"Marita Is Hard of Hearing too. She Understands More": Linguistic Care Work Among Immigrant Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students and Teachers

Liz Adams Lyngbäck[1][a], Enni Paul[2], Christina Hedman[3], Jenny Rosén[3]

[1] *Department of Special Education, Stockholm University,* [2] *Department of Education, Stockholm University,* [3] *Department of Teaching and Learning, Stockholm University*

Article Information

Abstract

Drawing on Crip Linguistics, disability justice and epistemic justice in educational contexts, we present how linguistic care is enacted between students and teachers in adult education for immigrant deaf and hard of hearing students in Sweden. The aim is to explore teaching and learning practices as examples of linguistic care work and discuss transformative acts of solidarity in networks of teachers and students. In this research project, a linguistic ethnographic study was used to describe lived experience and everyday life in classroom engagement.

Neoliberal market emphasize on 'language as skill' learning starkly contrasts with relational conditions in learning a new language, where embodied communication, technology, signed and spoken language, and visual resources are utilized. Crip time regarding languaging (patience, material conditions and optimal environments, provision of resources, utilizing all linguistic resources) as well as showing solidarity through the witnessing of being marginalized is described as aspects of linguistic care work.

Despite the commonplace occurrence of people migrating in adulthood, there is a dearth of research regarding social and epistemic (in)justices in the migrant adults' encounters with educational systems in the Global North, particularly when it comes to target language learning (i.e. the nation's named majority language). This is especially the case for adults who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing (DHH), which requires either technological accommodations and/or the use of and learning of sign languages, and the opportunity to learn with DHH peers and teachers. Education systems in receiving countries seldom accommodate the linguistic and orthographic heterogeneity of these populations or the differences regarding how they can access and learn the target language. The limited access to language in childhood that most deaf people across the globe have greatly impacted the learning of new languages and the development of literacy skills (Holmström & Schönström, 2024). As Henner & Robinson (2023) point out, engaging critical disability theory, i.e., cripping, can address diversity in languaging by first applying a critical lens to assumptions of ablebodiedness. Ableism in education leads to the perpetuation of a significant gap in students' opportunities to learn (Adams Lyngbäck et al., 2021), the training of educators who address the educational needs of DHH immigrants (Thoutenhoofd & Adams Lyngbäck, 2023), and

language teaching research in the DHH field (Cannon & Marx, 2023). A lack of recognition of other ways of knowing – so called epistemic injustice – related to the senses and sign language for example (Larsdotter et al., in press) could be argued to pervade adult education for immigrants and in general (Adams Lyngbäck et al., 2025). Epistemic injustice is particularly evident in the case of DHH in migration contexts and sign language usage (Schwartz et al., 2022), demonstrating how a failure to address this group's educational needs results from interlocking systems of oppression in relation to deaf epistemology, migration status, and language modality. It is unusual that deaf and hard of hearing adults worldwide will have encountered schooling where a fully accessible language is used in the home and for instruction in school settings (Murray et al., 2019; Snoddon, 2020).

In light of this, questions can be raised regarding the purpose of promoting language education for adult migrants, and what underlying assumptions of language learning it carries, such as in municipal adult education in Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) – which is the educational setting studied in this article. This is an educational program for most groups of adult immigrants to learn basic Swedish language skills required in everyday life. In Sweden, just like in many other countries in the Global North, municipal adult education (MAE) and its equivalents in-

a Correspondence to: liz.adams.lyngback@specped.su.se

clude programs at primary or upper secondary school levels and basic language courses for immigrants (SFI). These programs take on a normative fostering role, prescribing what the adult should become – i.e., an employable citizen – and consequently targeting certain categories of adults regarded as 'risks to society' such as immigrants (Fejes et al., 2018). In line with neo-liberal discourses of efficiency, the labor market focus and the marketization of Swedish MAE (cf. Mufic & Fejes, 2022), language learning within SFI runs the risk of being framed narrowly as work-oriented. Within SFI's culture of evaluation, monitoring, and increased testing, attaining skills in the majority language is framed as a measure of one's employability (Ahlgren & Rydell, 2020; Carlson & Jacobsson, 2019; Rosén, 2013).

An underlying and intersecting element to this dominant discourse about immigrants and language learning is how groups are perceived to be lacking, which is unearthed through disentangling and interrogating ableism, racism, and linguicism. Even in Deaf Studies and Disability Studies, an assumed sameness among DHH people generated through political and societal processes of categorization in the Global North requires further nuanced analyses including further investigation into how these individuals belong in regard to migration status, to racial, ethnic and cultural categories and the resulting dynamic intersecting ways of being deaf (see also M. I. Friedner & Kusters, 2014). The categories of hard of hearing and migration background are the focus of this study, with particular emphasis on a combined awareness of multimodality and relationality in the role of ethics in communication.

Linguistic Care Work

Neo-liberal discourses of education build on narrow ideas of language as skills, which reduce language learning to socialization for employability and citizenship (cf. Biesta, 2015; Canagarajah, 2023). Also, hegemonic ideas of named languages being separate entities with clear borders permeate language education and conceal the entanglement of colonial, raciolinguistic, and ableist ideologies at play (Canagarajah, 2023; Cioè-Peña, 2021). These ideologies produce legitimate and illegitimate language users, prescribing normalcy and deficiency, respectively, to bodies along intersecting lines of racism, ableism, and so forth (Flores & Rosa, 2015). In contrast, protecting minoritized languages through acknowledging their worth in additive language learning as well as working for language access through interpretation is 'border work' for disadvantaged groups (De Meulder et al., 2019; Palfreyman, 2018). Working for language access through interpretation further emphasizes the work done at the borders of modality. When set in focus in research, important insights about language emerge – insights that would go otherwise undetected as they are often overlooked or dismissed as illegitimate areas of linguistic inquiry (Henner & Robinson, 2023). However, the neo-liberal ideologies delimit and constrain teaching practices and what language learning and knowing 'a language' is

perceived to entail, for instance, by disregarding multimodal and multisensorial language use. In contrast, *linguistic care work* (Henner & Robinson, 2023), a foundational aspect of *crip linguistics*, is to a considerable degree a pedagogical stance drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship on aspects and characteristics of affirmative and transformative additional language learning. It is also a contribution to the newly expanding scholarship and activism "against neoliberal doctrines that are anathema to any claims for crip futurity" (Erevelles, 2018, p. 79). The conditions on which linguistic care work rely are twofold: the idea of disability justice as striving for communally engaged collective acts of mutual care (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, 2022), and in turn, laboring to be patient, to calibrate and to create environments which encourage cultural responsivity in crip time. This is a responsivity which actualizes notions centering care as relation, symmetrical, iterative, and linguistic in the sense that a "care fluency" can be learned and developed (Piepzna-Samarasinha citing Teukie Martin 2022, p. 100). This type of crip laboring is diametrically opposed to neoliberal laboring as effectiveness, production and progression (McRuer, 2018). Thus, crip linguistics via an understanding of time as non-linear, complex and disrupted (Samuels & Freeman, 2021) through emphasizing mutual respect in communication, views language use in language learning contexts as a collaborative and ethical process in which participants draw on diverse linguistic resources to create shared meaning

