English Language Learning for Adult Immigrant Students in Sweden
Integration, Language, Culture and Learning

by Emre Dogan
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Abstract

This is a study of English language learning for adult immigrant students in Sweden, and how it affects their integration into society. The primary aim of this study is to highlight and analyze the problems that adult immigrant students face, based on teachers beliefs, when learning English in a foreign country, and is backed up by various secondary sources in the subject as well as data collected in qualitative face-to-face interviews with teachers from adult education centres designed to help immigrant learn the native language as well as English. The results show the teacher viewpoint on the learning problems, which stem from cultural, lexical and mental blockades. They are analyzed according to the research questions and theoretical concepts, and presented with an accompanying discussion that aims to inform of the reader of the current learning situations.

Keywords

English language learning, English as a foreign language, integration, culture, affective filter theory.
Table of contents

1. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1. Aim and research questions .............................................................................................. 1

2. Background ............................................................................................................................ 2
   2.1. Theoretical background ..................................................................................................... 2
      2.2.1 Language Shock, Culture Shock and Languaculture ............................................... 2
      2.2.2 Affective Filter Theory ................................................................................................. 3
   2.2. Steering documents ........................................................................................................... 5

3. Method .................................................................................................................................... 6
   3.1. Informants ......................................................................................................................... 6
   3.2. Material ............................................................................................................................. 6
   3.3. Procedure .......................................................................................................................... 7
   3.4. Validity and reliability ....................................................................................................... 7
   3.5. Ethical considerations ....................................................................................................... 7
   3.6. Methods of analysis .......................................................................................................... 8

4. Results and Discussion .......................................................................................................... 8
   4.1. Research Questions and Relevant Data ............................................................................ 8
      4.1.1 Integration ..................................................................................................................... 8
      4.1.2 Previous knowledge ....................................................................................................... 9
      4.1.3 Proficiency .................................................................................................................... 11
   4.2. Theoretical analysis of data .............................................................................................. 13
      4.2.1 Language Shock and Culture Shock .......................................................................... 13
      4.2.2 Affective Filter ............................................................................................................. 14

5. Conclusion ................................................................................................................................ 16

References ..................................................................................................................................... 18

Appendix 1: Interview Questions ............................................................................................... 19
Appendix 2: Interview Transcripts ............................................................................................... 20
1. Introduction

This study will focus on English language learning for immigrant students in Sweden, primarily those who come from countries where English is not used as a primary (L1) or secondary (L2) language. It has been said by many that communication is key, and that language forms the very basis of communication - either in a business meeting regarding the newest fads, therapy sessions with a disgruntled couple or just between friends. For recently arrived immigrants, communication with people might be problematic due to their lack of language skills in Swedish. As English can be seen as an example of a contemporary *lingua franca* (Barber et. al., 2009), it provides us with a means of inter-cultural communication regardless of language background. The act of successful communication allows for integration into society, and makes it easier for the immigrants to adapt to their new environment.

For these purposes, immigrants - whether newly arrived or long-time students - have the opportunity to attend English language classes in language learning centres that are aimed at their language levels. However, important things to keep in mind are the success rates of preparing the students for integration; if good Swedish language skills are a requirement to learn English as full capacity; and if the English language learning resources that these learning centers provide are enough to meet the needs of their students.

1.1. Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to highlight and analyze difficulties in English language learning for adult immigrant students, seen through the observation of teachers. To achieve this, research will be made at two of these English learning centres by interviewing staff members to collect relevant data, and will progress with these research questions in mind:

1. **Integration:** when reaching the end of the education in question, is the student at an English language level that facilitates integration into society? For integration, is the focus more on Swedish than English, or is the role of English in integration recognized?

2. **Previous knowledge:** is it of importance that students have reached a threshold level in Swedish before attempting to learn English? Does the lack of an adequate language level in Swedish hinder learning? What can be said for immigrant students who study in a country where English is the primary language?

3. **Proficiency:** is it beneficial to place students with varying language proficiency in the same class as those who lack it or at a lower proficiency level? If so, in which way? Will acquisition be made easier when in the presence of more linguistically developed students?
2. Background

2.1. Theoretical background

This section will present the theoretical concepts that the data analysis in subsequent sections has been based on. These concepts are linked to the study topic at hand as well as the research questions proposed in the introduction of this study. The following concepts are backed up by secondary sources regarding their respective concepts; while this study is primarily concerned with immigrant students in Sweden, secondary sources which also deal with immigrant students in countries where English is the primary language, have been utilized.

English Language Learning (ELL) schools, language learning centres or adult education centres stand as a viable alternative for individuals who did not finish their education or, in the case of immigrant students, a way to learn the native language of their new residence as well as English. ELL is provided in Sweden to immigrants through various schools in the categories named above; the courses are at levels ranging from beginner levels to upper secondary levels.

In theory, these schools provide students with a way of learning the language needed to communicate in the country in question and thus integrating themselves into society. In practice, however, it does not always work as smoothly as one would think. An important factor is the age of an immigrant student; younger students can easily catch up with their peers, but older students face a negative impact on their performance (Böhlmark, 2008; Bleakley & Chin, 2007). While this particular study is primarily concerned with adult students, it is of importance to also mention the younger immigrants; as with adult immigrants, they too have to find a way to fit into the society that they have entered. However, it can be argued that this is an easier feat due to the social and educational nature of the early years in the school system, where integration and socialization are emphasized.

Adult immigrant students can face a myriad of problems when attending ELL classes, most of which stem from them not yet being accustomed to their new country of residence – neither culturally nor linguistically – and with priorities that do not always include ELL. The following concepts touch upon a few of the problems that adult immigrant ELL students face when learning English. These can be linked to both the purpose of the study as well as the research questions.

2.2.1 Language Shock, Culture Shock and Languaculture

It is important to realize that immigrant students have not only their language skills as a communicative barrier, but also their cultural perceptions and backgrounds. The concept of “language shock” can be closely linked to the concept of “culture shock” (Fan, 2010); for most immigrants, both of these are inescapable truths and can have a negative impact on language acquisition without the students being able to understand what exactly is bothering them. In order to understand language shock, the concept of culture shock has to be defined.
The term *culture shock* was first proposed during the early 1960’s by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg (Fan, 2010) and refers to the loss of the support that one receives from one’s own culture, and the shock of having to adapt to a new culture, which might very well be unfamiliar and highly strange to an immigrant. This particular phenomenon has several stages (Fan, 2010); Lysgaard (1955) stated that there are four particular stages of culture shock: Honeymoon stage, Culture Shock stage, Adjustment stage and Mastery stage; these represent the rough beginnings to the acculturated ends of the culture shock phenomenon, and are all shown in Lysgaard’s U-Curve theory (Lysgaard, 1955; Fan, 2010).

- **Honeymoon Stage**
  
  In this stage, the student is experiencing a fascination with the culture and everything bound to it; as language is an essential part of culture (Nida, 2003; Fan, 2010), the student experiences the first contact with the native language of their new residence.

- **Culture Shock stage**
  
  At this stage, the student is noticing the need to be able to cope with the foreign culture on a day-to-day basis. During this stage, the student can easily feel overwhelmed. This is where the need to learn the language becomes most apparent, in order to avoid a language shock at critical moments.

- **Adjustment stage**
  
  This is where the student learns to adapt to the new culture. Fan (2010) mentions that language and culture are two closely related factors which have an effect on each other: culture can have a deep impact on language shock, and the student requires the tools that help him/her adjust to the culture in an attempt to lessen the effects of language shock.

- **Mastery stage**
  
  As culture shock sets out to create an intercultural barrier that hinders communication (Fan, 2010), getting to the Mastery stage is often of outmost importance to any immigrant student. The amount of time it takes to enter this particular stage is individual, and can thus differ widely between students (Lysgaard, 1955).

