- The students write in their mother tongue or other languages they know and work with mother tongue teachers, classmates, teachers, volunteers from the community and technology (digital translation tools) to create bilingual identity texts.
- The students participate in IT-based interaction, for example social media and email, to communicate with relatives by using their mother tongue and Swedish.
- The teacher creates a blog with the students in which both teacher and students can post on various subjects. This can be combined with podcasts produced by students and the blog can encourage communication with others outside the class in a medium in which writing is dominant and has a natural function.

- Multilingual students can develop critical literacy and linguistic awareness by studying texts in the media on contemporary issues and comparing how events and controversies are reported in different languages.

There is not yet much knowledge about the last area, encouraging and developing written language skills in different languages and using digital tools and the internet for teaching. Some teachers have created ways of using, for example, blogs, social media, apps and software of various kinds in their teaching, but there is still very little combined knowledge in this area, particularly in relation to the group in focus here, students in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level who have little previous practice of using writing. Digital use and digital media are a knowledge area that is developing fast, which means that the need for knowledge is changing fast. Digital tools and media can be used in many different ways to support the development of the students by encouraging and supporting written language development.



CHAPTER 7

# Conclusion



## 7. Conclusion

**THIS LITERATURE REVIEW** has presented the current knowledge about the conditions for written language development for students in municipal adult education in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level. The text has emphasised an adult-oriented approach and a resource-oriented approach, which means that the students are positioned as competent adults with very varied knowledge and experience, which are important resources in the teaching. As adult students, they have different qualifications for learning to read and write in Swedish. When these qualifications are used well, they can support them in the serious task of developing skills in reading and writing that may be of importance to their lives.

The emphasis on an adult-oriented approach and a resource-oriented approach concerns issues of relations between literacy, identity, power and social justice. If students of Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level are treated as competent adults and offered the opportunity to influence how their learning takes place, with which content and in which language, their self-confidence is boosted, thus enhancing their learning. Consequently, the teaching can support them in the changes that their new life in Sweden entails and will entail. The curriculum for adult education emphasises that it must always “address each student based on his or her needs and qualifications” (Swedish National Agency for Education 2012:5). This is particularly relevant to how adult students who have not previously had the opportunity to go to school are treated. Assessing and building on these students’ different knowledge and experience from contexts other than formal school is central to the planning of meaningful teaching. Nevertheless, the teaching should be meaningful based on the students’ current everyday lives in Sweden, which may be very different for the students and the teachers, and also vary between the students.

The literature review has presented a basic overview of the available knowledge about teaching and learning reading and writing in a

second language for adults who have not previously had opportunities to learn to read and write, or limited opportunities to use writing. Different didactic issues relating to the planning and implementation of teaching have been presented. By way of conclusion, we would like to stress the importance of further research into basic literacy in general and teaching specifically for new immigrant adults who have limited experience of writing and/or formal education. Such research is important to permit the further development of adult education with a scientific basis. The following are examples of areas in which further knowledge is needed:

- How digital resources can be used in teaching.
- The importance of support from using the students' previous competence in other languages.
- Literacy practices of importance to students' daily lives and their future opportunities.

For anyone interested in studying any area in greater depth, a summary of the review is given below, as well as an extensive list of literature tips for further reading.

# Further reading

For further reading, the following are recommended in the categories *digital tools*, *identity and learning a second language*, *Swedish for immigrants education*, *written language use in everyday life and school*, *language use and written language use at work*, and *theory of multilingual literacy*:

## Digital tools

Basaran, Hülya (2016). *Nyanlända elever i mitt klassrum: Språkutveckling med digitala resurser (Newly arrived students in my classroom: language development with digital resources)*. Stockholm: Gothia utbildning.

This book describes with simple, specific examples how working with digital resources can be used with newly arrived students. The book is both a source of knowledge and a guide for teachers who want to develop their work with digital resources and it contains many inspirational examples and suggestions with clear descriptions of how to proceed in practice.

## Identity and learning a second language

Norton, Bonny (2013). *Identity and Language Learning. Extending the Conversation*. Bristol Multilingual Matters.

Bonny Norton's studies have been important in changing the view of identity and motivation in second language research. In this ethnographic study, she followed five women with different backgrounds who had immigrated to Canada and begun studying English. Her study showed that the interaction in which the women were able to participate was characterised by inequalities based on gender and ethnicity. The book deals with power, identity and learning a second language.

