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'English is a Subject that You Should Teach Yourself': Power and Learner Identity in the Language Introduction Programme in Sweden

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This article explores students' perspectives on English language learning in relation to the Language Introduction Programme in Sweden, which is an individual transitional programme for newly arrived immigrants and seeks to quickly transition adolescents into further education or the job market. High proficiency in English is vital in Swedish society, and insufficient knowledge of English can lead to negative long-term consequences for both individuals and society regarding inequality. The methodology used is based on linguistic ethnography, and the data for this article consists of eight semi-structured interviews with students in the programme at one school. Foucauldian perspectives are used to analyse power and the construction of language ideologies relating to the multilingual English-language classroom and learner identity. The results show that the importance of proficiency in English for a successful educational transition from the Language Introduction Programme is rarely communicated to students. Furthermore, English is positioned as a subject of low importance within the organisation. The results also show that monolingual norms and language hierarchies limit the students' ability to use their first language when learning English.

Keywords: English language education, language ideology, learner identity, Language Introduction Programme, power

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»Angleščina je predmet, ki se ga moraš naučiti sam/-a«: moč in identiteta učenca v programu seznanjanja z jeziki na Švedskem

Jenny Bergström

Članek raziskuje poglede učencev na učenje angleškega jezika v povezavi s programom seznanjanja z jeziki na Švedskem, ki je individualni prehodni program za na novo prispele priseljence; prizadeva si za hiter prehod mladostnikov v nadaljnje izobraževanje ali na trg dela. Visoko znanje angleščine je v švedski družbi ključnega pomena, nezadostno znanje angleščine pa lahko povzroči negativne dolgoročne posledice za posameznike in družbo, kar se tiče neenakosti. Uporabljena metodologija temelji na jezikovni etnografiji, podatki za ta članek pa so črpani iz osmih polstrukturiranih intervjujev z učenci, ki so vključeni v program na eni šoli. Za analizo moči in konstrukcije jezikovnih ideologij, povezanih z večjezičnim poukom angleščine v razredu in identiteto učenca, so uporabljeni foucaultovski vidiki. Izsledki kažejo, da se o pomenu znanja angleščine za uspešen prehod v izobraževanje iz programa seznanjanja z jeziki učence le redko obvešča. Poleg tega pomanjkanje informacij o pravici do izobraževalne podpore omejuje dostop študentov do enakih izobraževalnih možnosti, angleščino pa potisne v položaj predmeta z nižjo stopnjo pomembnosti znotraj organizacije. Izsledki kažejo tudi, da enojezične norme in jezikovne hierarhije omejujejo možnosti študentov za uporabo svojega prvega jezika pri učenju angleščine.

Ključne besede: učenje in poučevanje angleščine, jezikovna ideologija, identiteta učenca, program seznanjanja z jeziki, moč

Introduction

Since the late 1940s, English has become increasingly important in domains such as trade, politics, and economics in Sweden (Gheitasi et al., 2022; Peterson et al., 2023). Within education in Sweden, English is the only foreign language that is mandatory for all students throughout their education (Swedish National Agency of Education (SNAE), 2022a), and a passing grade in English is mandatory for further education (SNAE, 2021). Thus, English is an important component of educational success, and insufficient knowledge of English can lead to negative long-term consequences for both individuals and society regarding inequality and inequity.