Language shock is a by-product of the culture shock phenomenon, where immigrant students are subject to anxiety over their new linguistic environment (Miller & Endo, 2005). In the sense of learning languages, a student’s L1 is often a part of their primary culture (hereafter referred to as C1). This is where the term “languaculture” (Agar, 2006) becomes of relevance, which states that language is more than just vocabulary and grammar; it is all the background knowledge and cultural information, the habits and the various behaviours that comprise culture (Agar, 2006). Thus, languaculture aims to show the link between language and culture: in the case of immigrant students, their L1 and their C1.

### 2.2.2 Affective Filter Theory

The concept of an “affective filter” (sometimes also called the affective variable) is a theoretical concept often associated with learning difficulties in an EFL classroom, and is part of the input hypothesis developed by Stephen Krashen between 1970 and 1980. While the theory was first proposed by Dulay and Burt (Dulay & Burt, 1977), it is commonly linked to Krashen due to the inclusion of said theory into Krashen’s monitor model and subsequent developments.
The affective filter theory is primarily used to display a psychological detachment from language acquisition stemming from various social, cultural and individual factors; these are summarized by four factors that are named “affective factors” by Krashen (Du, 2009). They are, as follows:

- **Motivation.**
  
  As motivation ranks as one of the most important factors – if not the most important (Du, 2009) – factor for any type of learning, a basic conclusion can be drawn that a higher level of motivation will lead the student to acquire the language more easily, if only because it gauges how much the student actually wishes to learn the language; as Gardner (1985) said, motivation is “the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity” (p.10).

- **Attitude**
  
  According to Du (2009), “attitude decides the commitment”. The attitude towards ELL is often a deciding factor not only in motivation, but in acquisition as a whole. Immigrant students – who are often adult learners of English – can have attitudes which lower motivation towards ELL, especially if it is not the primary language of their new country; why should they learn a third language before they have yet to finish learning their second?

- **Anxiety and Self-confidence**
  
  Fear of failure is not uncommon, especially for new students without a proper grasp on either the target language or culture. When their proficiency is not at a level that the student thinks is sufficient to successfully participate in the learning process, they “shy away” from it rather than become a part of the process. Anxiety can be linked to a decrease in self-confidence; one can easily lead to the other, and boosting the self-confidence of a student can thus alleviate anxiety and help with language acquisition.

For this study, the affective filter theory is linked to the second and third research questions, primarily the third question; is it beneficial to place students with varying language proficiency in the same class as those who lack it or at a lower proficiency level? Looking at the affective factors, it can be surmised that placing weaker students with those who are more linguistically developed has a chance of leading to a loss in self-confidence for the weaker students, which will activate the affective filter and thus make acquisition difficult; in turn, this will worsen the problem, thus creating a “vicious cycle” of sorts.

Krashen’s theories regarding the affective filter – as well as his entire monitor model – have been met with a fair share of criticism over the years, with one of the main issues being whether “learning” can be distinguished from “acquisition” without creating a circular definition (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006); Krashen’s Acquisition-Learning hypothesis states that acquisition is automatic while learning requires a conscious effort (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006), so it needs to be wondered if immigrant EFL students really “acquire” the English language by being subjected to it on a daily basis or if they are “learning” the language through making a conscious effort to understand the linguistic rules.

Nevertheless, while there are linguists and psychologists who wish to disprove Krashen’s theories (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006), it can be argued that the affective filter theory has been established through observation; it is possible to able to observe the EFL classroom and see the great practical effect that Krashen’s theory can have and thus receive an opportunity to adapt the teaching techniques to ensure that the input remains comprehensible and that students acquire the language in an environment that they deem “safe”.


It is almost impossible to mention immigration without bringing culture into the subject matter; and as language is a part of the multi-faceted concept that is culture, it colors the students' views on language and the students' learning styles. The theoretical concepts mentioned above have an effect on the language learning of an immigrant student, and can be seen as linked to each other – in simplistic terms, the shocks beget the filter. For this particular study, the theoretical concepts represent only a few of the hurdles an immigrant student faces when trying to learn the English language or any language that is not his/her L1.

### 2.2. Steering documents

As this study is concerned primarily with adult students, excerpts from the official English translations of the steering documents published by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) will be presented here. Due to the upper secondary levels of the chosen adult education establishments, the upper secondary school steering documents will be used, with the reasoning as follows:

Municipal adult education at the upper secondary level should use the same subject syllabuses and knowledge requirements as the upper secondary school. At the same time, adult education should be flexible and adapted to the needs of adult students. (Skolverket 2012, p. 10)

In the Swedish school system, the first nine years are the compulsory school years; an upper secondary school education is optional. The basic requirements for entering an upper secondary school is to have passing grades in Swedish, English and mathematics, also called the core subjects. With English, however, there is an exception made for upper secondary school entry:

The exemption from the requirement for a passing grade in compulsory school English is mainly intended for students who have recently arrived in Sweden and have not studied English in their earlier schooling. The exemption only applies for admission to the upper secondary school. In order to obtain an upper secondary diploma, students must have passed upper secondary English in accordance with the requirements applicable to the programme. (Skolverket 2011, p.20)

Thus, to receive an upper secondary school diploma and fulfill the basic requirements for higher education, reaching the upper secondary levels of English is a must. The ELL schools aim to help immigrant students reach that particular point in their English language learning, and use the steering documents quoted above as well as steering documents regarding the compulsory levels within the Swedish school system as guidelines.
3. Method

In order to collect data for this particular study, a qualitative method was used in the form of face-to-face interviews. This method was chosen due to a select few English teachers being the main target for data collection, and in order to get exhaustive answers that could be analyzed using the theoretical concepts outlined in the previous section (Johansson & Svedner, 2010). A qualitative method was not selected due to the focus of the study being on teacher observation, and a secondary method of data collection was forgone in order to focus on a single methodology. While the focus on a single method of data collection allowed for specificity, it imposed a limit on the data available and only catered to a single viewpoint; according to Johansson & Svedner (2010), this can lead to a misrepresentation or exclusion of parts of the results.

3.1. Informants

For this study, three English teachers from two different adult education schools were interviewed; these three teachers will be referred to as A1, B1 and B2, respectively – with the schools being referred to as A and B. Teacher A1 and B1 taught the basic English adult education course which required no prior knowledge of the language, and B2 taught the second level English adult education course which required at least a basic understanding of English.

Teacher A1 is primarily a Swedish teacher, but has also previously taught the basic level English classes for a year. Teacher B1 has taught English classes for several years, while B2 has been teaching English for two years.

The schools are mainly geared towards adult students (known in Sweden as “vuxengymnasium” or upper secondary schools for adults) and offer various subjects in the upper secondary curriculums, with school A focusing more on the language courses. While school A is particularly geared towards immigrant students, school B is for all students, native or foreign.

3.2. Material

The interview questions used for data collection are presented in Appendix 1. Three of the interview questions were specifically intended to provide answers to the research questions stated in the introduction, with the remaining questions acting as filler questions. These three are, as follows:

3. In which way does the course help prepare the student for societal integration? Which areas of language learning are focused upon to reach a basic communicative level that allows the student to successfully be a part of the community?

2. When taking the course, how does a pre-existing Swedish language level help the student in class? For students who do not know Swedish, how do you alter the learning techniques to fit the needs of those students?

5. When teaching English, what beneficial – or detrimental – effect(s) does mixing students of varying language proficiency have?
These are structured to give an answer – either alone or in conjunction with other questions - to the first, second and third research question, respectively; and they will be referred to as the principal questions in this study.

### 3.3. Procedure

The data collection was carried out through face-to-face interviews; these were done over a three-day period, with appointments booked through email correspondence and questions sent ahead of time. This was done to ensure availability and to give the informant time to prepare for the interview by, for example, looking at the questions and formulating answers before the meeting. The interview questions were in English rather than Swedish; because the interviews were with English teachers, their ability to understand and answer the questions without difficulty was felt to be guaranteed. Due to this, the answers received were left untouched; had the questions been in Swedish, errors could have been made in their translation into English, which would not give fully correct data.

