



Vocational Swedish for Students with Limited Education in Swedish for Immigrants



NORDISKE KONFERANSEN OM GRUNNLEGGENDE LITERASITET FOR VOKSNE INNVANDRERE
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Follow-up research on orientation courses in vocational Swedish

- During 2023, Walldén followed and documented SFI (Swedish for Immigrants) instruction—specifically orientation courses in vocational Swedish for students taking SFI at levels A (and B).
- The courses run for 20 weeks.
- The course is mandatory for participants in the “establishment program” who have an education requirement.
- The focus was on study visits, which were prepared for and followed up (visits included a factory bakery, a fire station, and a study association).
- Collaboration took place between two teachers who planned and conducted the course, as well as a recruiter who arranged opportunities for the study visits.
- One lesson per week (90 minutes).
- Builds on previous research in which students from various tracks were offered language practice (Walldén, 2024a; Walldén & Winlund, 2024)



Purpose

The purpose of the study is to examine what conditions vocational Swedish instruction creates for participants/students with limited formal education to develop different dimensions of multilingual literacy.

Workplace experiences in language education

- It is important to promote the development of language skills through materials and communicative contexts that are authentic and relevant to the students (see e.g., Hajer & Meestringa, 2020; Walldén, 2020).
- Internships do not necessarily provide good opportunities to communicate in Swedish (Sandwall, 2013) – but they can also offer chances to speak the target language with L1 speakers and learn new words and expressions in context (Walldén, 2024a; Walldén, 2024b).
- SFI has become overly focused on students' employability – but there are few empirical studies on this (see Rosén & Bagga-Gupta, 2013; Sandwall & Lindberg, 2017).
- International research on internships in language education tends to focus on specific professional programs involving highly educated and relatively advanced L2 speakers (discussed in Walldén, 2024a).
- Second language research targeting adults often has a bias toward highly educated learners in academic language learning environments (Bigelow & Tarone, 2004)




Resources for students/participants without (or with limited) prior formal schooling.

Can be e.g.:

- **Oral proficiency in several languages** (Pettit & Tarone, 2015)
- **Experiences of participating in writing practices** (Wedin 2013, 2015)
- **Memory techniques and strategies** (Kurvers et al., 2006)
- **Social skills** (Bigelow & Schwartz, 2010)

Challenges for students/participants without (or with limited) prior formal schooling



Important – it's a diverse group!

Unfamiliarity with culture-specific school practices (DeCapua & Marschall, 2009; Winlund, 2021)
- how to "do school"

Multimodality... (Kress, 2010): text, tables, diagrams, maps... can pose a challenge (Altherr Flores, 2017; Burt, Peyton, & Schaetzel, 2008).

Unfamiliarity with written language practices: phonological awareness, distinguishing form from content, solving syllogisms (Kurvers et al 2006, 2015; Tarone et al., 2009)