Two aspects are particularly discernible in the actions undertaken in a pedagogical approach regarding linguistic care work: responsiveness and awareness (Henner & Robinson, 2023). Responsiveness, a key characteristic of ethical communication, accentuates caring as interrelated acts of receptivity and relatedness (Noddings, 1984, p. 2), and acknowledges the unequal distribution of resources and material conditions, especially when it comes to disabled bodyminds. Regarding language modalities and embodied communication, considering the compatibility between physical environments and the needs and desires of participants requires steadfastness in attending to accessibility due to the effects of *audism*. This is "the notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears" (Humphries, 1977, p. 12). Awareness in this context is the recognition of the ubiquity of audism. If acknowledged, it allows for a nuanced understanding of the communication context, faithfully reflecting the combined environment with its inherent disparities (Reagan, 2020). Thus, the tangible and visible aspects of language modalities are emphasized in embodied, multisensory, multimodal, and multilingual repertoires of immigrant DHH people (cf. Henner & Robinson, 2023). Extending the understandings of practices of translanguaging (De Meulder et al., 2019; M. Friedner, 2016; Green, 2014) and particularly in deaf education contexts (Duggan et al., 2023; Kusters et al., 2017; Lindahl, 2015) brings *epistemic justice* in language education to the fore, especially regarding the deaf or hard of hearing immigrant learner. Translan-

guaging and transknowledging (Heugh, 2021) are intertwined, and has in educational contexts the potential for transformative epistemic justice – that is, not just recognizing but actively changing whose knowledge and ways of using language are valued in the classroom. Understanding how learning involves acknowledging and recognizing deaf and hard of hearing disability experiences as embodied knowledge forms on which language as meaning-making is intertwined requires detailed empirical grounding.

A timely and relevant contribution to the field of language education, deaf studies and disability studies in the Swedish context is to be found in recent research which describes the linguistic background of deaf refugees in Sweden, and the consequences their background may have for their language learning and socialization into Swedish society (Duggan, 2024). The study examines the current language instruction in educational institutions aimed at adult deaf learners and what happens after the first years of Swedish Sign Language and Swedish instruction (Duggan, 2024). This study expands considerably the sociolinguistic work on the Swedish language learning context for immigrant deaf learners (Duggan et al., 2023; Duggan & Holmström, 2024)

Epistemic Justice and Disability Justice

To emphasize mutuality in anti-ableist approaches in social justice in education, we centralize disability in queries on epistemic justice, by drawing on Medina's (2012, 2013, 2018) notions of *epistemic friction, shared hermeneutical responsibilities,* and *epistemic activism* in communicative interactionism described as *network solidarity*. Coming up against dominant views, revealing and interrogating dominance in an education system in a specific context will demonstrate how responsibility, as shared, is enacted. This also helps articulate a critical pedagogy of hope (reconnected and rooted) in Black feminist theory on the transformative power of marginality (hooks, 2014) and critical disability theory (Campbell, 2009; Erevelles, 2018; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018). Network solidarity develops in the sensibilities resulting from dilemmas being handled where opposing views meet – particularly regarding redistribution, recognition, and the right to non-domination (Sépulchre, 2022). These tensions center on key educational questions: who provides education, for whom, and to what end. What each person envisions in these encounters is contingent upon the notion of justice we utilize and departs from an overarching ontology of disability (Erevelles, 2018; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018) which then reminds us of the methodological significance (Cannon & Marx, 2023) of how DHH people are located differentially along the axes of migration, race, gender, sexuality, and class.

Medina (2012) argues that *hermeneutical sensibility* (involving responsiveness and communicative dynamics) is essential for epistemic justice. It could be argued that hermeneutical sensibility involves engaging in linguistic care work in the sense of being able "to respond to attempts (however inarticulate) to express certain mean-

ings" (Medina, 2013, p. 97). Hermeneutical injustice occurs when some interpretations are privileged over others or silenced, leading to epistemic oppression or marginalization of certain groups or perspectives. By engaging in *epistemic activism*, which involves creating new forms of political imagination, challenging dominant sensibilities, and fostering dialogues among diverse voices through practices of interrogation and resistance, biases and insensitivity can be unmasked, disrupted, and uprooted (Medina, 2018). In some specific contexts, practices and institutions that provide a safe space for underprivileged groups can serve "for the self-empowerment of oppressed groups, or for the articulation of a public whose formation has so far been blocked" (Medina, 2013, p. 8). Connecting the intellectual virtue of justice to action is what Medina emphasizes. In respect to linguistic care work, this emphasis on action involves taking responsibility for active ignorance as a form of oppression, which includes the internalized ableism and audism in our examples. By sensitizing ourselves in relation to others, the oppressive experiences that have been obscured become visible through repeated attempts to make sense of them with those we trust. We can expand our hermeneutical sensibilities and eventually add to the hermeneutical resources of our group. These contributions of increased sensibility and awareness could also spread to other groups, as new interpretative tools acquire progressively wider circulation (Medina, 2013). How and why DHH individuals become members of a group is illuminated by combining scholarly work on the experience of oppression with ethnolinguistic models of DHH belonging (Hoffmann, 2008). Emplacement (Hoffmann-Dilloway, 2011) is a concept that describes both a strategy to belong and an orientation of understanding oneself contained in narratives of DHH individuals when they meet. Re-framing their experiences of exclusion towards belonging in a community with like-minded others is done in collaboration. This is a 'becoming a group' process, important for understanding and expanding the notion of linguistic care work. Collaborative emplacement stories highlight being responsive, sensitive, but also attentive to the difficulty of acceptance and the harboring of others' emotional suffering.