During the interviews, a tape recorder was used to record the entire interview session; the interview was structured so that it occurred directly face-to-face with the informant and the questions were near at all times. The purpose of this study was explained once more – having been previously explained in the emails requesting an interview – in order to ensure that the informant had full knowledge of how their answers would be used, and help the informants decide whether they wished to rescind their participation or not.

The answers received during these interviews were transcribed for use in the data analysis and reference whenever needed: see appendix 2.

### 3.4. Validity and reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the interviews, certain measures were taken with advice from Johanson & Svedner (2010) in mind.

To ensure reliability, all interviews were carried out in the same fashion, using the same recording equipment and questions. The interview questions were all asked in the same manner, with only a few clarifications about the questions added upon the informants’ request. Disruptions to the flow of the interview were limited, as the interviews were carried out in private rooms; while a mobile phone was used as a recording device, it had been programmed to ensure no disruptions during the interview.

To ensure validity, the questions which were prepared aimed to encompass as much of the subject matter as possible. As previously mentioned, the interview questions had been sent to the informants ahead of time so that they had the opportunity of knowing the scope of this study.

### 3.5. Ethical considerations

When conducting the interviews, all informants were informed of the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). They are summarized as follows:

1. Both the schools and informants received full anonymity upon participation. While a confidentiality clause was not signed prior to any interviews, confidentiality was granted immediately. The recordings of the various interviews were kept safe from the public, and could only be accessed by relevant parties.
Any and all names of students, teachers and/or establishments were removed from the transcriptions if and when they occurred.

2. Any data gathered would not be used for any commercial or non-scientific purpose, and would only be used in this study whenever needed. The data was not made public.

3. At any time, the informants were given the option of rescinding their participation; if such an event occurred, all relevant data would be permanently removed from transcriptions, the study and the recording device to prevent the inadvertent usage of said data.

The informants were informed of these ethical guidelines when requesting an interview, as well as mentioned in the beginning of every recording in order to ensure that they were understood and in effect.

### 3.6. Methods of analysis

As the material used for analysis is comprised out of interviews, the data will be analyzed by indentifying the theoretical concepts – culture shock, language shock, languaculture and the affective filter – outlined in the Background section of this study, and use the research questions – mentioned in the beginning of the study – as an analytical base. The results will be aimed at answering the research questions, and thus will be structured in such a manner that each research question becomes a subsection (Johansson & Svedner, 2010).

### 4. Results and Discussion

The data gathered is presented in appendix 2, which is a full transcription of three different interviews held with ELL teachers in adult education schools. Quotes of - and references to - them will be presented in this section, with each of the research questions of this study receiving its own subsection.

#### 4.1. Research Questions and Relevant Data

Here, the data gathered from the three principal questions detailed in the Material section will be presented, analyzed and discussed. As previously mentioned, each of them refers to a specific research question. If relevant to the research questions, additional data will be presented.

##### 4.1.1 Integration

The first research question in this study is aimed at the prospect of integration into society. All three informants noted that the time allotted to the ELL classes at lower levels was not enough; two of the informants pointed out that in order to give the students a decent opportunity to learn the language effectively, longer courses were required.

“I think the greatest problem when you give these courses is that you have such limited time. It is far from enough. You can compare it a child in a Swedish school, they have seven perhaps nine years in school. /…/ So if you’re a beginner in English /…/ you have to learn everything in a few weeks.” – A1

8
“Time is more of a problem – we have these courses that are four or eight or six weeks and we have to press in so much information in that short amount of time. /…/ We offer these courses, but we tell them that they need to enter the course with so much basic knowledge and that we can’t always teach theme everything in four weeks. Time is an issue, and we can’t cram the basics of language in four weeks, it’s too hard for them” – B2

The informants view time as a precious resource, and they found that there just was not enough time in their basic courses for immigrant students to develop a working language base. As immigrant students who come from countries where English is neither the L1 or L2 tend to have minimal basic knowledge of the English language, they require more time than the amount available in order to learn the language.

Regarding integration into society, the informants touched on the fact that the English language alone is not always enough for immigrant students in Sweden to integrate successfully. While English is the current lingua franca, Swedish is still the primary language used in Sweden, even though English sees widespread use.

“I don’t think this applies at all, because they are sort of learning English because they have to. They are learning English to be able to study.” – A1

The use of English in Sweden can be seen as primarily restricted to contemporary media, workplaces and in education; however, it can be argued that those factors are an essential part of integration into society, as they can be seen as integral pieces of Swedish society itself.

/…/ we are learning about Swedish society so it does help them a little to reflect on how to integrate, make them aware of certain behaviors that are not okay and that they have to reflect on what is okay and what is not.

As integration is focused on allowing an individual to assimilate, learning about the societal rules of the target country is of an importance that might be overlooked. The importance of behavior should not be downplayed, especially in communication; of course, this is where knowing the target language is of importance. Despite the fact that Swedish is the primary language of Sweden, communicative competence in English is a viable alternative that can transcend a cultural and linguistic barrier and allow for successful communication between individuals who do not share a cultural or lexical background, but are still members of the same social network.

With the question being if a student is able to reach the communicative levels in English – which can facilitate integration by discarding language barriers – the results of the data collection suggest that while it is possible, the chances of it are slim in regards to the basic courses in the English language; because the resources – especially lesson time - are not enough to adequately cover all the basics of the English language, integration via the English language might not always a viable option for immigrants who require immediate communicative competence.

4.1.2 Previous knowledge

The second research question is aimed at discussing the importance of basic knowledge of the Swedish language and how it facilitates the learning of English for an immigrant student.

“I would say it helps a lot, the students who have Swedish as a core language tend to understand English better because there are so many factors in common between Swedish and English, many words and grammatical rules are similar, so it’s easier for students who know Swedish.” – B2
Lexical relations can help some students when learning languages; if they were to have a basic knowledge of the Swedish language, their learning of English could be helped through the usage of lexical relations such as synonyms and antonyms.

The course materials used in the basic ELL classes are often in Swedish in order to ensure understanding of the material for a group of people who are not proficient in either the L1 or L2 of Sweden, but are still expected to have a basic grasp of the Swedish language prior to starting their English studies. One of the informants touched upon this particular problem that immigrant students might face:

“/…/ when they come to the first basic level class, they’re supposed to have SFI – they are supposed to be graduated SFI students, but far from everyone really are /…/” – B2

In terms of integration – relating to the previous research question – it can once again be argued that Swedish is seen first and foremost as the language required for immigrant students to achieve academic success and to integrate themselves into society. Thus, a higher priority is placed on the Swedish language, and students wishing to start learning English benefit from having learned the basics of the Swedish language.

“As we use Stepping Stone, and the word list is translated into Swedish, people who know more Swedish will of course benefit from that.” – B1

With certain course material including Swedish word lists, being able to translate correctly can expand learner vocabulary and help them understand new words and concepts. Course books, such as the aforementioned Stepping Stone, often have English grammatical rules and vocabulary in written Swedish, and thus being able to understand those sections of a coursebook is of great help to immigrant students who are not yet familiar with the English language.

No matter which country an immigrant arrives in, learning the L1 of the country in question is beneficial to the development of English language learning – if not because learning the L1 can give an immigrant student the tools to understand English through lexical relations, then because of the fact that having basic knowledge of the L1 will benefit their participation in class. Course material, syllabi and teaching methods in Sweden are often designed with Swedish students in mind, or students who have a basic knowledge of the Swedish language.

For a teacher, having one shared language in class can greatly benefit the sharing of information; in a class of cultural and lexical variety, Swedish is a prime option. Thus, if students were to have a basic knowledge of Swedish, they could more easily communicate with each other as well as the teacher; information could be relayed more easily and efficiently. It can be argued that the common language in an English class should indeed be English, but for students who recently started with their English studies, it is often a better alternative to use Swedish instead; e.g. when giving out instructions and preparing the course work, because it is important that the students are able to understand what is being relayed to them. A breakdown in communications does not benefit the students; instead, it might trigger the affective filter and thus hinder learning further.