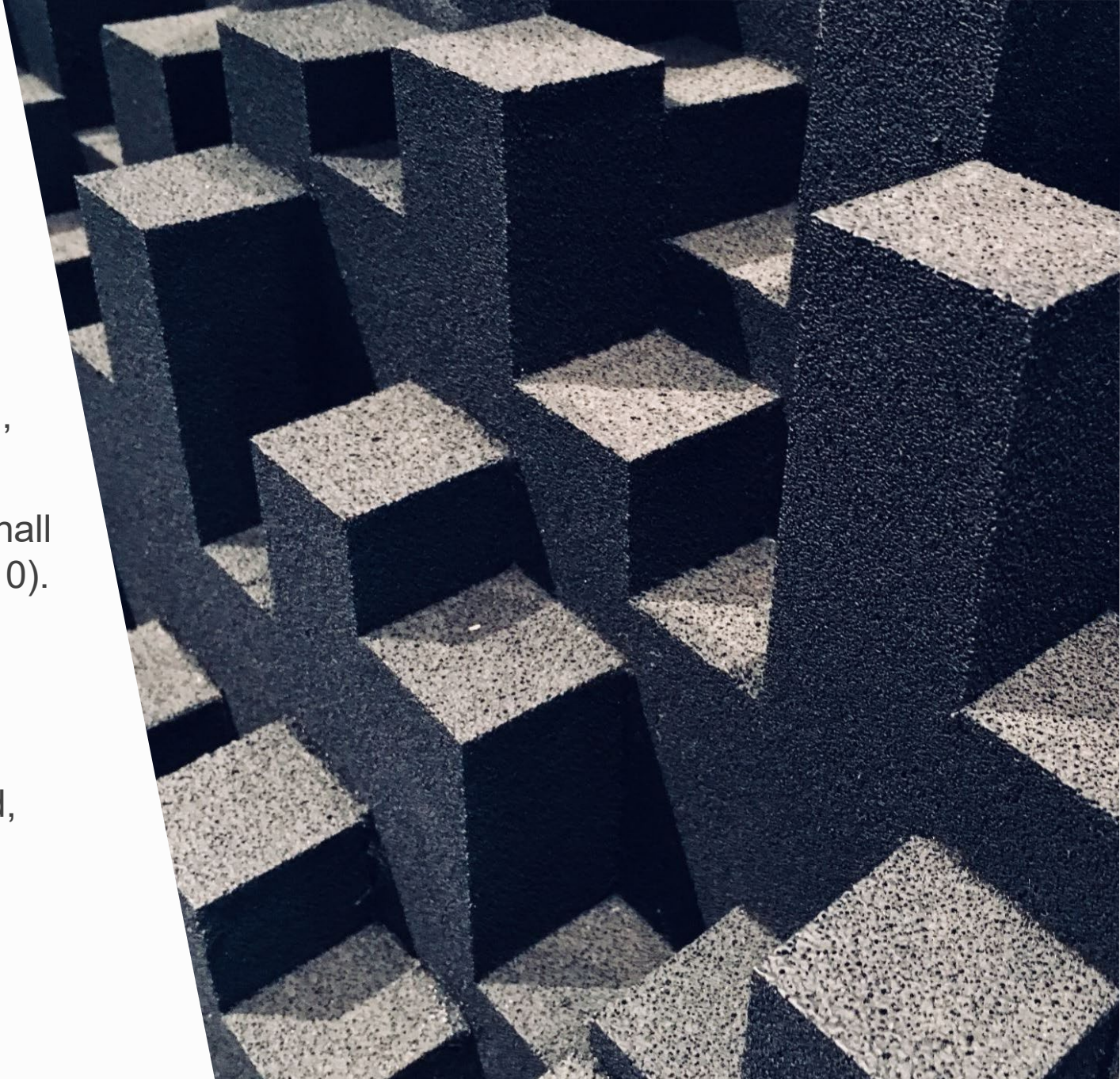
Learning to read and write in a second language (Alver, 2013)

Experiences of war and traumatic experiences before, during, and after flight (Abdi 2007; Bigelow & Schwartz 2010)

Teaching may need to be designed differently (Crandall, 2018; Marshall & DeCapua, 2013; Montero, 2018).

Research on teaching students/participants with limited prior formal schooling.

- Start from the participants' experiences and language development needs to participate in society (Franks, 2011; Warriner, 2011; Wedin, 2023).
- Move from the concrete to the abstract (Marshall & DeCapua, 2013; Bigelow and Schwarz, 2010).
- Work with oracy/oral skills... (Pettit, 2018)...
- AND the formal aspects of language – in meaningful contexts (Kurvers, 2015). Use the students' L1 for reading acquisition (Mörnerud, 2010).
- Develop Multilingual Literacy (Hornberger, 1989).