Warriner, Doris, S. (2004). "The days now is very hard for my Family": The negotiation and construction of gendered work identities



among newly arrived women refugees. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 3 (4), 279–294.

Warriner, Doris, S. (2007). Language Learning and the politics of belonging: Sudanese women refugees becoming and being “American”. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 38 (4), 343–359.

Warriner, Doris, S. (2010). Competent performances of situated identities: Adult learners of English accessing engaged participation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26 (1), 22–30.

Warriner’s studies, from North America, have a clear power-oriented approach in their analysis of newly arrived adults who are studying English as a second language. There is a particular focus on gender, ethnicity and class.

### **Swedish for immigrants education**

Lindberg, Inger & Sandwall, Karin (2007). Nobody’s darling? Swedish for adult immigrants: A critical perspective. *Prospect*, 22 (3), 79–95.

Rosén, Jenny (2013a). *Svenska för invandrarskap? Språk, kategorisering och identitet inom utbildningsformen Svenska för invandrare (Swedish for immigrantness? Language, categorisation and identity in Swedish for immigrants courses)*. Örebro Studies in Education 38. Örebro University.

This dissertation focuses on discourse, categorisation and identity creation in Swedish for immigrants courses, both historically over time and among participants in Swedish for immigrants at a centre of learning. The dissertation and its four studies discuss the discourses within which the education was designed from its start in the mid-1960s to 2011, with a particular focus on categorisation and identity.

Wedin, Åsa (2010). *Vägar till svenskt skriftspråk för vuxna andraspråksinlärare (Routes to Swedish written language for adult second language learners)*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

This book discusses issues concerning adults who are to learn to read and write in a new language. The book discusses what it means to learn a new written language, writing in relation to second language learning and Swedish writing contrasted with writing in other languages. The book presents a series of practical advice for teaching planning for adult student written language development.

### **Written language use in everyday life and school**

Lundgren, Berit (2005). *Skolan i livet – livet i skolan: Några illiterata invandrarkvinnor lär sig tala, läsa och skriva på svenska som andraspråk (School in life – life in school: some illiterate immigrant women learn to speak, read and write Swedish as a second language)*. Umeå: Institutionen för svenska och samhällsvetenskapliga ämnen (Department of Swedish and Social Science Subjects), Umeå University.

The dissertation studies how some illiterate immigrant women learn to speak, read and write Swedish as a second language. It is a sociocultural study of basic literacy teaching in Swedish for immigrants in which the decisive role played by school for this target group is emphasised and the focus is on conversation and interaction in the teaching.

Norlund Shaswar, Annika (2014). *Skriftbruk i vardagsliv och i sfi-utbildning: En studie av fem kurdiska sfi-studerandes skriftbrukshistoria och skriftpraktiker (Use of writing in everyday life and in Swedish for immigrants education: a study of five Kurdish Swedish for immigrants students' history of use of writing and writing practices)*. Umeå: Umeå University.

This ethnographic study focuses on relationships between written language use among Swedish for immigrants students in everyday life and at school. The importance of identity for written language use and learning is emphasised in particular. The studies is rooted in the research field New Literacy Studies, in which reading and writing are seen as socially and cultural based practices.

Rydén, Inga Lena (2007). *Litteracitet och sociala nätverk ur ett andraspråksperspektiv (Literacy and social networks from a second language perspective)*. Göteborg:

The Institute of Swedish as a Second Language, University of Gothenburg

This study analyses how people with little or no school education who have migrated to Sweden handle written language situations, with the focus on the importance of social networks. The study shows how the social networks are of great importance for language development and participation in the new society.

### **Language use and written language use at work**

Karlsson, Anna-Malin (2012). *En arbetsdag i skriftsamhället: ett etnografiskt perspektiv på skriftanvändning i vanliga yrken (A working day in a writing society: an ethnographic approach to use of writing in common occupations)*.

This book is based on ethnographic research into written language use at different workplaces and in occupations that are not traditionally considered to be closely associated with written language, such as drivers, joiners and assistant nurses. The book highlights the importance of writing at work today.