The Nordic multilingual English classroom

Research regarding education and migration is conducted around the world, but since the Language Introduction Programme (LIP) is situated in a Nordic context, the background of this article is research into multilingual education performed in the Nordic countries. In the Finnish context, Kajala and Pitkänen-Huhta (2020) discuss multilingualism as a lived experience in the English-as-a-foreign-language classroom and how teachers can increase students' understanding of their own multilingualism and tolerance for diversity. Also, Pitkänen-Huhta (2019) argues that the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of learners affect how they relate to the teaching of foreign languages (p. 139). In addition, teachers must be aware of how their own perceptions of multilingualism affect their teaching practices and how they often turn to monolingual solutions when encountering problems in multilingual contexts (p. 140). In the Norwegian context, Iversen (2017) investigates students' use of their first language (L1) when learning English, a practice mostly invisible to their teachers. Iversen concludes that teachers seldom incorporate students' L1s in classroom practice and that many multilingual students are not given the educational support that would enable their L1 to be an asset in learning English (p. 45). Also, in a Norwegian context, Dahl and Krulatz (2016) and Surkalovic (2014) conclude that English teachers lack knowledge and/or in-service training in teaching English in multilingual contexts and teaching students with diverse educational backgrounds. Furthermore, these issues are seldom addressed within teacher education, meaning that future teachers are not prepared for increasingly diverse classrooms. In Sweden, Källkvist et al. (2022) show a need to expand how language resources can be used in classrooms and argue that clarification in Swedish may not always help multilingual students

in their learning. Moreover, Tholin (2014) shows how the Swedish language is regarded as a norm in the English-language classroom. Tholin states that this classroom practice benefits students who come from a Swedish background (p. 225). In the LIP context, Berggren et al. (2020) posit English as a bridge between students' L1 and Swedish since most students have some prior knowledge of English when arriving in Sweden. Furthermore, Bergström et al. (2024) show how English teachers and principals regard English as a difficult and complex subject for LIP students and how English-language education at LIP is often neglected within the organisation.

English in Sweden

English is described by the SNAE (2022a) as a vital factor in participation in fields such as politics, education, economics, and international studies, as well as working life in Sweden. Compulsory national tests are taken at ages 12 and 15 and at the upper-secondary level, and the organisation of English as a school subject in Sweden mirrors the CEFR levels of foreign language education.[2] (Council of Europe, 2020). The national syllabus for English in mandatory schooling in Sweden (SNAE, 2022a) states that the aim of English as a school subject in Sweden should be 'to develop all-round communicative skills' (p. 35). The syllabus also states that students should be given the opportunity to 'put course content in relation to their own experience, living conditions, and interests' (translation by author) (p. 35) and that English education should stimulate students' interest in language and 'convey the benefit of language knowledge' (p. 35).

The Language Introduction Programme

LIP is a nationwide individual transition programme for newly arrived migrant students in Sweden aged 16–19 (SNAE, 2013). It is organised within upper-secondary education, but the course content is that of compulsory schooling in Sweden. The main purposes of the programme are to ensure a fast transition to further studies or the job market (Swedish Education Act, 2010, p. 800, Chapter 17, §3) and to increase proficiency in Swedish as a second language (SSL). Because of global migration, the heterogeneity of students is high, and the education context is constantly changing. Also, the period of student enrolment at LIP differs greatly. A student with a long history of schooling in their home country is expected to spend a shorter time on LIP, while a student with

2 Mandatory schooling is comparable to CEFR A.1.2– B1.1, and upper-secondary schooling to B1.2–B2.2. (SNAE 2022a, 2022b).

less schooling will likely spend longer.

Nuottaniemi (2023) explores student perspectives on LIP and living in a small rural town in Sweden. The study participants express feelings of being stuck between places and how a lack of language proficiency becomes a factor of immobility (p. 310). Nilsson Folke (2017) also explores student perspectives on LIP and, like Nuottaniemi, describes students expressing feelings of being in an educational waiting room and out of place both in space and time: 'a partly parallel, but disrupted, temporal trajectory that has lost contact with the progressive linear time of the mainstream system' (p. 98). Nilsson Folke also shows how collective and standardised solutions in separation from mainstream schools are recurrent and how this might lead to parallel systems that do not meet the individual needs of LIP students. (p. 90). Bomström Aho (2023) focuses on students' perspectives on LIP education, stating that teachers and faculty members often focus largely on what students lack instead of what they know (p. 77). This affects the expectations and progression of LIP students (see also Wedin 2021). Furthermore, Sharif (2017) argues that LIP students' proficiency in SLL leads to teachers undervaluing their knowledge in other subjects and that students' language repertoires are seldom regarded as resources in the educational context and are therefore not used in classroom practice (p. 168). Gynne (2019) explores LIP classroom practices and how monolingual norms penetrate education in terms of, for example, students being asked not to use their language resources during learning.