The elements of giving testimony in becoming part of a hard-of-hearing community transform a previous position of being seen as impaired into a position where they have the right to accommodation for hearing loss. DHH individuals' accounts become networked through sharing experiences of exclusion as they contrast with new experiences of using hearing technology and sign language together. Thus, witnessing and being in spaces where people can meet each other to witness is important for transgressing and transforming in the margins, and for the formation of groups that can voice their experiences and interests. The formation of epistemic responsibility and agency involves the processes of understanding ourselves simultaneously with understanding positionality and differences in society, which also requires epistemic and emotional friction (Medina, 2013).

Medina's attentiveness to sensibility as a way of harnessing hermeneutical resources is rooted in the specific understandings that emerge within communities that share experiences of vulnerability. However, this is only the initial step towards recognition and resisting domination regarding epistemic injustice. Linguistic care work is, we argue, not only a way to understand each other in conversations to voice one's views and wishes – it is transformative. Emotions play an integral part in this (Medina, 2018). According to Zembylas (2007), emotions in a classroom are political spaces "in which students and teachers interact with implications in major political and cultural struggles." (p. xiii) Emotions awoken by testimonies and witnessing of, for instance suffering and injustice, can be used as pedagogical tools that can engage students in critical reflection and empathy (Hållander, 2019). A position on the margins becomes then not a place of exclusion or deprivation, but rather a space of possibility, creativity, and resistance through this pedagogy that centers the experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups to be witnessed in shifting contexts (hooks, 2014; Medina, 2012). Perspectives on knowledge that claim to be neutral, objective, and universal reveal their limitations because these lack the tools to engage with alterity and uniqueness.

Empirical work in linguistic ethnography of immigrant DHH (cf. Kusters & Hou, 2020) students, marries epistemological, disability, and linguistic justice perspectives to nuance and inform the approaches that describe what supports the further development of language and communication as adults. In essence, we wish to "incorporate understandings of the interdependence and vulnerability of the human condition in the development of theories of justice" (K. Q. Hall, 2015, p. 9) through exploring teaching and learning practices as examples of linguistic care work. This will include discussion of transformative acts of solidarity in networks, focusing on what must be required of those enlisted to serve these learners. So, we aim to illuminate the following in the ethnographic work at hand: What characterizes linguistic care work in the teaching and learning practices of adult educators of immigrant deaf and hard of hearing students? And, how can these teaching and learning practices be described as transformative acts of solidarity?

Fieldwork and Action Research: Social Action and Research Leading to Social Action

The study presented in this article is part of a two-year action research project focused on ethnographic description of participation, accessibility and visual resources in language learning contexts conducted in 2022-2023. The aim was to promote students' participation in education in collaboration between teachers and researchers through the use of visual resources. Of significance for the action research were the regular reflection meetings where participating teachers from all four centers and the researchers discussed and reflected together. Teachers from four different types of municipal adult education centers in Sweden participated in the action research project. In this article, one of the centers – here called Quintus Center– is in focus with programs in Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) for DHH students, introductory classes in Swedish Sign Language (STS), and Swedish as a second language (SSL) at a basic level. At this center, three teachers participated in the action research project, and their teaching was observed in four different SFI-groups and one SSL-group. The fieldwork on which this article is based comprises three groups (with 2, 3, and 7 students in the groups, respectively) and two of the teachers.

We observed 15 lessons in these three groups and wrote field notes, photographed, audio-recorded, and video-filmed. We also had conversations with teachers and students during breaks. Additionally, we interviewed seven of the students and both teachers. The interviews with the students focused on their past and present experiences of education and language learning. Six of these students identified as female and one as male. Two interviews (an initial and a follow-up) were conducted with the teacher Marita, who herself is hard of hearing since childhood, and one with the teacher Anna, who is hearing. Both teachers who identified as female have a migration background (i.e. both have migrated to Sweden; one as a child and the other as an adult). These teacher interviews revolved around their experiences as teachers of adult DHH students in SFI, their teaching strategies, and conditions creating possibilities or hindrances for their teaching. All interviews were conducted at the school using hearing technology equipment and held in Swedish and/or English – whichever the interviewed participant preferred. If the student was familiar with Swedish Sign Language and incorporated sign language in their communication, then signing was also used by the first author in the interview. The excerpts are translated from Swedish to English by the authors.

During our fieldwork we frequently discussed and revisited the data material. We began to notice the importance of the students meeting other students who shared similar circumstances, i.e., of being a hard of hearing additional language learner in hearing technology-adapted classrooms, which was, for most of these students, a new experience. Also, acts of support from fellow students during the lessons and breaks were regularly noted in field notes and memos while re-watching the video data material.

The use of emotions when students shared different types of personal experiences was manifest. Early on, how the teachers utilized their own experiences in the language teaching of having migration backgrounds and/or being hard of hearing was also noted. We began to discern how these elements of sharing as care in respect to languaging are based on different ways of knowing, not only in the role of language instructor. The iterative analytic steps proceeded through the re-watching of the videos, re-reading fieldnotes and interview transcripts, alongside our joint discussion in the research group centering theoretical contributions of critical disability theories, crip linguistics, social justice and knowledge for-

mation and justice. Through the engagement with these readings and the accumulated data material, the final themes came to center around *becoming a group* and *teachers as everyday activists.* Each theme is first presented with a vignette below.

Becoming 'A Group'

> When I return from the break Elif [student] and Alina [student] chat with each other in the classroom. Elif is showing Alina sign language, teaching her some signs. Elif seems very excited when she's doing this, and I reflect on her strong advocacy for sign language. She tries to convince Alina to sign up for the class on Swedish Sign Language for beginners that Elif herself attends on Mondays.
> On a later occasion, her teacher, Marita, tells me that Elif struggled to come to terms with her hearing loss when she first started at Quintus Center. She felt ashamed and didn't want to use hearing aids due to having had such negative previous experiences. But now it is quite the opposite! Elif has become proud and likes sign language, telling everyone in class to attend the sign language classes. This is also something I experience, when Elif asks me on several occasions if I want to learn sign language, telling me I really ought to, and cheering me on when I imitate some of the signs she is teaching her fellow students. [Vignette based on field notes by EP 2022.12.08 and 2023.02.08]

What emerges in the analysis of the above vignette is how hermeneutical sensibility through becoming, belonging, and being part of a group (cf. Medina, 2013), is being meliorated in this educational context – SFI for deaf and hard of hearing students at Quintus Center. This process is tightly interwoven with emotions and affective responses to previous encounters of injustices of being excluded from teaching and learning practices. There is a discernible identification shift in being invited to contribute to meaning-making activities in modes and languages, and at a pace accessible and adapted to the DHH students. This becomes illuminated in the description of Elif's initial unacceptance, which connects to experiences of shame and stigma, to the transformation the teacher Marita describes: from hiding an impairment to being proud and excited about the possibilities that have opened up through the opportunity to learn a visual language. This is relayed in how Elif now wants others in her situation to join her in sign language classes, encouraging them and even encouraging hearing people she assumes are interested in her revelation and what it means for her learning. The articulation of experiences with other students like themselves and especially meeting teachers sharing qualities with them – being hard of hearing and/or with migration background(s) – was noted to be important in the fieldnotes, interviews, and memos. What was obvious was that the students were experiencing becoming, belonging, and being part of a collective, *a group*. At Quintus Center the students we encountered are for the first time in a group with other DHH students and meet DHH teachers.