Nelson, Marie (2010). *Andraspråkstalare i arbete: En språkvetenskaplig studie av kommunikation vid ett svenskt storföretag (Second language speakers at work: a linguistic study of communication at a large Swedish company)*. Uppsala: Department of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University.

In this dissertation, the everyday communication of five permanently employed second language speakers is studied at a large Swedish company. The aim is to study which communicative and discursive factors influence the integration of second language speakers in the working environment and with their own working group.

Roberts, Cecilia (2010). Language socialization in the workplace. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 30, 211–227.

Sandwall, Karin (2013). Att hantera praktiken: Om sfi-studerandes möjligheter till interaktion och lärande på praktikplatser (Managing work experience: on Swedish for immigrants students' opportunities for interaction and learning in work experience placements). Göteborg: Department of Swedish, University of Gothenburg.

The overall objective of this dissertation is to study the opportunities of second language speakers for interaction and learning in work experience placements. This is the first dissertation to discuss this area. The dissertation also provides specific suggestions for educational tools that may enhance these students' potential for second language learning.

### **Theory of multilingual literacy**

Hornberger, Nancy (ed.) (2003). *Continua of Biliteracy: An Ecological framework for Educational Policy, Research and Practice in Multilingual Settings*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

This book provides a theoretical model for the analysis of multilingual literacy that can also be used as the basis for planning written language teaching in contexts in which the students have a multilingual background.

Janks, Hilary (2010). *Literacy and Power*. New York: Routledge.

This book is interesting for everyone with an interest in critical literacy. As one of the central figures in this field, Janks offers a well-organised discussion of critical literacy in relation to teaching. The book offers many examples of how the theory of critical literacy can be applied in specific teaching situations.

Lindberg, Inger & Skeppstedt, Ingrid (2000). Ju mer vi lär tillsammans: Rekonstruktion av text i smågrupper (The more we read together: reconstruction of text in small groups). In: Åhl, Håkan,

(ed.) *Svenskan i tiden: Visioner och verklighet (Swedish over time: visions and reality)* (pp. 198–224). Stockholm: HLS förlag.

This study concerns interaction and social interaction as strategies for second language development in teaching for students with little education. The focus is on group discussions on common tasks. The study shows that knowledge is not fixed. It is developed with others. The study takes a sociocultural approach in which interaction, dialogue and collaboration are emphasised as important values for learning.

Martin-Jones, Marilyn & Jones, Kathryn (ed.) (2000). *Multilingual Literacies*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Company.

This anthology presents relationships between multilingualism and literacy via the book's various chapters, which together create a rich, illustrative picture of various ways of using writing. Through the texts, we meet adults and children from minority groups in the United Kingdom. A central aspect of the various texts is the issue of relationships between language, literacy and power in multilingual contexts.

Prinsloo, Mastin & Breyer, Mignonne (Eds.) (1996) *The Social Uses of Literacy: Theory and Practice in Contemporary South Africa*. Philadelphia: Sached Books.

As in Martin-Jones & Jones (above), this is an anthology in which issues of multilingualism, literacy and power are elucidated via the various chapters. These texts are based on examples from South Africa during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a period of great social change. The book is a great resource for anyone working in the field of literacy and adults in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level.

Street, Brian (1984). *Literacy in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Based on his own studies of poor people in Iran, in this book Street challenges conventional theories of literacy and the ways in which people use literacy in their lives, their literacy practices.

Street, Brian (1993) (ed.). *Cross-cultural Approaches to Literacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture: Cambridge University Press.

In this anthology, Street collects ethnographically inspired research by anthropologists and sociolinguists into literacy practices in a wide variety of contexts. The texts are used to study people's use and understanding of writing in a manner that was of great importance to research in subsequent years. The book has also been of great importance to teacher training and to the design of projects focusing on literacy campaigns aimed at adults.

Strömquist, Siv (2005). *Skrivprocessen: Skrivprocess, skrivråd och skrivstrategier (The writing process: writing process, writing advice and writing strategies)*. Malmö: Gleerups.

This book is invaluable for everyone working on the development of writing in students, both adults and children. It emphasises that all writing is a process and this should be the starting point for teaching writing, regardless of the subject and the school level.