Students in the basic English language learning classes require the use of a language which they are able to understand while in class. The downside of using Swedish in the ELL classroom, however, is that an overreliance on Swedish can be formed, and English as the main communicative language can be neglected. For students in the later English language learning classes – primarily those classes which operate at an upper secondary school level – using English in all interactions is more feasible, due to the fact that students are expected to have reached a higher communicative level in English. For
immigrant students in the lower level classes, the chances of them not yet having reached a basic communicative level in English is high, and communicating with them in English can thus hinder learning. However, completely forgoing the use of English when interacting in the classroom also serves as a hindrance to language learning. While perfection as a concept is not explicitly sought after in the basic classes, it is important for both students and teachers to not over rely on Swedish in an ELL classroom as not to undermine interaction in English.

Having basic Swedish skills when learning English can be beneficial to the learner; it helps with lexical relations and information acquisition, and also allows students with poor English language skills to ensure communication with their teacher and peers. A detrimental effect can be achieved by relying profusely on Swedish when interacting in the ELL classroom.

4.1.3 Proficiency

The third research question is aimed at the practice of mixing immigrant students of varying language proficiency, and whether it is beneficial or detrimental to the language learning of said students.

In a classroom setting, it is almost always a given that certain students will be more proficient in the subject matter than other students, despite being in the same class; this proficiency divide is very apparent in the ELL classroom, where there is a large focus on interaction between all participants. Mixing students of varying language proficiency can have both beneficial and detrimental effects.

“First, the beneficial part, is that they really have to try making themselves understood. /…/ When you mix everybody up, they talk to a person that doesn’t share their mother tongue and have to try to speak in English” – B1

One of the more beneficial effects is that - in a mixed proficiency classroom - the students have to increase their efforts to achieve understanding between each other. While this might not be as pressing for the stronger students, those with a lower language level will find that they have to try harder to be understood and to participate in classroom activities. Thus, weaker students will often double their efforts in order to reach the higher language levels, and thus be on a par with their peers.

Of course, the reverse of this is also true; some students might just as easily shy away from participation in class and thus limit their learning while in class, which can have a highly negative effect not only on their language level, but also on their communicative abilities. The language classroom is a perfect setting to practice communicative abilities, which will not only aid their integration into society, but also help them in their daily lives. If students who already possess a below average language level and communicative skills shy away from active participation, logic dictates that they will not develop their much-needed skills.

For teachers, having students of mixed proficiency in a classroom can pose certain problems. In a class where some students are weaker and some are stronger, it is hard to successfully cater to all needs at any given time. Informant A1 mentions the difficulty of having to teach different things to different students during the English lesson; something that possibly another teacher is unable to do. Thus, the teacher is forced to utilize the same course material when teaching all students, some of whom might find the material to be either uninteresting or daunting. Using easier material in class will eventually cause a disinterest to form in the stronger students, while using harder material in class will cause the weaker students to shy away from participation.

As mentioned in the background section of this study, motivation is a key factor in learning. If the students are not motivated to participate in class activities and learn the language, their learning will be
hindered by an increased affective filter; due to motivation being one of the main affective factors, it can be surmised that using teaching methods which are not stimulating at their language level will lead to the students becoming unmotivated and not actively participating in the learning process.

Mixing students is not limited to just language proficiency, but also language background. While the research question is primarily focused on proficiency, a mention can be made for the effects of mixing students of differing language backgrounds. This is touched upon in the analysis of previous data, but from a proficiency standpoint, mixing students with differing language backgrounds as well as language proficiencies will display the need for weaker students to make themselves understood; and thus facilitate their active participation in class as well as learning.
4.2. Theoretical analysis of data

In this section, the data acquired during the interviewing process will be analyzed according to the theoretical concepts presented in the Background section. Quotes from the interview transcripts will be used as needed through the analysis; discussions regarding the data and analysis will be presented in turn. When relevant, the findings from the previous sections will be referred to.

While the previous section presented, analyzed and discussed mainly the data acquired from the three principal interview question, the theoretical analysis is derived from the interviews as a whole in order to limit the exclusion of data which would have occurred should only the answers to a select few questions be chosen; it should be noted, however, that certain questions touch more upon the theoretical concepts than others – an example of this would be question six, which explicitly asks about the affective filter theory outlined in the background section.

The theoretical concepts were touched upon in the previous section, but will become the main focus of this particular section. While the term *languaculture* is defined in the background section, it will not be used explicitly in the analysis, but rather implicitly in relevant sections.

4.2.1 Language Shock and Culture Shock

Language shock and culture shock are such connected concepts that it would be nigh on impossible to address one without at least giving a mention of the other. They are both inescapable facts for immigrants, whether young or old, and are not something that is limited to only language studies. Language shock and culture shock are pieces in the day-to-day life of immigrants, and will color all facets of their interactions.

The data collected showed that culture shock was more of an issue than language shock; however, as language is such an essential part of culture, it can be argued that both are in equal focus. The main data for this concept was gathered primarily from the informant in school A, which deals more with immigrant students than school B – and thus, it is more subject to cultural differences and interferences.

“Because if they…for example, if they were Arabic they would find that Swedish and English were very similar, so they could compare the languages and they had been learning Swedish and the Swedish grammar system and they could compare this to the English grammar system and find similarities” – A1

A comparison between their native language and culture, and the language and culture of their new country of residence can indeed help a student, if only to find common ground which allows them to slowly acclimate to their new environment. In an ELL classroom, the use of L1 was often frowned upon (Kaviauskienė, 2009) during the 1970s and 1980s, but a more positive attitude has been adopted in today’s language learning classroom (Kaviauskienė, 2009). Despite certain teachers banning the use of L1 in classrooms, allowing an immigrant student to utilize their native language can be of help, especially if it is shared by other students in their class.

However, as previously mentioned in this study, relying too much on L1 in a L2 classroom can be detrimental to learning, and thus the student might not progress past the eponymous stage of culture shock. If immigrant students find themselves in a comfortable position by using their L1, their English language learning will suffer as a result, due to the lack of practice and motivation to learn.
“/.../ of course, English is very much used in the Swedish society as well, ‘cause you have many information and advertisements and stuff like that. But it’s mainly to help them, to further studies, I think.” – A1

This highlights the importance of English in the Swedish society; as previously mentioned in this study, English is used as a primary language in certain sectors, and is one of the main informative languages in media. Being able to speak Swedish does indeed facilitate integration and aid the student in adapting to the new culture and community, but English language learning allows students to more easily achieve cross-cultural communicative competence.

“So they have so different backgrounds, but it’s the same when they learn Swedish, people have such different backgrounds and expectations of how to learn something. But that’s just reality, that’s the way it is, so you just have to convince them that this is the way we learn here.” – A1

By reinforcing the cultural and linguistic rules, it can be argued that immigrant students are put in a position where they are left with no other choice than to adapt and leave their culture shock behind.

When immigrants arrive in a new country, it is not uncommon for them to take a piece of their culture with them from their motherland. They can bring a portion of the cultural rules, attitudes and viewpoints to which they are accustomed; in some cases, they decide to live by the standards of their native culture, and thus shut out the Swedish culture. Culture shock can easily cause an immigrant to withdraw back into their own culture, and thus never progress past the eponymous stage. By living in certain immigrant-heavy areas, they will instead build their own community based on their native culture, and never integrate fully. In English language learning centres, teaching students about the cultural rules of Sweden can help the immigrant students familiarize themselves with the foreign culture, and thus begin to reach the mastery stage.

It is imperative that adult immigrant students receive the help they need in order to progress to the mastery stage of culture shock as soon as possible. Learning the English language can help them reach the end stages of culture shock and with it the end stages of language shock; for integration, this is an event of utmost importance.