Cunningham (2023) focuses on English education at LIP and identifies several organisational challenges. One important aspect of the complexity of teaching English within LIP results from the core focus on SSL in every other LIP subject, meaning that English is set aside since it is the only subject that does not fit into this description (p. 175). Cunningham also emphasises the importance of a passing grade in English for LIP students, stating that without this, their futures are limited (p. 194). This is in line with Bergström (2024), who shows that English is an important component to making a successful transition from LIP. Lack of proficiency in English can become a gatekeeper to future plans for LIP students since a passing grade in English is needed in order to progress within the Swedish education system (p. 22).

Learner identity in a migrant context

Norton (2013) shows how identity is an important feature of learning a new language and how this is linked to students' future goals. The term *investment* links students' motivation to expectations and perceptions of education

(p. 6). The connection between language learning and learner identity is also investigated by Block (2009), who describes language learning as an ongoing process and how learners position themselves influences their learning outcomes. In the American context, Kanno and Kangas (2014) focus on students in English Language Learner (ELL) classes and how placement in the ELL can have a negative effect on both progression and how students position themselves as learners. Also, Kanno and Cromley (2013) show how ELL students' access to further education is linked to their parents' education levels, incomes, and engagement in their children's schooling (p. 110). In addition, Cummins (2000) investigates power structures in classroom settings and how transformative pedagogy can have a positive effect on learner identity and outcomes.

Theoretical perspectives - Language ideologies, learner identity, and power

The theoretical perspectives used in this article are language ideology, learner identity, and power. There are several definitions of *language ideology*, but in this article, the term relates to perceptions of language that are constructed within a group and social divisions such as class, gender, and generation (Kroskrity, 2000). Petersen (2020) defines language ideologies as 'perceived notions, beliefs and /or emotions that people hold about certain social styles, varieties, or features of a language' (p. 7). Gal and Irvine (2019) argue that statements about language involve ideological positions that are made possible through social life, often in contradictory ways, while Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) write that ideologies can be traced through language use and are often deeply rooted in social power (see also Barrett et al., 2023).

A definition of *learner identity* relevant to this research is Norton's (2013) term *investment*. Norton argues that students may be motivated to learn a new language, but if the teaching and classroom content do not align with expectations and ideas of what education is, students' investment in learning is negatively impacted (p. 6). Norton also argues that learning a new language is a renegotiation of identity and that this process is not without obstacles (p.45).

The definitions of *power* for this article rest on Foucault's (2002) perspective of power as socially constructed and renegotiated through social interaction among people. Within society's institutions (p. 338), power can be observed in the core elements of organisations. Schools, for example, use control of time (schedules), value and grant or decline access (grading), and punish (detention) to maintain control over students. Foucault (2017) describes the concept of the panopticon, wherein individuality is a controlling factor (p. 223).

Within a neoliberal society, the individual is expected to administrate his/her success and may also be held accountable for larger problems in society (see also Gershon, 2018). In a society in which everything can be measured, calculated, and evaluated, surveillance and increased individualisation lead to isolation and powerlessness. Foucault (2002) declares, however, that where there is power, there is also resistance (p. 340).

Research regarding LIP seldom focuses on English language education, but given the importance of English proficiency in Sweden, further research is needed. This article contributes to narrowing this research gap.

Aim and research questions

The aim of this article is to explore LIP students' perspectives on English language education at LIP and learner identity. Furthermore, the article investigates how English as a school subject is positioned in relation to power at LIP.

1. What language ideologies are constructed among LIP students within English-language education at LIP?
2. What views on learner identity are verbalised by students in English-language education at LIP?
3. How is English as a school subject at LIP positioned in relation to power?