### **Visual literacy**

Franker, Qarin (2007). *Bildval i alfabetiseringsundervisning: En fråga om synsätt. Rapporter om svenska som andraspråk (Choice of images in initial literacy teaching: a question of approach. Reports on Swedish as a second language)*. (ROSA) Göteborg: The Institute of Swedish as a Second Language, University of Gothenburg

This study is part of the ROSA series, which consists in part of research reports in the subject of Swedish as a second language. The purpose of the series is to establish how image material is used in teaching of basic literacy, to analyse some teachers' choice of images and to highlight the reasons why the teachers choose certain images as teaching material. Just over fifty teachers of basic reading and writing contributed their use and choice of images to the study.

Franker, Qarin (2011a). *Val, vägar, variation: Vuxna andraspråksinlärares interaktion med svenska valaffischer (Choices, routes, variation: interaction between adult second large learners and Swedish election posters)*. Department of Language Education, Stockholm University.

Franker, Qarin (2011b). *Litteracitet och visuella texter: Studier om lärare och kortutbildade deltagare i sfi (Literacy and visual texts: studies on teachers, and participants with little education, in Swedish for immigrants)*. Stockholm: Department of Language Education, Stockholm University.

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# Appendix 1. Procedure

An account is given here of the search for relevant literature for the literature review. The selection was made based on the aim of preparing a literature review for the field of basic reading and writing learning in Swedish as a second language for adult learners who previously had limited opportunities to use writing. The selection was also made taking into consideration the need for the literature review to support and help teachers who are to teach students with little or no school education prior to their arrival in Sweden to develop their reading and writing skills in municipal adult education in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level.

The search began with a systematic search for relevant research articles. Certain restrictions were put in place at an early stage of the search. It was decided from the start that the articles to be collected had to concern adults with little or no school education. The search was also restricted to articles written in English and Swedish that were published between 1990 and 2015. All literature that concerned children's learning of reading and writing was excluded from the search process at the start.

The systematic search was carried out in the following databases:

- Eric
- Eric (ProQuest)
- SpringerLink.com
- DiVa
- Libris

The following links were used:

- Avhandlingar.se
- Google.se
- Google Scholar

- <https://benjamins.com/#catalog/books/swll/main>
- Journal of adolescent & adult literacy
- Canadian journal for the study of adult education
- Journal of adult development
- New horizons in adult education & human resource development
- Recruiting & retaining adult learners
- Functional Literacy Assessment: Issues of Interpretation
- Adult Education Quarterly
- Adult Learning
- Studies in written language and literacy
- Literacy Theory in the Age of the Internet
- Women literacy income generation: A. Rogers. Education for Development, Reading

The search words were initially more general but were gradually adjusted. The search was initially carried out broadly, based on one word at a time. The accuracy of the search was increased by combining searches with the Boolean search terms *and, or, not* (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

- Language Training Policy
- Literacy Education
- The Development of Writing Skills
- Adult Learners
- Second Language Literacy
- Adult Participants with Low Educational Profiles
- Skills
- Newcomers
- Immigrants



- Literacy Practices
- ESL Adults
- Adult Education
- Literacy Programmes
- Alfa
- Alfabetisering (initial literacy training)
- Adult Literacy
- Functional Literacy
- Adult Learning
- Basic Skills
- Adult Skills


After reviewing the literature found, it was possible to distinguish the following subjects:

- Research into basic written language teaching for adults
- Research into writing and written language teaching
- Literacy and power
- Literacy and identity
- Literacy and gender
- Writing and written language communities
- Basic written language development in Swedish as a second language.

These subjects therefore assumed a central position in this literature review. As the initial search for research articles of relevance to the field produced excessively poor results, the material was subsequently supplemented by a selection of other international literature that was deemed to be relevant to the focus of the literature review. The literature search was then supplemented by Swedish dissertations and theses and by literature aimed at active teachers and student teachers.

The aim of this search was that it should generate material that will support teachers in Swedish for immigrants and Swedish as a second language at basic level who are working in written language development primarily at basic levels.





This literature review consists of the current knowledge gathered about basic literacy in adults who have previously had limited opportunities to learn to read and write. The focus of this review is written language teaching within municipal adult education in Swedish for immigrants and municipal adult education in Swedish as a second language at basic level.

This literature review is based on research into traditions of written language teaching and basic learning of reading and writing for adults. It also discusses the relationship between literacy, power and identity. The review is intended primarily for teachers and heads of schools.

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