From the data collected, it can be seen that English language learning centres are indeed helpful in facilitating integration and acclimation. In learning new languages and being exposed to different cultures, adult immigrant students can leave their language and culture shock behind, and slowly reach the point of integration into Swedish society.

### 4.2.2 Affective Filter

The affective filter theory (Dulay & Burt, 1977) is often met with criticism (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006), but through empirical evidence it is not difficult to see that it does indeed exist in some capacity in an ELL/EFL classroom. It is not uncommon for students who are less than motivated, or have negative thought processes regarding the subject, to erect a mental blockade of sorts in response which hinders comprehensible input from reaching them (Du, 2009).

The informants for this study pointed out that the affective filter theory did indeed exist in their classroom, mainly affecting the immigrant students. While the native student ratio in their respective courses was very low, the basic courses were not taught only to immigrant students. It can be argued that native students would not have their affective filter switched on as they would be more exposed to the English language before the course start – beginning with the compulsory school years – and might
even have had experience with extramural learning of English, which is English learning outside of a classroom setting.

“/…/ if they have low expectations, if they’re afraid that they can’t manage somehow, that could have a negative effect.” – A1

This can be linked back to the analysis of the Integration question, in which time is mentioned to be a precious resource and that the basic classes do not give the students enough time to fully learn the basics of English; if students feel that they are unable to manage the flow of input and cope with the expectations set in course aims and syllabi, they might easily lose their motivation in learning the English language, and thus they will not sufficiently develop their linguistic skills.

“The lack of linguistic skills can cause a psychological “blockade”, if they don’t feel like that they have enough education to understand they tend to go back and have problems with learning; this is regardless of origin, I’ve noticed.” – B1

This is one of more – if not the most – common factors leading up to an affective filter, and can be seen as a direct consequence of the previously mentioned issues. For immigrant students, the feeling of not being on par with their peers – many of whom share their immigrant status as well as their lack of English language skills – can lead to a decrease in self-confidence and motivation; these affective factors are commonplace in situations where they need to display their language skills to someone other than the teacher (Du, 2009).

“You can explain it five times in Swedish and five times in English and write it on the board or give it on paper, but someone will still ask you questions. Not just one, but I would say two-four students every time, things you’ve talked ten times about they will ask a question to.” – B2

One of the informants had discussed the idea of a hypothetical “comfort zone”, which certain students might possess. It can be argued that every student has a certain comfort zone in which the intake of comprehensible input is maximized. In a classroom, factors such as same-culture peers, methods, situations and even something as trivial as seating arrangements can have an effect on the comfort zone of a student; if their comfort in class is reinforced, the affective filter theory dictates that the successful intake of comprehensible input should benefit, while if a student is moved out of his or her comfort zone the affective filter is switched on.

“This comfort zone is something we have to work with, many people don’t like to speak in front of other people or don’t like audiences; this is something we have to work on as well. Sometimes it feels strange as we work with older people who don’t know how to speak in front of a class; that’s a common fear that many people have.” – B2

While the informant states that some older students do not know how to stand in front of a class and speak, it can be argued that “not knowing” is not really the case with these students; rather, a lack of confidence and fear of failure could prevent them from mustering up the courage to show their abilities. Language is not only grammatical rules and lexical knowledge; to be able to communicate and participate in classroom activities using the target language is also an integral part of language learning. In situations that require the usage of a language in which the user has not yet achieved the desired proficiency, it is easy to shy away from participation and thus forgo an important part of the language learning process.

Adult immigrant students have many experiences that can lead to the affective filter being switched on. These can stem their lack of lexical knowledge, the feelings of inadequacy in the ELL classroom or just due to differing priorities. The gathered data shows that the affective filter
is indeed a current problem in the ELL/EFL classroom, a problem that needs to be solved in order for students to achieve maximum learning. Much like culture shock or language shock, the affective filter is not something that most students can be spared from – it is worth mentioning that this is often because of the aforementioned concepts. When not accustomed to either the language or culture, understanding and communication suffer as a result.

One of the informants touched on the fact that some adult immigrant students, despite their years of life experience and the like, are still subject to the classroom setting that younger students experience; in other words, adult students tend to regress to their younger selves from their educational periods. If such a period was filled with negative associations regarding the learning process, it is not uncommon for them to adapt the same attitude in their adult education. It does not always have to be the same subject, even; just the associations made with learning in general.

“I start every course by just saying “don’t be afraid to make mistakes”. You have to make them in order to learn. We’re all here to learn. It’s better to say ten things where five are wrong rather than not saying anything and waiting for that moment to shine.” – B2

Du (2009) mentions how a teacher can alter the teaching methods to bypass the affective filter – by increasing the learner motivation through creating a light atmosphere in class and using a diversified teaching method; or through lowering language anxiety and boosting learner confidence by telling the students that it is indeed okay to make mistakes, as a conscious effort to learn will benefit them in the long run.

5. Conclusion

This study has addressed a few of the various problems that adult immigrant students can face when learning the English language, as well as trying to integrate into Swedish society. The main question that can be asked at the end of this study is if English commands the same importance as Swedish does in the matter of integration; despite that the fact English is the lingua franca, and that learning it is important no matter the integrational purpose, is Swedish still a more important factor in integration into society.

The theoretical concepts brought up in the background section address only a few of the current problems that adult immigrant students face; with the critical age being nine, younger immigrant students do not face the same problems on an equal scale – with their school years being compulsory and English being taught at a reasonable pace, they achieve higher language proficiency much easier than the adult immigrant students. If this study could be reworked, more problem areas could be identified and added; while the mentioned concepts can be seen as the more common ones and thus form the basis of their problems, logic dictates that there should be more topics to research and discuss by delving into the field of both linguistics and psychology.

To identify, analyze and discuss the additional problems, a more extensive study would have to be made on the subject matter. Interviews and questionnaires could also have been used to collect additional data from students, who experience these problems first-hand; while teachers have a decent understanding of what an adult immigrant student faces, a quantitative approach could be made in
future studies to ensure a broader result and also address the students thoughts on their English language learning in a foreign country.
References


Appendix 1: Interview Questions

1. In the ESL/ELL classroom, how high is the immigrant student ratio? Is the course specifically geared towards them, and if so, in which way?

2. When taking the course, how does a pre-existing Swedish language level help the student in class? For students who do not know Swedish, how do you alter the learning techniques to fit the needs of those students?

3. In which way does the course help prepare the student for societal integration? Which areas of language learning are focused upon to reach a basic communicative level that allows the student to successfully be a part of the community?

4. For students with poor reading and writing skills in their mother tongue, what difficulties – if any – do you find that they face in the English language classroom?

5. When teaching English, what beneficial – or detrimental – effect(s) does mixing students of varying language proficiency have?

6. What problems do the students face, linguistically? If they have problems, can you attribute it to their current language skill level or to an affective filter, commonly seen in Stephen Krashen’s monitor model?

7. Do you find that the resources available are adequate to sufficiently develop the English language level of a student for integration into society once reaching the end of the learning period? If the answer is yes, can you provide an example? If no, what do think is lacking?
Appendix 2: Interview Transcripts

Interview 1 (A1)

1. I had this English course for a few months last year, and that was immigrants learning English at a beginner’s level. I was thinking about this when I started teaching English. For the first, I am not an experienced English teacher. I studied English very long ago at the university and I sort of got this at the side of my job as a Swedish teacher. I had this class of beginners in English and they were also at the same time studying Swedish, they were taking these courses simultaneously. It was difficult because I didn’t really know how to approach this problem; I hadn’t thought about this much in advance because it came really suddenly to me. But there were also students who were Swedish, so it was a mix. I had a few students who were Swedish speaking, and a few immigrants, so they weren’t in separate classes.