Theoretical framework: The continua of biliteracy

Figure 1. Continua of Biliteracy adapted from Hornberger (1989)

Traditionally low valued	← →	Traditionally high valued
Minority Content <i>Students' personal and multicultural experiences</i>		Majority Content <i>Societal and majority culture content and expectations</i>
Everyday <i>Language for everyday and student-near situations</i>		Formal and Specialized <i>Language and concepts related to working life, civic participation, and education</i>
L1 (first language) <i>Languages students know in addition to Swedish</i>		L2 (second language) <i>The target language, that is, Swedish</i>
Reception <i>Listening and reading</i>		Production <i>Writing and speaking</i>
Oral <i>Use of spoken language</i>		Written <i>Use of written language</i>

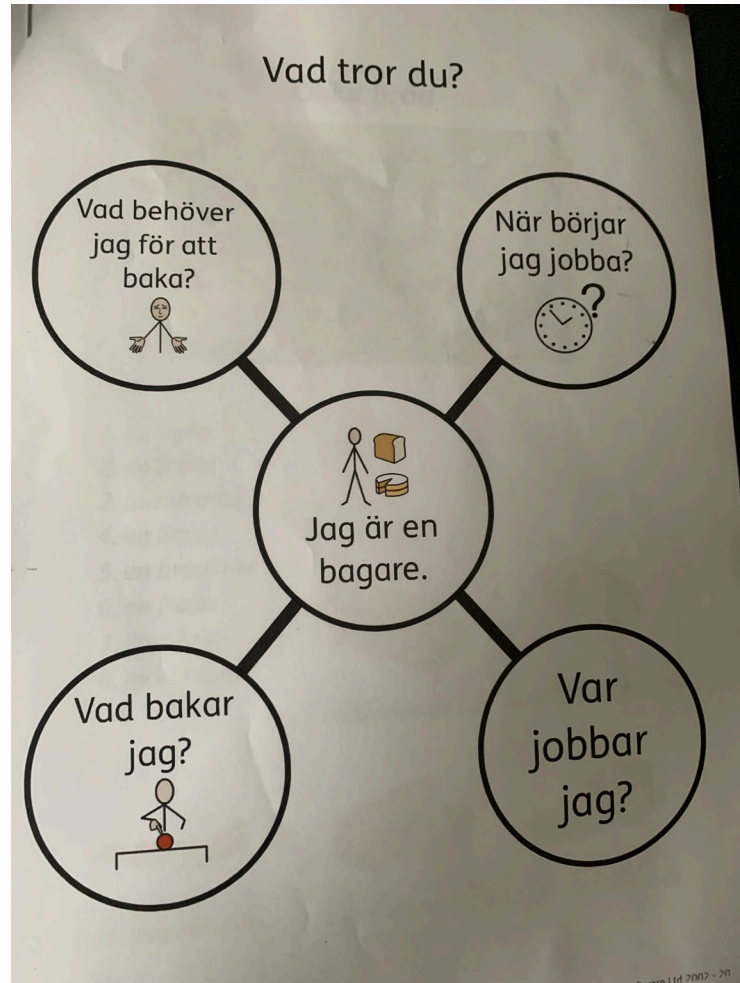
Data Collection

- The teaching was documented through notes, audio recordings, and photographs of the classroom whiteboard.
- Interviews with the two responsible teachers (and four selected students).
- Mother tongue teacher and English teacher – lacked previous experience of sfi (Swedish for immigrants) teaching.

Analytical procedure


- **Iterative qualitative method** (Tracy, 2020) with movement between empirical data and theoretical perspectives linked to the study's research questions.
 1. Walldén identified transcribed teaching sequences focused on vocational Swedish, e.g., vocational themes, study visits
 2. The CoBi model is used to analyze the conversations with regard to which dimensions of multilingual development were emphasized.
- **Findings?**

Following the interest of the participants: focus on the baker profession



Focus on vocabulary, reading, interaction ...

Vad behöver vi för att baka?







1. ägg
2. mjöl
3. mjölk
4. smör
5. nötter
6. socker
7. vaniljstång
8. råsocker
9. visp
10. träska


Ivan jobbar i bageri

Jag heter Ivan och jag arbetar som bagare.
Jag arbetar på ett litet bageri i Landskrona.
Varje dag bakar jag olika bröd.
Jag bakar också bullar och olika kakor.