Method

The methodology for this article is linguistic ethnography (Copland & Creese, 2015; Lillis, 2008) using ethnographic observation and interviews at two Swedish upper-secondary schools over the course of an academic year: Meadow Hill and Slope Hill (pseudonyms). Both schools are upper-secondary schools in a medium-sized town in Sweden, teaching both national programmes and LIP.[3] The data for this article consist of eight individual interviews with LIP students at Slope Hill. All interviewees were students enrolled in Levels 3 or 4 in English, the final two stages of English language education at the LIP. I chose to interview students from these levels as their English was advanced enough to discuss their education and future in relation to English proficiency.[4] Covid-19 restrictions limited my possibility of interviewing students at Meadow Hill. Furthermore, since all English-language education at Meadow Hill was organised in mixed levelled groups, it was not possible to ask questions regarding the

3 During the study, the total number of students at Slope Hill was 759; 84 of these were enrolled in the LIP program.

4 Appendix 1: Interview questions.

specific classroom practices of Levels 3 and 4[5] to the participating students at Meadow Hill.

Participants

All participants were given pseudonyms (Table 1).

Table 1
Participants.

Name	Languages (bold: L1)[6]	English level	Years at LIP
Ali	**Urdu**, English, Punjabi, Swedish	4	1
Gabrielle	**Kirundi**, English, French, Kinyarwanda, Luganda, Swedish	4	>1
Guled	**Arabic**, Swedish, English	3	4
Juanes	**Spanish**, English, Swedish	3 (later 4)	4
Noor	**Arabic**, Swedish, French, English	3	2
Rahma	**Somali**, Swedish, Arabic, English	3	4
Reza	**Dari**, Pashto, Swedish, English	4	2
Selma	**Tigrinya**, Swedish, English	4	3

Ali wants to become a computer engineer and describes English as a valuable resource for him in Sweden. Gabrielle wants to become a bank clerk, and since she is more proficient in English than Swedish, her interview is conducted in English instead of Swedish. Guled does not have any set plans for his future and thinks that English is difficult in school but easy outside of school. Juanes wants to become a photographer and describes proficiency in English as important in his future working life. Noor wants to become an international entrepreneur and describes English as an important factor in attaining that dream. Rahma wants to become a nurse, and even if she finds English challenging, she says that she needs to learn it for her university studies. Reza wants to work in a store and says that he understands that proficiency in English is important in Swedish society since most Swedish people speak it fluently. Selma wants to become a psychologist but expresses feelings of lack of motivation in the English classroom at LIP.

5 Level 3 is comparable to CEFR level A2.2 and level 4 is comparable to CEFR level B1.1 (SNAE, 2022a, 2022b).

6 Languages are presented in the order ranked by students regarding proficiency: L1 first and then decreasing proficiency, to the language they had mastered least. Some students have more than one L1 or fluid boundaries between L1 and L2 but chose one language for L1.

Interviews and transcription

All participants gave written consent and were informed about their right to withdraw their participation at any time. The interviews were conducted in Swedish or English in a private room. Some participants told me that they were afraid of their teacher knowing that they were part of the study and, therefore, wanted to be interviewed more privately. All participants were given the opportunity to read and correct the transcript. The transcripts were produced to represent the content of what the participants said and have been edited to include written conventions such as punctuation. The original Swedish[7] transcripts were translated by the author. Since the students at LIP are in the process of learning both Swedish and English, the quotations in this article might contain errors in for example word order or grammar compared to standard Swedish or English. The author has decided not to edit these so-called errors and to keep the quotations in their original form.

Transcript conventions:
Italics for emphasis.
[ ] for an explanation
[…] for ellipses.

Data analysis

The data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019) and Foucauldian (1997, 2002, 2017) perspectives on power. The analysis of the data was conducted using the original (Swedish) transcriptions, which were later translated into English. Firstly, the transcribed interviews were repeatedly read; thereafter, codes were generated, and each interview was coded. This led to identifying and understanding the themes while connecting them in a theme map. At this stage, definitions for each theme were created, and the connections, overlaps, and contradictions between them were analysed. The themes were *the future*, *information about English*, *language ideologies*, *use of L1*, *learner identity, the role of English*, *transition from LIP*, and *power*. The themes were then also analysed in relation to Foucault's perspective on power.