Were the more immigrants in the classroom than Swedish speakers?
Yes. There were more immigrants; because this is a school where immigrants go, so they knew about this school so most of our students are immigrants. But there were a couple of Swedish students as well.

So it wasn’t in fact geared towards them, it was just a course in English.

2. By speaking English.

Constantly?
Yes. I try to do that, but, that is very difficult when they don’t know any English. So for the beginners, it was important to explain sometimes in Swedish, a few things. And to make comparisons between Swedish and English. Because if they…for example, if they were Arabic they would find that Swedish and English were very similar, so they could compare the languages and they had been learning Swedish and the Swedish grammar system and they could compare this to the English grammar system and find similarities. So that could be a help.

Anything else?
No, not really. But I think it’s a good idea to speak as much English as possible for any students, so it doesn’t really matter if they’re immigrants or if they’re Swedish, I think it’s a good idea to start speaking English as much as possible.

3. I don’t think this applies at all, because they are sort of learning English because they have to. They are learning English to be able to study.

Can we not argue that studying integrates them?
Yes, in that way, it does. That’s the only thing I can think of. Well, of course, English is very much used in the Swedish society as well, ‘cause you have many information and advertisements and stuff like that. But it’s mainly to help them, to further studies, I think.

Which areas of language learning do you focus upon to help communication?
Um. I try to focus on speaking, because that’s the way we learn English in Sweden, and that’s the way I learned that it was important to be able to speak [English], compared to when you learn other languages; you focus very much on grammar. The greatest problem I met when I started teaching English was that all the students from other parts of the world who were more acquainted with this system of learning by translating or using grammar systems first and then learning to speak, or perhaps never learning to speak, they started asking me questions about
English grammar that I didn’t know. I didn’t know much grammar in that way because when we learn English in Sweden we start so early that we sort of just listen and learn, and learn intuitively I think. So we don’t focus as much on the grammar system. That’s the way I’m taught.

4. Spelling, perhaps. It depends on their previous experiences of how to learn things, I think. If they’re used to learning language, for example, if they learned Swedish by listening they would probably be more comfortable learning English by listening. But if they have a higher education perhaps they have another approach. Yeah, I think spelling is a great difficulty, but I haven’t thought about it much. 

**Having the knowledge of how to learn helps the students?**

Yes, yes, perhaps something like that, yes, because they’re already learning Swedish, they can just go on and try to learn English in the same way. So it’s not the first time that they learn a foreign language.

5. As I said, they’re so different, and they have different learning styles and have different experiences of how to learn languages, some of my first students had actually studied English in Iran for several years, and they had managed to take some sort of exam, but they couldn’t say a word in English. They had just been reading texts and translating. They didn’t know how to speak, but they knew a few words, and I don’t know how that worked really, it was very strange. So they have so different backgrounds, but it’s the same when they learn Swedish, people have such different backgrounds and expectations of how to learn something. But that’s just reality, that’s the way it is, so you just have to convince them that this is the way we learn here.

**What about mixing students of varying proficiencies? Good or bad?**

I think it’s good, I like to mix people. But, for me as a teacher, it’s awfully difficult. I had to teach them different things at the same time, because we always have these small groups when teaching English here, so we don’t have different classes for different levels, we only have about six persons at six different levels. So for the teacher it’s very difficult, but for the student it can be an advantage, they can learn from each other. Those who know a bit more can try to explain something to the others and sort of learn more themselves by talking about. So yeah, it can be good but it’s not easy.

6. Perhaps. I really can’t say. I find that a few who have actually learned a little bit of English before they came to Sweden, they say that they forget because they’ve been concentrating on Swedish so much, they’ve been trying so hard to learn Swedish that they have forgotten all of their English they once knew, but I think they exaggerate. But as you say, if they have low expectations, if they’re afraid that they can’t manage somehow, that could have a negative effect. And some have difficulties in believing in themselves, they’re afraid to start talking; they think it sounds funny or something.

**What about linguistic problems? A by-product of the affective filter?**

I can’t tell. I don’t really know, I haven’t thought of it that way. One thing that I’ve been thinking about is that they sort of, they don’t have to learn as much English as Swedish, they can sort of settle for less, but they don’t really know that. They expect to learn as much English as Swedish, and so they sort of panic as it seems so much, but they don’t really need that much, ’cause they only need English for certain areas and Swedish is the language they have to use all the time. They may find it to be overwhelming.

We had a book called Stepping Stone. They weren’t so many books that were written for adults, so Stepping Stone were books that we found were most...because in Sweden, everyone...
already knows English when they grow up, so we had to find books that were written for adults, for beginners. Stepping Stone were those types of books, but it was a bit annoying. There were so many texts about things that I don’t think they need to know, for example there was a whole chapter about a woman who visited her old retired father. They were talking about things that were outside this area of what you need to know. It wasn’t the most important vocabulary that they acquired in these books. I think they should concentrate on more everyday things, things you need to know when you travel, meet people from another country, communicate with them. You’re not very likely to speak English to your parents. It was a bit strange. I think you should concentrate on the most areas of the vocabulary. You don’t have to know all the objects in the kitchen, for example. You’re never going to have to know that anyway, so you should concentrate on something else; to give directions, how to ask something and explain something, and discuss everyday topics. News and things like that.

7. I don’t think I have enough experience to answer that question [A/N: It was mostly answered previously].

I think the greatest problem when you give these courses is that you have such limited time. It is far from enough. You can compare it a child in a Swedish school, they have seven perhaps nine years in school. If you take the first seven years, grade 3–9, those seven years of English you get fifteen weeks [per year?]. So if you’re a beginner in English – at least it was like that when I was teaching, I don’t know if they changed it – you have to learn everything in a few weeks. It’s quite impossible. It will be very limited, what you can learn in that short time. We had like two lessons per week. So little time; that will never be enough. Doesn’t really matter what material you have, you need time.

Interview 2 (B1)

1. Well, depending on the level of the course – in this case, I’m having the basic courses for the moment – on the basic level, the immigrant ratio is much higher than for higher levels. Considering that we’re using Stepping Stone – I’m not very happy about having Stepping Stone as one of the course books in my course, as I don’t think it’s suitable to learn a language in another language that is not your mother tongue. When teaching Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), I was teaching in Swedish. You learn Swedish in Swedish. Why not learn English in English? And wherever I have been working before, I’ve always removed Stepping Stone. I have managed to bring in the British course books, which are called Inside Out. I enjoyed working with it, because a lot more listening parts are included; for every reading part, they have a listening part as well. That’s the best thing, because that is what I think Stepping Stone lacks. I myself, yes, I adapt my teaching for immigrants, but the course book I follow does not.

What do you think is the reasoning behind using SS?
Not a stubbornness, but a habit. They think it should be in Swedish, and it’s more important that they learn Swedish than English. This is the argument used by the other teachers, but is not my opinion.

2. As we use Stepping Stone, and the word list is translated into Swedish, people who know more Swedish will of course benefit from that. But there are always a couple of students who have a word that they don’t understand the translation of. After each chapter in Stepping Stone you have a two-page list of new words and their phonetic transcriptions, but there are always at least 3–four words in each that people don’t understand. I have to go in and explain it to them. Sometimes I explain it in Swedish to those that understand Swedish, but I prefer to explain in
English using synonyms and creating sentences; that’s one way of using Swedish in the classroom. If they know enough Swedish, it will be easier for them to understand. How do I alter the learning techniques for those who don’t know much Swedish? I come up with even more examples and synonyms, and that is one way for them to understand the parts that they find difficult, otherwise I have to have some really concrete examples. I find myself always coming up with a solution so that they finally understand. Most of them, at least…99%.