Jag börjar jobba tidigt på morgonen.
Jag gör degar.
Jag **formar** bröd och bullar.
Kunderna kan köpa **nybakat** bröd.

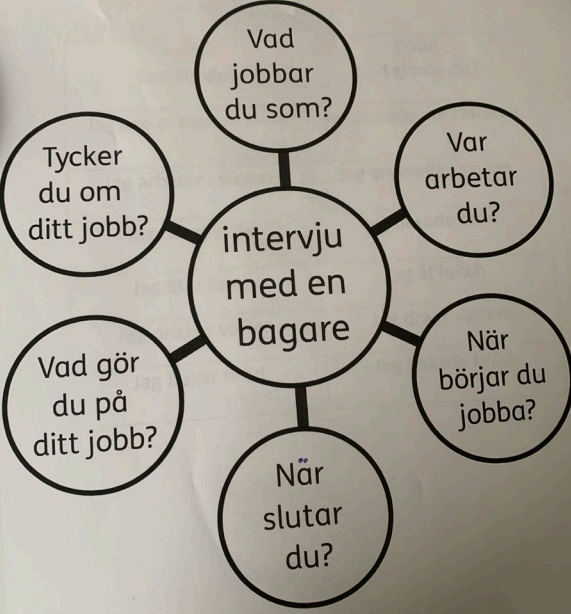


Ivan formar bröd och bullar.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MICG2Ao7HE>

Yrkessvenska A



intervju med en bagare

- Vad jobbar du som?
- Var arbetar du?
- När börjar du jobba?
- När slutar du?
- Vad gör du på ditt jobb?
- Tycker du om ditt jobb?

Wörntschneider © Wörntschneider 1.11

Example of interaction

Rania: What do you do at your work? What do you do. [reads from the paper] /.../ That, I don't understand. [laughs] Speak but don't understand.

Robert: Yes yes, exactly. What do you do at your work. And that work. Work as a baker. What tasks. What does a baker do?

Rania: /.../ Worked bread. Croissant.

Robert: Croissant, yes.

Rania: (Cake).

Robert: Dough, yes.

Rania: Cake.

Robert: One makes dough. Or do you mean ca-?

Rania: Cake. Cake or.

Robert: Do you mean cakes? Do you mean cakes? If you say "cake" like in English.

Rania: Cake, that that. [flips through something]

Robert: Yes, it's good to have pictures, huh? [laughs]

Rania: That. [points at a picture]

Robert: Yes, cakes.

Rania: Works Morocco that [points]. Works.

Robert: Aha. So you made cakes in Morocco?

Rania: Cake? Swedish?

Robert: Cakes.

Rania: Cakes. One uh [reads in the booklet] cakes. Cake. One cake?

Study visit that was followed up

Teacher: We visited. We and some of you. Afraa was with us. Who else? Who was with us? Liyana was with us too. We were. Or we visited a bakery. We went there. We went there. And we looked ourselves. But not everyone. Not everyone could come. What is this? [points] What do you do with this machine?

Student: Dough.

Teacher: Aha, what do you do?

Student: Mix.

Teacher: Someone said dough. We have dough. And you mix. So it's a dough mixer. A dough mixer. Dough. Mix. Together it becomes dough mixer. A dough mixer. But it's not small, is it?

Det finns ett bageri [redacted]. Bageriet heter [redacted] i [redacted]

Bagarna där börjar kl 23:00 på natten och slutar kl 4:00 på morgonen.

De gör deg. De blandar vatten, mjöl, salt och jäst i en degblandare.

Man har olika kryddor som kanel och kardemumma i deget.