Research design

The data set for this article (marked in bold in Table 2) is part of a larger

7 Except for the one interview when the participant wanted to be interviewed in English.

study involving ethnographic observation and interviews at Meadow Hill and Slope Hill.

Table 2
Data overview (larger study; data used in this study marked in bold).

Participants	Observations	Interviews	Field notes	Photographs
		22[8]		
		8 students[9]		
85	78	5 faculty members	50,000+ words	300+
		6 English teachers		
		2 principals		

The research was conducted in line with All European Academies' (2017) and The Swedish Research Council's code of ethics (2017), focusing on the concepts of *reliability*, *honesty*, *respect*, and *accountability* (p. 4). The study was approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority.[10]

Results

This section presents the results in relation to the three most dominant themes: *language ideologies*, *learner identity*, and *power*, and the connections, overlaps, and contradictions between them.

Language ideologies

In the analysis, the theme of *language ideologies* is linked to the theme of the *use of L1*. The students speak of the usage of L1 as being accepted but that it comes with stipulations, for example, that it is permissible to use Google Translate or ask a friend with the same L1. It becomes clear during the interviews that the unspoken rule of the classroom is that students' L1 is to be used in silence and alone. 'We know that we can't speak Dari in class' (Reza); 'We should not use our language' (Rahma); 'We use Swedish out of respect' (Guled). Learning English is done through the use of Swedish. Juanes, one of the participants, describes this as challenging. Juanes' first language is Spanish, and

8 A total of 22 interviews were conducted with 21 interview participants, as one of the participants wanted to be interviewed twice.
9 All students interviewed were enrolled at Slope Hill.
10 Application approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (application number: 2021-02629).

in his interview, he expresses a wish to learn English through his L1 (Spanish) instead of Swedish. 'But we are learning English with Swedish' (Juanes). This classroom practice is something that Juanes describes as very confusing and time-consuming.

Students' language repertoires include previous knowledge of English in various ways. Ali, who has been educated in English for several years in his home country, describes *his* variety of English as not being valued in the same way as the other English varieties, such as British English. 'I speak English like an Urdu person. […] I can speak like a Pakistani speaking English'. Ali regards English as a valuable language resource for his life in Sweden and speaks of the benefits of having a high proficiency in English. Several of the participants described how English plays a central role in their lives. They also speak of English as a resource during their migration or initial time in Sweden, when English functioned as a bridge between them and their new society. The participants describe English as a lingua franca and a way of communicating with others in different places in the world. English is 'The language of the world,' says Guled. However, English is not considered a priority or resource for LIP students; instead, the national language of Swedish is seen as granting them access to the larger Swedish community and school system. When discussing the importance of English in Swedish society, Noor describes regret: 'Unfortunately, I have only studied Swedish. Swedish, Swedish, but that was wrong. I should have focused on English too.' Questions regarding participants' awareness of the importance of English in Swedish society, all the students said that English is an important language and that it functions almost as a second language in Sweden. However, none of the students say that this is something that is addressed in school. 'We only speak of Swedish', says Noor. The theme *language ideologies* includes both monolingual norms and the restricted use of students L1 in the classroom. Foucault (2002) states that language use is never neutral and can be connected to power structures. The monolingual habitus and focus on the national language in education risks the creation of an unjust language hierarchy (see also Gogolin, 2013; Bergström et al., 2024).