The emotional weight and significance of hardships previously experienced became tangible on many occasions, for instance, when Elif, during her interview, is visibly distressed as she misunderstands the question of what advice she would give for a new DHH teacher, thinking we meant she would be getting a new teacher. "I don't want any other teachers," she exclaims with a troubled look. When the misunderstanding is cleared up, she explains why Marita and one of her other teachers, Asra, who is also hard of hearing, are the best teachers *for her*, saying that it is because they themselves are hard of hearing and thus "understand how we learn Swedish". This communal 'we' of sharing a new hard of hearing position points to the DHH group she has strongly started to identify with herself. Elif continues by giving examples of the hearing teachers she had encountered during SFI as not understanding DHH students' learning process: keeping too fast of a pace, not using gestures or one's body to enhance meaning, not repeating what was said and not taking into consideration that DHH students need many explanations in different modes and facilitating that everyone in class follows, watches and listens to the one speaking.

A pattern in all interviews is how the students who have had hearing loss since childhood share painful memories of feeling and being excluded at school, both from peer groups and from being able to access instruction. Milena, for instance, says: "When I was a small child, I was alone, [I did] not play. Alone. All my life I am alone."

Similarly, Elif and Olivia have experiences of being excluded from society, in the family, and in school, and sharing these memories is emotional for both of them. Neither of them had access to hearing aids when growing up. Olivia retells about being hit by the teacher for not understanding what the teacher asked her and being unable to answer correctly, which then resulted in her being dismissed from the classroom. "I don't want to think [about it]. I want to forget", she says. Elif, in turn, describes that she couldn't follow the teaching in class as a child, and only participated in school for five years before it was deemed as useless for her, her being told she should quit school. "I wanted to continue in school, but the teacher didn't accept me. The teacher said, 'You don't hear, you can't come." She explains that her classmates helped her by pointing to what task they were doing in the books, and she thanks God she could read – something she had learnt on her own. Also, at home, Elif felt isolated as only her mother really understood her, an example of a commonly shared experience of deaf children in hearing families known as *dinner table syndrome* (W. C. Hall et al., 2018; Meek, 2020). Even in this familiar environment, her closest family members could only communicate with her, with her mother acting as an intermediary in what would normally be quite unnecessary in close familial relations. Elif had a very restricted life after leaving school still as a child, which lead to spending most of her time at home.

These experiences of exclusions in education do not only concern schooling in the countries where the stu-

dents had migrated from but also include experiences in Sweden. These occurred in either regular SFI classes before finding the Quintus Center or in language introduction programs at upper secondary schools for those who had come as youth to Sweden. These programs are for newly arrived students between the ages of 16-20, where they study Swedish as a second language and additional subjects, with the aim of the student being able to continue to a national program at upper secondary school or municipal adult education.

One example of this is found in the next vignette, which is Sania's retelling of her experiences at SFI. Her voice is subdued when she talks about the time when she attended regular SFI classes at another adult education center. She talks about having to study alone by reading only, having difficulties and not getting help the way she gets support for learning now. She has had the opportunity to go to school in her home country and has received a high school diploma, but this was with much help from her parents; she also explains that she felt lonely and missed out on things in school. Her experiences at regular SFI in turn led her to drop out. Sania, like most other students we encountered during our fieldwork, didn't know that specialized learning environments existed, and was first referred after having met insurmountable barriers in terms of progress in learning a language. This subdued voice while re-telling one of these past experiences is contrasted with the elated way she speaks about her studies now, and her admiration of her teachers Marita and Anna. Especially Marita, being hard-of-hearing, is highlighted as a role model in Sania's narration, as she recognizes the needs of the students in order for them to be able to participate in meaning-making.

> Marita is also hard of hearing. She understands more. She knows she can help others, other students. When she talks, she doesn't talk very fast. She draws [pictures on the whiteboard] so that we can understand what she means. Also, she knows sign language, she signs. And it is important to her that we understand. She goes to get things and uses them, wants to tell us in different ways. So, she acts out what we are doing, [drama role play]. I think that when new teachers come they have to do the same as Marita. They must speak calmly, not very fast like all people [in society usually] do. It is hard to understand and listen and hear what they say. Yes. And if you don't understand you have to speak with your hands or use, for sign language if you can. So, that's how it is. [Interview with Sania]

The different modalities Marita uses in languaging, signs, drawing, showing artifacts, and using role play, as well as understanding temporality and time, such as speaking calmly, provide an environment where the students can partake as learners in the classroom community, contrasting the positioning of aloneness of their previous school experiences. Sania explains that the teachers at Quintus Center help her a lot, give her confidence, and that she is happy to have come to this center.

> It's good because there's a microphone so we can hear [better] and we can also really listen to how you say the words exactly so it's good that we're working with the microphone and mm, it's the environment, students, it's good, they are kind and when we meet we talk a lot, very nice and we have told each other how to do, do hearing when I have [this kind of device].

Like Sania expresses in the above quote, part of the interaction in the group during breaks was sharing about one's own use of hearing devices and experiences of having hearing loss. The role of technology was constantly evident and noted in fieldnotes, as the teachers helped the students remember to turn the microphones on or off. Similarly, the group dynamic, the caring and warm attitude between students, and lots of laughter together, were noted.

Just like for Sania, Olivia's first experiences of language education in Sweden weren't untroubled. As she was 17 when she arrived in Sweden, she started at the language introduction program at upper secondary school, but wasn't able to follow the teaching and didn't make any friends. Olivia relayed accounts of sitting on her own in the cafeteria all the time, always silent and not daring to talk with anyone. In the language introduction classroom, there were no accessibility adjustments made for her hearing loss. When she turned 20, she wasn't allowed to continue at the language introductory program. Instead, she was redirected to Quintus Center after medical and psychological testing and assessment, after which she received medical treatment as well as new hearing aids, and a diagnosis of intellectual disability. Now, both she and her teacher, Marita (and as represented in the videos and the field notes), describe an active and talkative student, quite different from the silent and insecure one not daring to speak to anyone. This change of how she now actively participates in meaning-making is evident in how the collective – the student group – as a resource for learning is facilitated in both Marita's and Anna's teaching. The importance of the view of teachers and the meaning the group has for how a student feels is exemplified in how Marita connects Olivia's ability to learn and express herself to how she is treated and included as a knower.