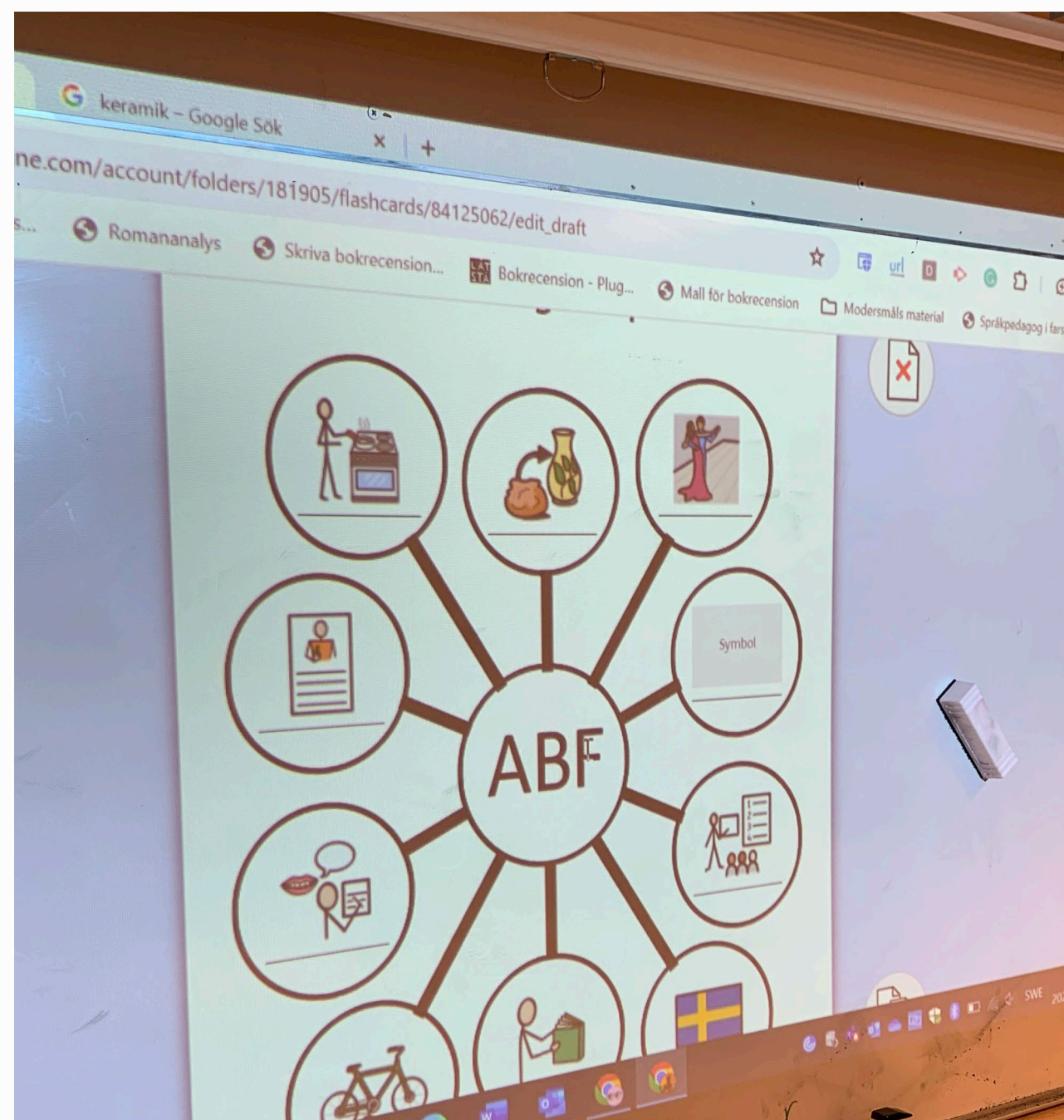
Bagarna bakar olika bröd. Du kan köpa bröder på Lidl och Willy:s.

De gör ströbröd och skorpor också.

en degblandare

flera degblandare

en ugn



Leveraging participants' linguistic resources (interview)

Irena: You also mentioned translanguaging, that it permeates the way of working in the classroom in some way.

R: Can you give some examples of that?