Learner identity

The theme of *learner identity* often connects to themes about *transition from LIP* and *future*. Several of the participants describe future plans that could easily be linked to learning English: becoming a computer engineer (Ali), international photographer (Juanes), or university student (Gabrielle). The syllabus for English in Sweden states that English education should be based on

student's interests, goals, and life experiences (SNAE, 2022a). Guled describes using English while engaging in online gaming and positioning himself as a valid English speaker in this context: '[English comes] automatic without me thinking.' He states that outside of school English comes naturally, that he learns English in his own way, and is a competent learner and user of English in terms of communication and interaction. However, while Guled describes English as something that comes naturally outside of school, he considers it to be very difficult in school. Guled describes the classroom as an environment disconnected from his English learning:

> But here in school, I sit in the classroom, I feel in this environment like I stop, [it] doesn't work, [I] don't want to continue because there is too much grammar, and it is the classroom environment

Guled speaks of wanting to learn English using his communication skills instead of grammar drills, which he describes as common classroom practice. The analysis shows that Guled is invested in learning English. However, his learning strategies and goals conflict with the English-language classroom practice. Rahma also describes the difference between the English taught in school, and the English used outside of school. She describes finding it difficult to speak English in school. However, during her summer job at a café, she had the opportunity to practice speaking English with a customer. Rahma says that this broadened her understanding of English as a resource to her. 'I think it [English] is needed a lot'. The importance of English became more visible to Rahma and affected her willingness to invest in learning English.

However, the participants also describe difficulties practising or being exposed to English outside of school. Rahma, Reza, and Noor state that they had difficulties finding places in which to speak English, and when they listen to songs or watch movies to expose themselves to English, the comprehension of the content is up to them alone. "Yes. I listen sometimes to English music with translation. It is rather hard to use to listen to music and stuff" (Guled). Several students speak of English as a subject that they practise alone and then show to their teachers to demonstrate mastery: 'English is a subject that you should teach yourself' (Noor). The focus on individual progression creates an isolating individualisation. This, in combination with the lack of information regarding the importance of English for the transition from LIP, means that everything and nothing at the same time are vital. Foucault (2017) describes how individuality ultimately leads to constant measurement, a never-ending dossier of examinations to be undertaken, and impossible norms that make education increasingly like a prison (p. 284).

Noor also speaks of wanting to talk to other girls that she knows in English but feels ashamed of her English: 'Those girls are so good at English. I do not dare to talk to them, they are so good.' Interaction in English can be difficult for a beginner, especially when you know that others are far more advanced than you are. Norton (2013) describes silence in classrooms as a way of protecting students from humiliation (p. 7). She asserts that learning a new language as an adult or adolescent is a redefining of identity and a process that is not always free of conflict and contradiction (p. 48).

Power

During the analysis, themes relating to *power* become visible and often in connection to *the role of English*, *information about English*, and the *future*. These themes connect in various ways, for example, regarding the participants receiving information about the importance of English in further education and the job market by the school. All students answered that they had received no such information. 'We never speak of that' (Guled). When English is addressed, it is in terms of how to study it at home or which assignments to hand in. Several students described finding information about English themselves outside of school: Selma and Rahma described being given this information by their guardian or parent. Rahma stated that her teacher had spoken about English being important in Sweden but not *why* or for *what*, making the importance of English distant from the reality of LIP.

The analysis shows that the theme of power can also be connected to how the students describe their access to support. According to the Swedish Education Act (2010, p. 800, Chapter 3, §5), students who are in danger of failing a course are entitled to additional support. Several of the interviewees describe difficulties with English as a subject: 'English is not good' (Rahma) and 'Very difficult' (Reza). During her interview, Noor describes struggling with English but not telling her teacher out of fear. When she is told that she is as entitled to support as any other student in the Swedish school system, she replies, 'I know, but I don't dare to [ask]'. Noor states that she is afraid of being transferred to a lower level of English if she speaks up about her struggles, which would affect her chances of moving forward in the school system. Since school progress is a factor in the asylum process (Upper-Secondary School Act, 2017, p. 353, §3), failing school comes with high risks and severe consequences for LIP students. The lack of information and support creates a void where power structures silence students' resistance.