> Marita: I've heard that from other teachers before: 'But she can't talk and how are you supposed to be able to teach?' and [Olivia] has felt like ((sighs loudly with exasperation)) that it's so hard and all but here [with other hard of hearing students] you've seen how she really has progressed and so much because she has been seen as a person who certainly can show what she knows. Who should be able to show the skills she has without being put down and diminished because she can't speak well but she has been able to learn to speak much much better and here she has felt much less different than how others have made her to feel before and then she can blossom. Then she can show and talk and demonstrate the knowledge that she possesses, it's absolutely incredible.

The teachers constantly urge the students to look at each other, explain to one another, use their body and their focus on extracting and comprehending what the different individuals are thinking and having them explain why they interpret something as they do. Attending to being responsive to each other strengthens how students see themselves as important for each other's understanding. This is an example of linguistic care work as a pedagogical practice of freedom (Freire, 1996; hooks, 2014), which for this student group also requires an adapted environment with microphones and teaching including multimodal means of expression, a pace adapted to all participants, and many repetitions. Most importantly, *all students* are invited as knowledgeable contributors, encouraged to use all linguistic resources, which is a quality shown to be essential for not feeling silenced or reduced.

Through such teaching practices committed to linguistic care work, light is being shed upon the injustices they have been dealt, and now, through these new experiences, they are getting access to collective hermeneutical resources. The course activities introduced by the teachers include and make room for engaging in contrasting others' and their own past experiences with these new accessible and holistic conditions in their present learning environment. When these revelations of previous inaccessibility are shared, an internalized stigmatization is slowly *sensed* differently than before when it comes to the surface as an injustice. This aspect of audism, thinking that hearing is better than not hearing, can then be nuanced and questioned. Making sense of their own experiences of schooling in this new light, contributes to the formation of belonging to a group and as part of this group interpreting their experiences in a certain way. The transgression to seeing oneself as part of a group, is enacted through sharing one's experiences and witnessing about them, which results in promoting self-knowledge and knowledge of others as aspects of hermeneutical sensibilities (Medina, 2013). Also, what becomes evident is the shifting of the students' view of themselves as having to adapt or as not being able to contribute to their own and others' learning. They then see themselves as knowers and that the environment and others should adapt and accommodate to their needs. In other words, this is a move towards confronting others' hermeneutical insensitivity (Medina, 2013). In conclusion, the students are the ones who enter an entangled existence as newcomers: newcomers to a disability community, newcomers to a disability culture, newcomers as Swedish language learners, newcomers as sign language learners and deaf culture, and newcomers to inhabiting a position as learners with rights (Adams Lyngbäck & Andersson, 2024). It is here that the hard-of-hearing identity (i.e., as members of a hard-of-hearing community) is first being developed and exemplifies social inclusion as being a prerequisite for academic inclusion (Andersson & Adams Lyngbäck, 2022).
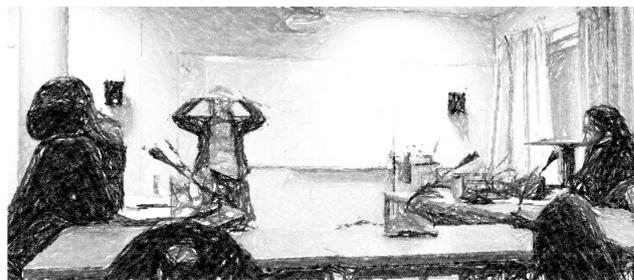
Figure 1. This image is a line drawing of a screenshot from a video recording from the classroom.

Note: Photo and drawing by Enni Paul

Teachers as everyday activists – promoting epistemic agency

The following description is based on video-recording, audio-recording and fieldnotes by Liz Adams Lyngbäck and Enni Paul dated February 8, 2023:

> A group of hard of hearing students are assembled in their Swedish language class and are sitting at desks in a horseshoe formation with table microphones. A unit on reading and literature is in focus.
>
> The group that Marita is teaching is reading a short story. They have acted out scenes together, discussed interpretations, drawn pictures to explain their interpretations, and described how they associate these to the story. For many of them, reading and discussing fiction is a new activity they have not taken part of previously in their lives. When talking about what one of the characters may have been thinking, Marita explains the metaphor of the iceberg and looking for what is said 'between the lines' in order to understand the feelings and motives of the characters. The rest of the group has caught on to these ideas, that there is more than you can see on the page. Olivia has not yet grasped this, so Marita explains by signing, gesturing, drawing, and writing on the whiteboard, pointing to parts of the text – all of this with the help of the entire group providing examples, and trying to explain. Both of us researchers start to feel the time in our bodies, a type of impatient discomfort from our ideas of being responsible for how lesson-time is used. One of us (LAL) writes in her fieldnotes: 'I would have given up much earlier, but Marita didn't. She repeatedly takes in what Olivia is saying and knows that she still doesn't understand but lets her continue to talk, try things out, and guess.'
>
> Marita does not give up. She stays in this 'trouble' and continues, even if the hands of the clock have long ago passed the time for the coffee break. After some time, through the collective effort to explain and illustrate, including the multitude of examples Marita, the classmates, and Olivia herself provide, Olivia finally shows that she has grasped the concept. She gives an example of interpreting what takes place in the text, explains her idea of events in the short story. But the metaphor of the iceberg is still unclear to her, which compels Marita to venture on, all the time involving the entire group, and continues

until Olivia realizes the meaning of the metaphor. Already in the hallway, during the break, both of us researchers want to talk about how we would've given up and moved on and taken it with Oliva later one-on-one. When we sit down with Marita we share our reflections on the uneasiness we experienced, the time ticking by, and the rest of the group already grasping it, and how we would have moved on. Marita looks at us sharply, saying she would never do that. She continues explaining that many of her students have never heard this discussion about the interpretation of fiction, and in some cases may not have even grasped what being able to read leads to. "This is real marginalization! I want to open a new world where everyone can participate. It is revolutionary for them!" she says. [Vignette based on video-recording, audio-recording and fieldnotes 2023.02.08]