Irena: That you seek, like. Support the students in that they should, like, think in their mother tongue. And look for different concepts in their mother tongue. That they shouldn't have this idea that as soon as we step into the classroom, we close the door, and we actually close the door to all other languages except... uh, that it's exactly the opposite.

Shabnam: There was a lot that if we were talking about a word, then. I asked the question, what is it called, so what do you say in Arabic or in Persian or in... well, the languages that I didn't know, like Swahili or Maban. I've never... But they were allowed to. They supported each other if there was someone in the class who... who knew. For example, in Maban. We have two. Two students. A feeling that one of them is a little... a little more... This student knows a little more. And they supported the other student. **Irena:** So then there was also development of their literacy in their mother tongue

Conversations based on images and study visits

Teacher: We talked about spices. And in the text it says cinnamon. /.../ What did we say in Arabic? Cinnamon. /.../ Does anyone know? Darchi? Same as in Persian? Do you know in your language?

Student: Qirfa.

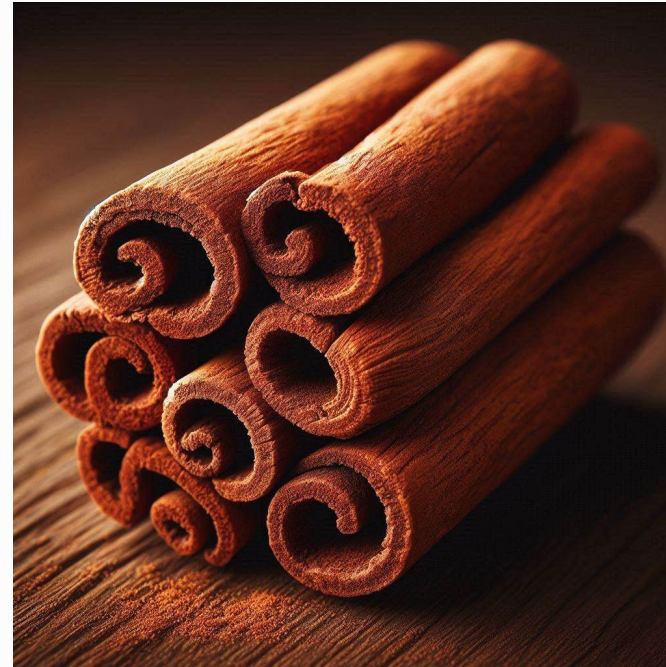
Teacher: Qirfa? Okay. And in Maban?

Student: (Karfa).

Teacher: (Karfa). Qirfa. Similar. And this. That. [points at cardamom]

Student: Haal.

Teacher: Haal. In Arabic, in Persian. In Maban too? /.../ They are spices. Different spices. Cinnamon, this spice cardamom. It has two m's, cardamom. [emphasizes "m"] -dum. Cardamom. Two "m"s. Cardamom. Do you remember?



Oral language or written material?

The teachers' expressed a wish to promote conversation

Irena: We focused a lot on conversation as well. There was a lot, a lot of interaction.

Shabnam: And they talked.

Irena: Conversation, conversation, that was number one for us.

Shabnam: We practiced interviewing each other even in the A-course, about bakers for example. And we used different mind maps a lot. Different questions.

Fritidsaktiviteter på ABF

Joakim: Hej! Jag heter Joakim. Jag jobbar på ABF. Hur kan jag hjälpa dig idag?

Selma: Hej! Jag heter Selma och läser svenska på sfi. Har ni några **fritidsaktiviteter** här?

Joakim: Ja, absolut! Vi har olika fritidsaktiviteter. Vad är du intresserad av?

Selma: Jag tycker om att måla.

Joakim: Vi har en kurs i måleri på tisdagar kl. 17:00 – 18:00.

Selma: När börjar kursen?

Joakim: Den börjar den femte december.

Example

Teacher: Selma asked if they had any leisure activities, and what does Joakim say?

Student: Yes absolutely. We have di-, different. Free.

Teacher: Leisure.