Power also became visible during Gabrielle's interview when asked

whether she has been offered a place on upper-secondary courses in English because of her high level of English. She replies that no one has spoken to her about her English skills or offered her any individual plan for progression in English. 'Maybe if I had asked, they would have told me'. In this situation, the students find themselves in a catch-22 situation: they are not given information because they do not ask for it, but do not ask for it because they are not aware of its existence. This lack of access to information can be linked to power. Kanno and Kangas (2014) argue that the social capital of both students and parents is vital to the provision of information regarding educational paths. Therefore, prior knowledge about the structure of the school system benefits those who possess it and are used to navigating institutional structures in society (p. 868-870).

Discussion

LIP students construct several different language ideologies, perhaps the most dominant of which is the monolingual normative focus on the national language of Swedish. This may be unsurprising since one of LIP's core goals is proficiency in SSL. However, another core goal of LIP is to transition the students to further education and the job market (SNAE, 2013), and herein lies a contradiction. Without a passing grade in English, LIP students face a limited future (Cunningham, 2023) and risk long-term inequality in fields such as politics, education, and economics, and losing "opportunities to participate in different social and cultural contexts, as well as in global studies and working life" (SNAE, 2022a). The analysis shows that the focus on SSL marginalises English as a school subject and creates a language hierarchy that disadvantages LIP students in terms of their learning of English. Several participants describe ambivalence regarding English as a school subject and the importance of English in Swedish society. They state that English is an important subject and a valuable resource for life in Sweden. However, at LIP, the national language of Swedish is prioritised.

Bias related to different student language resources, including English, is made visible through Ali's comments about his English being that of an 'Urdu person' or 'a Pakistani'. This comment also indicates that he is aware of prejudices that affect how his English skills are evaluated and valued. Norton (2103) argues that regardless of whether a student is invested in their learning, biased classroom practices have negative effects on student motivation and progression. Biases related to language and the construction of language ideologies are not always performed consciously (Kroskrity, 2000) but nevertheless affect LIP

students and their ability to use their language resources to learn English. Also, Wollard and Schieffelin (1994) argue that, when investigating language ideologies, we must also address power relations and investigate the social construction of language (p. 58)'. Language use is never neutral (Gal & Irvine, 2019) and how schools value and position students' L1s can be linked to power structures and injustice. The results make it clear that students' L1s are not regarded as a resource in the English-language classroom. Instead, it is the national language of Swedish that is used together with English. Tholin (2014) refers to this use of Swedish in the English-language classroom as *Swedishness* and states that the students who benefit from this practice are native Swedes and not minority students. Gynne (2019) shows that the language resources used in the classroom are often restricted to languages that the teacher has mastered.

Norton's (2013) term *investment* links students' motivation and dedication to learning the target language. However, this is a process of renegotiation of identity and often involves conflict: 'investment in the target language is also an investment in learner's own identity, an identity, which is constantly changing across time and space.' (p. 51). The participants in this study have various goals and dreams that could be linked to learning English: to be an entrepreneur, a university student, travel, etc. The syllabus for English (SNAE, 2022a) states that education should be implemented based on students' interests, living conditions, and previous experience. For Guled, investment in learning English takes place outside the classroom; the classroom practices that Guled describes are far from the domains where he finds English useful, and this affects Guled's engagement in learning English at school. Norton claims that students' interests are not distractions from learning and should instead be regarded as the core of a student's investment in learning the target language (p. 51). If Guled's interests could be more closely linked to classroom content, he might feel more invested in learning English in school. Another example is Rahma, whose investment in learning English was also connected to an experience outside of school. The importance of English to both Guled and Rahma can be traced to their lived experiences, interests, and future plans.

In relation to power, English is positioned as a subject of less importance than Swedish (see also Bergström, 2024). Also, a lack of information regarding the importance of English as a school subject to LIP students' futures is evident. Kanno and Kangas (2014) discuss how increased equity in education requires power structures to be challenged and information about rights and opportunities to be given to students. There is a risk of education injustice when students' backgrounds affect their ability to navigate the education system. Many LIP students arrive in Sweden without their families and must navigate the

institutional systems alone. When the students have parents with them, these parents are generally not able to provide assistance with navigating the institutional system in Sweden. There is thus a risk that such students do not receive relevant information regarding how to transition into Swedish society.