The teachers, as epistemic activists in the everyday – as illustrated in the vignette – amend and develop epistemic habits and attitudes with respect to accessing linguistic input and showing linguistic care towards each other in the groups. This sensitivity exhibited in linguistic care work (Henner & Robinson, 2023) is shown in the way time is taken, used and spent: in being patient, in supporting and providing semiotic resources, in seeking, expanding, and claiming and activating one's own semiotic resources, in calibrating to each other in seeking mutual understanding – and in not letting one in the group fall behind and fall out of the collective sense-making. This is not only language work but care work through languaging in being invested in a mutual endeavor for each other and for belonging. This included what Marita describes as seeing the students 'in a positive light', meaning she has expectations of them as knowers able to contribute to meaning-making, in contrast to how others have seen them, which is based on how hard-of-hearing people, like her, are regarded. Marita stresses that this is especially important for her students who often feel that others see them as unintelligent, infantilizing them, since it takes longer time for them to interpret meaning because of it being hard to hear what someone says and because they have been, as expressed in the vignette, marginalized and excluded from situations where they could have had the opportunity to develop knowledge others have had access to. She knows that an alternative approach emphasizing mutual investment builds on acknowledging one another and allowing all of them to meet in dialogue. Marita lets this take time – expanding the time frame in school with breaks and lesson time – making the right for everyone in her student group to access understanding, her top priority. Being excluded in situations is also something she had experienced herself, stating that not much surprises her anymore when it comes to treatment her DHH students have experienced or in the attitudes of others. She explains that "dialogicity is a life condition for all of us", but having hearing loss requires different modes of expressions and repetitions, which is ingrained "in her blood". She continues:

Marita: My whole self and my life is in everything I do. And maybe I can meet them that way too, because this is something that I try to show them too, that this is something we have in common, the disability, it works the same way wherever you come from all over the world, it works like that. Then I have also thought that it also plays a big role [that] I have also been individually integrated [in school], as several of them have also been, but they may have had much worse conditions than what I have had, but we have all had things in common, we have sat in contexts where we could not use our own resources. I mean as an individual you become very limited when you are individually integrated in a class and you may not know [catch] what your classmates say, you cannot show your knowing in the way you want to. […]
EP (Researcher): Exactly. I was just thinking about, like what you said, that many of the students in the interviews said that you have the same experience as they do, that it is so important to just you as a role model and your experiences, so it is exactly this that you are talking about that is mirrored in their interviews, that it has been vital that you understand and in that way put yourself in their position. Another thing I thought of, you bring up dialogicity, and that is something we have considered in the listening, that you build up that they listen to each other. You see that in your teaching that you build this with the students.
Marita: […] Here we talk about things that are difficult for them to comprehend that there are others who feel the same way as Elif, who I told you about, who asked every classmate during the break "When did you get your hearing aid?" because then she realized, that's how it happened for you, and you and you and have they had the same experiences as me or not, because in the past it was just too embarrassing, no, really mortifying, this is something you just can't talk about.

The interaction in dialogue with other students with hearing loss is paramount in Marita's view. Dialogicity for Marita is the act of practicing the reciprocity and symmetry of care work in a language learning context that she wants the students to take with them to be able to participate in society. Persistently, Marita speaks about the experiences her students carry with them from past school contexts as well as regarding hearing loss and first-time medical interventions. When asked what she was most pleased about in her own teaching she talks about finding points of interest to create engagement and goes on to explaining about a task through which she can challenge the students view on disabilities and themselves, explaining:

Marita: Then I wrote them a personal letter about myself, but I was careful that the letter would ignite a little spark but not so much, that it wouldn't be too much so they would say never in my life, I can't write a letter about myself, but challenge them just enough. I told them several times that the letter was about myself, I have written it and everything that is written there is true and still half the group after half the text asked "Who wrote this text" "Yes this is me"

"God how terrible, how did you dare to" "Yes it is me" but there was nothing that was terrible in the text. Then the next task was for them to write their own text. And I thought how will this go now then. But yes, it was a complete success. Each one of them wrote. They all said we can't write. They wrote two whole pages about themselves, and then they started talking to each other, "Was it the same for you?" because they thought like this "It's just me", "No, it's just me".

The three decades of teaching add to her own experiences of having been the only student with hearing loss, which are combined in a classroom activity to give testimony about her experiences for her students. The importance for the students to meet others with DHH who had similar experiences was a point that was returned to in the conversations with Marita. By the pedagogical task of sharing some painful memories and testifying about them in the letter, or during chats during the breaks, to say this happened to me, to witness, to know it will be painful to say and to hear but also why it is important to share is the pedagogical relationship on which linguistic care work is enacted in this classroom. This type of investment in another person's learning through one's own emotions, also in the form of political will, is to be hopeful from a critical position. Marita explains that as a teacher, one has to dare to challenge the students' assumptions and everything they have experienced, in order to "stretch their boundaries". This is a process through which they can gain insights and where the classmates play a crucial role. To bypass this opportunity to address what students have been through is a common element in avoiding disability – that it is stigmatizing to single it out and to rather just leave it in the past. This is an attitude that dictates what a teacher's role should be because it is from the hearing, able-bodied position where disability can only be seen as something to be avoided. It is the disabled child of the past that cannot have any value in the (neoliberal) future of any adult student or any society. (Fritsch, 2016). Marita clearly is engaging in creating an "elsewhere" and "elsewhen" (Kafer, 2013, p. 3) in how she uses her own past to bring forth a transformation. Knowing when and how to share a lived aspect of disability, requires social knowledge that can read an individual's or a group's readiness to be responsive to hardship as a contribution to shared understanding, i.e. dis/ability literacy (Adams Lyngbäck, 2016).

EP: Yes, that's right because you really can see how incredibly important classmates are in building this mutual understanding, that you are really doing this together.
Marita: Because it's a painful journey to come from another school to us, because when you come here you can feel like you're handicapped because you have that role like I came here because I'm handicapped because I have a hearing aid and there is equipment, that I am different. It is a real somersault for them to come here and during the journey all the activities that you do are aimed at making them realize that "I have a hearing loss" and then come to the realization that I can do exactly what I want with my

hearing loss. There are no limits. There is nothing, others have set limits but, but in reality there are no limits. Others don't have to set limits and they don't have to set limits but it is open and all the aids, all teaching methods, including visual media, are open to them and are based on the view that we see, that we hear with our eyes.