Student: Leisure. Activi-.

Teacher: Exactly. Activities. So you have leisure, then activities. Yes, absolutely. We have different, not just one, different leisure activities. Different. Okay.

Student: What are you not.

Teacher: Inte-

Student: Intereased?

Teacher: Interested

Student: Interested.

Teacher: In. Interested in. That means like. What is it that you like? What is it that you want to do.

Conversation with student

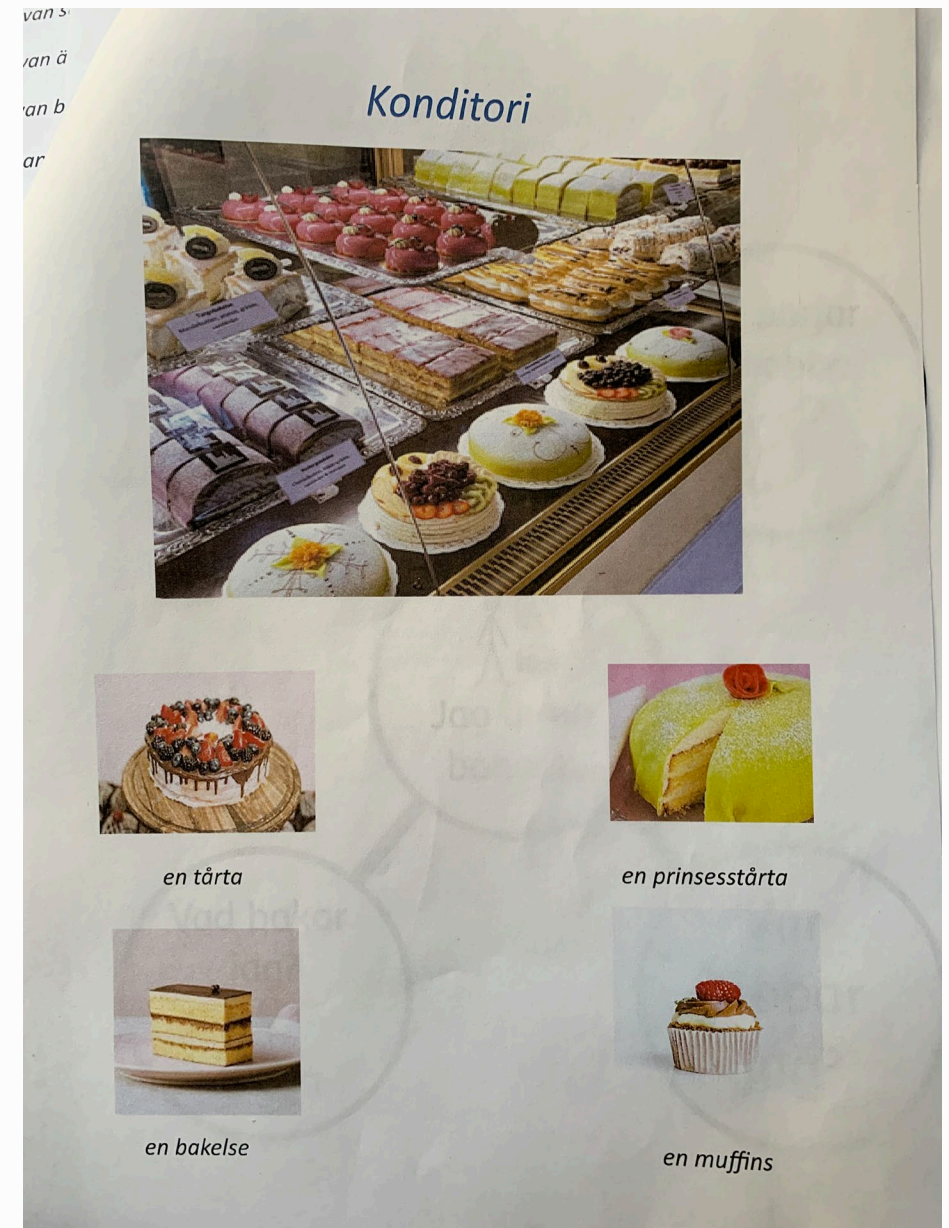
Rania: Yes, that one. Princess.