Furthermore, the results show the power differences between students and their teachers are linked to fear of reprisals and that speaking up might affect the individual asylum process. Foucault (1971) states that not everyone may speak of anything (p. 52) or have the power to resist power injustice. Foucault (1997, 2017) shows that when a person is individualised and set apart from others, resistance is difficult (2017, p. 223). Therefore, the structure of LIP, as an individual programme that links education with legislative structures (Upper-Secondary School Act, 2017, p. 353), makes it difficult for students to resist injustice.

Conclusions

In recent decades, Swedish classrooms have become increasingly linguistically diverse because of migration (SNAE, 2020). This has led to calls for changes to education practices to ensure equal education for all students (Swedish Education Act, 2010, p. 800, Chapter 1, 9§). In a multilingual and diverse classroom setting, teachers must use all the information they possess about their students to maintain not only motivation and investment but also comprehension. Here, students' L1s can be a powerful didactic tool. Iversen (2017) shows that students seldom inform their teachers of the importance of their L1 in their learning. Reza's statement, 'We know that we can't speak Dari in class', thus shows the language hierarchy and makes evident the neglect of students' language resources. How schools value students' language resources can open up classroom practices, enable students to comprehend course content, and invite students to position themselves as valid language learners. However, the very opposite is also possible when students' language resources are not valued or used in the learning process. Although the students stated that it was acceptable to use their L1 in English class, they *also* said that this was disrespectful. Other researchers have addressed the invisibility of students' L1s as resources and tools in their learning in relation to LIP (Gynne, 2019; Nuottaniemi, 2023; Sharif, 2020). This practice deprives students of valuable resources in their learning and creates a monolingual norm that penetrates all parts of education. During the interviews, the students were asked to imagine ways of using their L1 in ways that are not currently used in their English-language classrooms. Many students described a desire to be able to ask questions and clarify things

in their L1. The students also proposed more interactive approaches to language learning – working together with friends who shared the same language resources but also being able to speak less Swedish and more English in class.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Firstly, because the data consists of only eight student interviews in a particular school context, the results could be restricted. Therefore, further research on English-language education at LIP is needed. Nevertheless, the study contributes to knowledge regarding learner identity and power structures associated with learning English at LIP. It is vital to bring forward an understanding of how proficiency in English can serve as an important component for a successful transition from LIP to other domains in Swedish society. Proficiency in Swedish is important for LIP students to integrate into Swedish society; it is, however, not the *only* proficiency they need for their future lives in Sweden. This article contributes to these discussions and narrows the research gap regarding English-language education at LIP.

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Appendix

Interview questions - student interview

Background and previous experience

1. Could you please tell me a little about yourself?
2. Please describe your time here at LIP.
   - What do you consider to be the greatest challenges in your daily studies?
   - What do you consider to be the greatest possibilities in your daily studies?
3. What are your future plans (after LIP)?

English

4. How do your regard English as a school subject? Is it a difficult or easy subject in school?
5. Do you need English in your life?
   - If yes, for what?
   - If no, why not?
6. To reach your future goal/plans (the answer for question 3) do you need English to do so?
7. Would you like more help in English?
   - If yes, with what?
8. What kind of support is there at school if you, as a student, are struggling with English?
9. Do you have access to a mother tongue study guide during English class?
   - Would you like to?
   - Pros and cons of having a mother tongue study guide available during English class?

Organization

10. If you are good at English, can you change levels in English at a faster pace?
    - Do you know how this process works?
11. Is the importance of English for future studies and working life discussed with you and your parents/caregivers together with a student counsellor or at the development meetings?
12. What information regarding the importance of English for future studies and professional life is given to you and your parents/caregivers?

13. What languages do you speak?
14. Are languages that you know used in the classroom practice?
    - How are they used?
    - Do you have any thoughts on how your languages could be used (in the classroom)?

Additional topics

15. Is there anything else that you would like to address?

Biographical note

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