Marita's and the students' accounts give witness to a major shift and expansion away from letting (hearing) others' hermeneutical insensitivity limit their life chances and that this is a fundamental part of the language learning process at Quintus Center. In regard to access to spoken language in educational settings, enacting this linguistic care work interrogates the negative view placed upon these students in the form of personal shortcomings. The linguistic care emboldens the individual to be able to see a more nuanced reality of the role of the environment and arrangements that are necessary for society to provide. We noted throughout our fieldwork how the students told us, the researchers, for instance to turn on and off the microphone, speak closer to it, speak slower, repeat ourselves, etc. showing the shift towards requiring others to adapt to the demands of the communicative act *with* them as a group of hard of hearing people in this designated space where it is entirely possible to be on equal terms if you use the equipment. As both these teachers reported this was a characteristic that was learned at the school and served as an indication of growing awareness and advocacy. The contrast to the lack of this accessibility they have always experienced serves to remove limits both in a physical aspect as well as an existential aspect; a positive image towards themselves comes into view.

The teachers at Quintus Center were also showing an aversion to the idea of creating tasks strictly targeting language skills for formal assessment purposes. Anna explains that she instead seeks out interesting societal matters to discuss and isn't afraid of taking up controversial issues. In her view, language is about communication, which always happens between people who live in a society where there are imbalances of power and hierarchies. She explains that she only makes a loose plan for her teaching and then lets the students influence the pace and what topics they focus on, because whatever the topic is, they can work with the goals stated in the curriculum. In the interview before fieldwork began, Anna describes working with a task of writing 'letters to the editors' and trying to get them published in local media. This task had its start with one of the students retelling an experience of being treated badly at a doctor's office.

Anna: We have also written letters to the editor because they came one morning and started talking about the treatment of the people with hearing impairment in society and then one says: "Can you imagine, I come to Central Hospital where I had CI surgery [cochlear implantation] and the receptionist says something to me, I say can you repeat that, I can't hear. And the receptionist rolls her eyes and

starts talking like this [overly loud, slowed and with a rude tone]. "What kind of attitude is that?" [he says] Ok, I say what can we do, maybe you misunderstood. "No, I didn't misunderstand." Okay, then we looked at different situations, how can they be solved. Then another student said "I went to take some course and there everyone was talking at the same time and I didn't hear anything and they just [...]." Okay there's that situation. And I [then turn] to the third student, how do you experience how you are treated. And she explains [...] OK, then it came spontaneously and then I thought we will write letters about this. I then intend to send their accounts to [the local newspaper] or some other newspaper. [...] And then I actually called [the local newspaper , got the phone number of some journalist, texted, called, left a message and left a message on the answering machine. And I said this can be a very interesting theme about how we are in society, what we believe or pretend to close our eyes to, the hypocrisy in it all, that everyone in Sweden is welcome, or that Sweden is a safe country. But if we really think about it, is Sweden really a safe country? Especially here, if we think of refugees who come to Sweden, is social welfare money all they need and then it's all good and safe or is there something else they need that we don't know about and don't provide? [...] Is Sweden safe in the way that Swedes think?

Anna concludes by saying that it's important that these kinds of tasks actually serve a purpose. That authentic content is defined by how it can become a real-world task that serves a purpose and is illustrated in how it also becomes an activity that requires a step out of the classroom, resulting in having a real impact on her adult students. This action also summarizes her view on social participation. Anna draws on students' lived experiences of events of discrimination and foregrounds the epistemic friction (Medina, 2013) which emerges when injustice is called upon and emphasized through the discussion of topics where difficulty emerges. The students' experiences of treatment in this activity are turned into voicing their perspectives in an activist form, using their hard-of-hearing perspective as an example of knowledge that is missing and leads to hermeneutical insensitivity, which creates inequality. Anna summarizes by lifting up the frame of "Is Sweden really a safe country?" which begs the question of the value of dominant viewpoints in a democratic society. A society that focuses on epistemic friction will be better served by locating the contextualized gaps in knowledge through resistance to the loudest narrative.

When asked if she feels she has the support to carry out her teaching work, Anna brings up the current standard practice in adult education structure of providing short ten-week courses. These courses focus on fast completion rates which she sees as limiting the real opportunities to learn and what language learning really ought to entail.

> Anna: I am skeptical, or no, maybe hateful, while I understand the economic thinking and savings and short courses, that there is somewhere a type of mis-

understanding or a misinterpretation of what it is we actually do and what we are expected to do. If you think language, just language, maybe you can learn just language in ten weeks. We basically grade every ten weeks in SSL [Swedish as a second language]. [...] It [regulation about assessment] comes from the national level. The [school's] management and the municipality do what the national authority says and find ways around this so we do succeed. But if you want to embrace the unfathomable, if you want to improve integration, the quality, levels of knowledge, professionalism, then you actually, you think yes it's not just language. So I think all this, the problem in terms of integration, that we haven't found common points of contact, we haven't had time to learn about other people's culture and way of thinking and haven't had time to introduce, train and discuss each other's culture so that it can be grasped.

Anna formulates the complexity of language learning being missed as being a part of cultural knowledge and meeting 'the other' – even when or especially when it involves aspects of epistemic friction. In other words, the efficiency discourse (Mufic & Fejes, 2022) in the national policies affects the steering by the municipality and school management and thus conditions teaching practices, pushing it towards viewing language learning as detached from the extensive process that underlies the aptitude of communicating competently. Anna's view instead points to how communication is embedded in a society embroiled in epistemic friction and epistemic injustices, which affects the everyday life of the students in different ways, as their experiences are on axes of gender, class, race, ethnicity, and disability. However, as shown in the quotes by Anna and Marita, the teachers actively resist the reductionistic ideas of only efficacy and languages as skills in their teaching practices. Instead, they foster and engage in linguistic care work together with students and through their own experience by letting the teaching and learning take time through "embracing the unfathomable," as Anna put it. In fact, they do not avoid but actively seek out opportunities to create tasks where epistemic friction might flourish, thus opening up a space where epistemic habits can be reconfigured (Medina, 2013).

Discussion

To further elaborate on formulating why adult language learning in DHH populations requires attention, we can begin by expressing that we are not only invested in the "how" of linguistic care work but also in the "what is at stake" when such an approach is embraced or ignored. As a pedagogical framework, linguistic care work centers ethical action by both teachers and students. It serves different but overlapping purposes and ends: fostering mutual understanding, supporting justice-oriented practices, and challenging dominant narratives in education. These challenge and contest existing neoliberal frameworks that reduce language learning as nothing more than a skill linked to employability. Instead, it affirms language learning as a communal, emotional, and ethical

process, embedded in relationships, lived experiences, and shared vulnerability.