Researcher: Yes, princess cake. **Rania:** Morocco, this one. [laughs] **Researcher:** Is there princess cake in Morocco?

Rania: Yes, I worked with that in Morocco. [points]

Researcher: That one too? I knew, I just thought it was Swedish. [laughs] Just Swedish cake.

Rania: Exactly, yes. [reads from the paper] Pas-? [pastry]



Students' voices

Noor (through interpreter): She says that it is. If there are, like, more oral exercises. Maybe that would, like, help us practice speaking. That's what she thinks. /.../

Amani (through interpreter): Yes, he also says. It's the same thing, if there is a lot of speaking and oral skills that he wants to develop here. /.../ Yes, he says if there is, like, more repetition and oral work, better than written, because they want to speak.

Robert: If this course were to continue into the spring, how would you like the course to be then?

Afraa (through interpreter): Yes, well, it's always the language above all. That she would focus especially on written language, yes.

Robert: Can you explain a little more what is important about written language specifically?

Afraa (through interpreter): If you can't read written language, then it becomes difficult to be able to read instructions at a workplace, for example.

Students' voices

About the teacher (Shabnam):

Amani (through interpreter): Shabnam is good. She is a good teacher. Because I don't know much Swedish. So she explains to me.

R: And Noor? Can you?

Noor (through interpreter): Yes, it's the same. [laughs]. /..../
The method is slow, slowly slowly. Then we have time to understand.

Conclusions

- The bakery theme was a productive entry point to the course – easy to relate to and connect with everyday life.
- Relatively large focus on vocabulary work (different kinds of bread, baking utensils, activities at a study association), reading comprehension, and whole-class discussions.
- A context for practicing reading comprehension, conversation, and grammar (tense).
- Fruitful elements: varied forms of support (visual, multilingual, interactive), shared experiences, content that interested the students, and a clear resource perspective.
- Based on CoBi, written language, specialized vocabulary, and reception (listening/reading) were emphasized.
- The students appreciate the course.

Conclusions

- The teachers produced material related to the study visits, but the visual and written presentation was sometimes difficult to interpret.
- Examples and mind maps did not always function as support for dialogue.
- Written material hindered the participants' engagement in the dialogue: trying to decode questions and workplace-related vocabulary: talking to each other in other languages, asking the teacher about the words.
- Focus on reading comprehension rather than on oral communication: formal dialogues, formal written language not oral language or the participants' experiences linked to these themes.

There was a lack of focus on functional oral language for everyday and working life.

Didactic Implications and Development Opportunities

There are good opportunities to stimulate their oral production and use of everyday language in communicative activities:

- pair talks, which are based on the students' everyday experiences of, for example, baking
- maximize focus on spoken language and oral production
- jointly prepare questions to promote the students' linguistic and social participation during the study visits themselves.

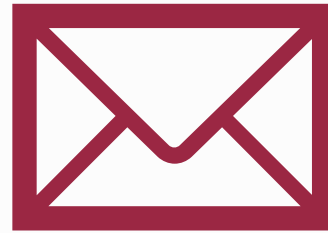
Didactic Implications and Development Opportunities

- follow up on study visits through joint writing: LEA (language experience approach, genre pedagogy (e.g., Walldén, 2020)
- create conditions for movement between spoken language (the students' oral suggestions) and written language (the joint text), as well as between everyday language (to travel or walk in a familiar environment) and more specialized language (to describe the study visit location).
- link language-developing activities to the text, such as pronunciation practice, vocabulary repetition, and analysis of linguistic structure (e.g., spelling and syntax).
- there are good reasons to continue the investment in orientation courses in vocational Swedish for sfi A and B (Swedish for immigrants, levels A and B).

Thanks!



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