3. Stepping Stone, at least the last book (third step), is about cultural differences, so it is a way of making them aware of that we have differences in our behavior, and that’s what we’ve been talking about for the past couple of weeks. I’ve shown them videos on how people act, some expressions or facial expressions could be anything; those are only small parts, but in the course there is a good part which I think is very good: a comparison is made between foreigners/immigrants and Swedish people coming in time, respecting the time to show up; Englishmen show up half an hour later, and Swedish people have to come right on time. That’s also one difference. Even though I think they’ve heard much about the differences when they were studying Swedish, I think it’s good to repeat that, but in English instead and make the comparison, because the English classroom has more of an international spirit and atmosphere, so it’s like everybody is equal; and we are learning Swedish sometimes at the same time – we are learning about Swedish society so it does help them a little to reflect on how to integrate, make them aware of certain behaviors that are not okay and that they have to reflect on what is okay and what is not. There was a listening part at the end of a chapter [in the workbook] that made them think about and reflect upon the new rules of a new country. They let them immigrants come, how will they then be helped? Made them think about how they would adapt and maybe be grateful over being here.

Any focus on expressions which will help them? No, not really. The book mainly focuses on the English-speaking countries rather than Sweden.

You can be so stuck in your situation that you forget that you are an immigrant like the rest of the people in the US, Australia and other countries, and I hope that they are able to relate to immigrant stories and situations in other countries, and think about the long-term effect of being here, because I think everyone is aware that I’m sharing their background and not a native Swedish person. I’m not originally Swedish, which makes them feel more comfortable, so we have these types of discussions on how you integrate and so on in a more open way then if they had an ethnic Swede as a teacher, for example.

Which areas of language learning are focused upon? I would say all of them. When it comes to the national test, they’re tested on their speaking skills, reading, writing and listening, and nowadays with the new grading system they cannot pass this course without passing all four sections and areas. So I cannot say that one area is focused on more than the others; I focus on all of them, but the language skill I use the least because of the coursebook is listening. I try to bring it in as much as possible, we are speaking, I am speaking, they listen to me or videos and that’s not enough. Listening is number one, because that’s what comes handy, but everything is important.

So you focus on all areas to help them become a part of this community? Because it’s English I don’t know if I can agree upon that, but maybe to make them aware of the situation in Sweden in another way. Not literally, that they know what to think about when meeting people in Sweden and communicating, that they are aware of how to adapt or
integrate. In the English lesson we focus on a lot of phrases, on how to thank someone and be polite and so on. Maybe it makes them reflect on formality in Swedish as well. I think its individual.

4. When they’re having poor reading and writing skills in their mother tongue, it doesn’t help their English and it will get affected. When they have these difficulties, I usually send them to our special pedagogue to maybe support them and help them improve their learning. I mean, if they have poor reading and writing skills in their own mother tongue, it’s not good for their learning other languages, so usually they usually don’t come so far. Here especially, at adult education, it’s so intensive; you have maximum eight weeks – from two weeks to a semester. They sometimes think that they just have to show up here – the mentality of how to get knowledge, they think the teacher is just going to plug in the knowledge in their minds and they will learn just because they come to school. Everybody chooses the eight week courses, thinking they will pass it because they are coming to school. So, unfortunately, not everyone passes, especially these students who are weaker in their skills. We have reading courses and we have extra English support and extra speaking courses within the courses where they can individual help; but they don’t show up, because they have other priorities. I face a lot of difficulties in the classroom, from people were not educated enough in their own countries; with higher education behind them is easier for them know exactly what to do.

Can we link this to question 2?
Learning techniques. It’s not easy to know them if you have never seen them before. I think an academic education is required for you to pass the short eight-week course with a good grade. It’s not impossible to pass barely, but it’s not enough if you’re planning to study at the university.

5. First, the beneficial part, is that they really have to try making themselves understood. If they’re talking to people with the same mother tongue as they have, they will automatically switch to it, so I try to mix them up all the time. At the same time, it is good when they are trying to find a word from their mother tongue to English or Swedish and help each other. There are pros and cons, but the best part is when you have a mixed class. When you mix everybody up, they talk to a person that doesn’t share their mother tongue and have to try to speak in English, because I have really banned Swedish from the classroom.

What about weaker students in the presence of stronger students?
Confidence might be an issue, but not always, it depends on how proud they are and their confidence and self-esteem; it’s a matter of individuality. It depends, it’s not something I can generalize on, like ‘everyone who lacks education has low self-esteem’ as that is not always the case.

6. It depends. Linguistically, it’s not a grammatical part you’re asking for? [Not only] It depends since I have a variation with students with such different backgrounds, sometimes I can actually generalize people who are from Eastern Europe or Russia or the Balkan, they usually don’t have articles, in 99% of the cases they leave out or forget the articles. They don’t write “a” or “an”, they don’t have definite or indefinite articles.

Any concrete examples?
Yes, of course. Most students, regardless of origin and background, tend to use Swenglish, because all of them have – or should have – studied Swedish, their basic Swedish studies. They can say things like “I have living in Sweden for 25 years ago”, which can be viable when translated; they always mix up the prepositions, and sometimes make a Swenglish translation of it and bring in many of the Swedish words, so instead of saying “I’m glad that he’s here”
they can write “I’m glad at he’s here”. There are many examples of them mixing Swedish and English.

**What about female students from the Middle East? Do you find that they have affective factors stemming from their origin?**

They feel forced to be here, they don’t really want to be here. Some students from the Middle East are motivated, mostly Iranian students despite their lack of language skills or accent, they show that they want to learn and improve. Arabic female students are not as eager as Iranian ones, though, who already have an academic background. Arabic female students who come here for a myriad of reasons don’t have that eagerness, as they don’t really always come here voluntarily. The lack of linguistic skills can cause a psychological “blockade”, if they don’t feel like that they have enough education to understand they tend to go back and have problems with learning; this is regardless of origin, I’ve noticed.

7. In our school, we recently got iPads for the teachers, so we’re using this method called “flipped classroom”, where we do things the other way around; instead of holding classes or teaching in class, we teach in a video and make it their homework to watch my seminar or what I want to tell them about anything, like a grammatical part. I put it online, they watch it at home and they do their homework in school. It’s one way of being more effective. We have just started with this project, we haven’t begun doing it full scale in all courses, but I’ve started to use it little by little, step by step. My goal is to, from next year and on, to provide all my courses online instead so they can have the classes. What I would have taught in class I could teach in a ten-minute video instead of the forty minutes in class, questions included. Then they can come to class and or work individually, have my individual help. It’s another way to have a contact with the students, and I totally believe in that. That is another possibility we have received from our school and an excellent way to help them integrate into society because then we have more time to interact. This is a new trend from the US. They introduced the flipped classroom, and I found it to be very inspiring. As we have short courses, it’s a good way for the students with weaker self-confidence to go back to the videos and watch them as many times as they want in private, and then when they’re sure enough or have a few questions they can go to class and get my help. If they don’t have computers at home, which isn’t very common, or if they come to class without having watched my videos, I have my iPad ready so that they can watch the videos in class, or switch on computers that we have in the classroom and let them watch with headphones on. Time is often lacking, I find that there isn’t enough time for the students to get everything, and the courses are pretty short for its…scope, I guess.

**Interview 3 (B2)**

1. Okay, I would say that – if you talk about the basic courses or basic levels, which are comparable to the seventh, eighth and ninth grade in Swedish schools – almost 100% immigrants. When you go up to English 5/A it’s a totally different number, I would say about 50%. About the courses being geared towards them, I would say yes and I would say no as well, because we have to follow the syllabus when we teach; it’s really hard because the syllabus is meant for Swedish students and I think sometimes we have expectations that are too low or too high on immigrant students, because they don’t have same…they are not exposed to the English language the same way the Swedish students are. They need more time and slower pace, so I would say, mostly no to the question.
2. I would say it helps a lot, the students who have Swedish as a core language tend to understand English better because there are so many factors in common between Swedish and English, many words and grammatical rules are similar, so it’s easier for students who know Swedish.

**How do you alter the techniques if they don’t know enough Swedish or no Swedish at all?**
That’s something we struggle with, like, all the time, because it’s really hard to know how to approach a student who does not know English or Swedish. I think really that it’s a problem, sometimes me as a teacher I use English in my classes, but I have to give information in Swedish as well. It’s not sufficient to just give instructions in English; although some students know more than they can express.

3. I think it’s only because the Swedish society is so full of English language, that’s the only way it helps them. I wouldn’t say we have any techniques or any methods to help them into integrate into society or anything like that, I think it’s only that being aware of the language being a key factor in the Swedish society and it helps them get a job and things like that.

**Which areas of language learning are focused upon?**
Well, we follow the syllabus and I would say we have four skills that we practice: reading, writing, listening and speaking. I don’t exactly what you are asking for.

[I explain the question].
I would say that we try to have equal focus on all four skills, but mostly the listening and speaking parts are the hardest parts for students, so we try to focus on them a bit more. But we have to give equal attention to all four skills, because they are like a unit; you cannot leave something out and expect a student to grasp…you cannot speak if you cannot write, something like that, at least for adult students. Kids can do it, though. So yeah, we try to give equal focus but we have to also practice more on speaking and listening, the oral communication skills.

4. That is a problem, obviously. I think it’s pretty obvious if a student has education from their home country or have had encountered any English at all, if they can write and read…I would say it’s pretty obvious if you have writing problems, if you have reading problems, you will surely just – the teacher will see it, with some students you have always have to work more; I don’t think it’s specific for immigrants, I think it’s more of an individual problem. Some students have difficult backgrounds, though, they have war issues and childhood issues, some have secret identities…it’s hard to say.

**Do you think they have a specific problem? If they don’t know how to learn, how do you think it colors their English learning?**
It’s really hard to say. Since I only teach English I don’t have anything to compare to; but I would say that when learning any language, if you have writing and reading problems, would affect your ability to perform, so to speak. It all depends on which language is your mother tongue, really. We have many Hispanic students, for instance. Some languages are similar to English which makes it easier, it’s linked in some ways. Of course, some countries don’t have a good educational basis like others countries do. But it’s so individual.

5. This is a bit similar to the second question. The problem could be that they don’t understand when you try to explain something in Swedish, they don’t understand when you try to explain something in English which makes it really hard to face that problem, because as a teacher you cannot know how to look to everyone’s needs - I once had 30 students in my class with 22 different language backgrounds – I think it’s really impossible, but we try to take it slowly, we try to repeat things and give it on paper or write it on the board, we try to give the attention we feel they need but it’s really hard, and it’s different from class to class or student to student.
They have such different backgrounds and ways of learning and cultural interferences going on. For some people it’s not a problem.

**If you put stronger students with weaker students, does it help or hinder the weaker students?**

I think it’s also something that is...because when they come to the first basic level class, they’re supposed to have SFI – they are supposed to be graduated SFI students, but far from everyone really are, so they come with different kinds and levels of knowledge, both when it comes to Swedish and English, which makes it that even if they are supposed to be on the same level, a few are way ahead a few are way back. It could be beneficial to mix good students with not-so-good students to make them speak more and want more and throw themselves into the learning process more. Many students feel like it’s a confidence issue, they feel like they don’t want to say anything. I start every course by just saying “don’t be afraid to make mistakes”. You have to make them in order to learn. It’s better to say ten things where five are wrong rather than not saying anything and waiting for that moment to shine. Some students wait for that moment all the time, they think that they need to impress the teacher. They feel that if they do the perfect things, it helps them. I think that’s a cultural phenomenon as well, as helping teachers in Sweden is not something you do. I think it’s mostly a thing about being self-conscious, to feel good about yourself, and this might help them if they work with students who are more confident with themselves.

6. Okay, so this was the theory by Krashen. I’m not really familiar with the affective filter, when you explained it to me I felt that it was pretty common with the affective filter. I think we teachers talk a lot about – between lessons when we have the time to talk to each other – this; I was trying to explain this thing in class, and the students could just not understand it. You can explain it five times in Swedish and five times in English and write it on the board or give it on paper, but someone will still ask you questions. Not just one, but I would say two-four students every time, things you’ve talked ten times about they will ask a question to. I don’t know much about the filter, but it exists, a lot of students are struggling. I don’t know what the basic problem is, but cultural shocks can have problems. I feel that even though we have adult students – 20 to 65 – it doesn’t matter, because we don’t think about ages or how old you are when we’re having a lesson, but when students go into a classroom and they sit down, with their pens and erasers and books, they are thrown back to their childhood. And if they had problems then, they sort of relive them. They go back, they become like seven-year old students again, and they go back to their old roles. They remember it, they feel it...I think it’s so crucial with the first years in school, almost everyone remembers the feelings and looks they had from their classmates, how they looked at you and how they commented you. I would say that many – not most – many people feel that they become kids again when they come into school. For good and for bad, of course. You can try to make them...they want to feel comfortable, give them their comfort zone, they want to sit in the same place, they want to feel secure; but at the same time, they have this pressure to always have the highest grades and compete. Many students think it’s more important to get the highest grade rather than learn something. Do they want to study, most of the time? No. They have to study, to get a better education or a job. So it’s not really that easy.

**Do you find that when students are outside of their “comfort zone”, they put up a psychological blockade?**

Yes. They do. And that’s what we’re trying to get away from. They have to speak, I tell my students all the time that they have to speak. If you sit and say nothing for two months – this
course is 1six weeks, if you don’t say anything during those 1six weeks you will get a bad
grade or fail, as I need to see what you are capable of. This comfort zone is something we have
to work with, many people don’t like to speak in front of other people or don’t like audiences;
this is something we have to work on as well. Sometimes it feels strange as we work with
older people who don’t know how to speak in front of a class; that’s a common fear that many
people have. I would say that is the biggest issue, problem and fear they have when they come
into these courses. The output is important.

7. I think it was like the first question, many of the resources we have are not really constructed
with immigrant students in mind. We’re still not speaking about the things that need; I think
we’re afraid to speak about what they need and what they don’t need, because we put the focus
on the wrong things. I would say that the people of Skolverket or those who sign the syllabus
and course goals don’t really know how to teach immigrant students, they don’t know how it
is in a classroom where students have so many different languages, and they don’t know how
it is in real life. You have to see it for yourself, because it’s so different from class to class, so
individual. We have more people from certain countries and backgrounds, but it’s not really
consistent.

You said about integration into society; of course we want to, but I don’t know if it’s the role
we should play as teachers. Even though we want to, I think all we can do is to provide them
with the language and provide them with the confidence for a future job or education. I would
say from my point of view, I think it’s hard to have concrete tools for students that they can
take with them when they finish a course. I think we have to take it little by little, piece by
piece, one thing at a time. I think it’s too big to think about integration, because we don’t have
that type of contact either – how do you feel about the language, do you have a job, how are
people treating you in this country…we can’t ask questions like that because it’s too private,
and we don’t have the time. I don’t think many students would want to share something like
that with a teacher. I think it’s a hard question to answer, because we can only provide them
with the tools they need to feel confident and that they know something about this language,
which makes them feel at ease when going out or looking for a job.

You can argue that that is integration, but we have 20-30 students and they all need the same
attention…we can help them feel good about themselves.

Are any resources lacking?
Well, we have a student councilor and we offer students with dyslexia and ADHD some kind
of special treatment, like longer tests or more explanations. If they have problems with writing
by hand we can let them send in by computer, even if it was a handwriting lesson. We have to
give them the chance to do it their way.

Time is more of a problem – we have these courses that are four or eight or six weeks and we
have to press in so much information in that short amount of time. That’s a big problem. Our
summer courses are four weeks and we have them every day. We have to press in harder
courses into four weeks, and learning languages takes time. We offer these courses, but we tell
them that they need to enter the course with so much basic knowledge and that we can’t
always teach them everything in four weeks. Time is an issue, and we can’t cram the basics
of language in four weeks, it’s too hard for them.