The characteristics of the pedagogical approaches exhibited in this article are that all the participants – teachers and students alike –are engaged participants in *linguistic care work* as a *communal* practice. The teachers dynamically enact and strive to be committed to these students in ways that validate the whole person, not just what a student can produce in formalized academic attainment in terms of language skills narrowly defined as only encompassing oral and written modalities. As has been exhibited, becoming a group and acts of everyday activism in this educational setting illustrate how students who have faced systemic barriers to learning find connection and solidarity with peers and teachers through shared experiences, particularly painful experiences of being excluded. Despite differences in migratory histories, racial/ethnic backgrounds, and different backgrounds in terms of previous schooling, this type of sharing created spaces of mutual emotional investment. The way their past experiences regarding hearing loss intersect with these various circumstances in their belonging to the hard-of-hearing group can be understood through suffering and yearning as a way to know (hooks, 2014). Thus, we argue that linguistic care work is a type of communal affective engagement carried through emotions and shaped by cultural practices that have social, relational, and pedagogical meaning (Hållander, 2019; Zembylas, 2022). This yearning, through combining personal experience, creates an educational space that can foster critical hope (hooks, 2014). Authentic classroom engagement with issues of (in)justice challenges the neo-liberal and rationalist perspective that teachers must remain objective and keep their emotional distance from students.

Epistemic activism is in this way done by the teachers by legitimizing struggle, suffering from unfairness, and stigmatization as themes in their teaching and by using their own experiences and political views in dialogic interaction with students. The hermeneutical gaps are identified and simultaneously serve as openings to begin challenging and interrogating with sensibility, a practice of testimony where students can learn to follow suit. The knowing embodied by a group (such as DHH adult immigrants) gains recognition first by sharing with each other (Medina, 2013), bonding together, and then by embodying this knowledge in other societal groupings to which they belong. This is exemplified in the teachers' demonstration of using testimony in educational practice, where they share their personal struggles for the purpose of centering recognition, thus legitimizing and opening up spaces for the students to also share their experiences and emotions. The students' knowing as disabled persons has not been experienced as a valuable resource before. The teachers give the students recognition for their struggles. Through such practices, awareness can grow not only of personal histories but also of the institutional and structural conditions that shape language learning. These subtle acts of resistance embedded in practical everyday encounters, or in pedagogical terms, transformative actions, stand in contrast to commodifying systems of education. Advocating for embodied, multimodal, and multisensory interaction in the adult language learning classroom bolsters a comprehension of linguistic variation as a useful resource for ethical meaning-making in earnest. It also allows for an expansion of the social imagination of what language teaching and learning is and can be, working as a path towards hermeneutical sensibility.

The pedagogical practices illuminated in this article are genuinely committed to emotions opening educational space (Zembylas, 2022) through testimonies. For such testimonies to be heard, a shared communal foundation must be established – one that encourages mutual recognition, shared experiences, and attentiveness to creating pedagogical hope and solidarity. Hermeneutical sensibility as Medina calls it can be related to the emplacement stories (Hoffmann-Dilloway, 2011) of hard of hearing, sign language learning and technology-using individuals. They are joining a type of accessibility culture with ethnolinguistic traits (Bechter, 2008). This recognition of each other aligns with what Medina (2013) calls *network solidarity*, grounded in a kaleidoscopic social imagination but with an emphasis on the emotional aspect of sensorial differentness DHH people share. This is an approach that depends on engaging with the diverse, multifaceted testimonies of others and seeing the world through their eyes. Hence, linguistic care work has epistemic engagement, sharing through other ways of knowing and being at its core.

Crip theory (Kafer, 2013), epistemic justice studies (Medina, 2013) and disability justice (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018) form analytical tools for studying the experiences of "like others" as a matter of trusting some more than others in social situations. In this ethnographic account, the hard of hearing students' coming together marks a shift from internalized audism toward collective recognition. Through shared testimony and communal engagement, students begin to see themselves—and be seen—as capable of contributing as credible, believable, and as knowers. Albeit realization is part of recognition of having been wronged and is fortified in separate education settings where all students and teachers use hearing technologies. In this way, epistemic friction becomes a generative force: an ongoing confrontation with the sources of hermeneutical injustice, made possible by solidarity among those with shared embodied ways of knowing. and not seeing or being seen until networked in solidarity with others who do.

Conclusion

The role of witnessing (Medina, 2018) for one another about the casual acts of everyday symbolic violence through education reveals how teachers and students push back neoliberal ideologies, which are simultaneously audist (Reagan, 2020), ableist (Campbell, 2009), and racist (Erevelles, 2018). Medina reminds us that "...multiple struggles to make sense have to be sustained over

time for a group of subjects to develop this definite sense of the contours of a social experience that still lacks a name" (2013, p. 208) which is especially true for the immigrant, hard of hearing students learning additional languages. We find in the pedagogical practices studied that linguistic care work is a pedagogy of anti-colonial hope (2022), situated within specific communities of DHH immigrant learners who have suffered in relation to their (lack of access to) experiences in education "...not in terms of individualized personal tragedy, but in terms of communal trauma where the legacies of ableism pervade both conscious and unconscious realms." (Campbell, 2009, p. 22). Possibilities for ending the re-production of injustices related to additional language education have been found in cultivating epistemic activist practices. Such practices make us more critical and promote engagement towards a sense of critical responsibility in classrooms (hooks, 2014). Being deaf or hard of hearing falls under mechanisms of dispersal, resulting in the separation of individuals with hearing loss, the consequences of which "generate internalized ableism in that mixing with other people living with impairments is interpreted as a negative, inadvisable choice" (Campbell, 2009, p. 23). As hooks (2014) writes, transgressing and transforming happen in the margins, where alternative ways of knowing and being are cultivated. In the classrooms studied, it is teachers and students, especially those further along in this journey, who lead this process. When and if they meet, they teach community, witness for one another, and lay the groundwork in terms of transforming adverse experiences of disability into epistemic agency, hermeneutical sensibility, and network solidarity.

⸻

Positionality Statements

Team of Authors' Positionality Statement

As hearing researchers working at the intersection of language teaching and learning and Deaf Studies and Critical Disability Studies, the four of us bring diverse perspectives from interdisciplinary fields to our collaborative work. Our shared commitment to engaging critical theory in applied research provides a starting point for exploring the complexities of language, and modality, disability and technology in terms of epistemic and social justice where we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the marginalized experiences of deaf, hard of hearing and disabled individuals in migration contexts. Feminist theoretical perspectives unite a mission to produce, disseminate and enact our research to promote social change and advocate for language rights for these groups. To understand the knowledge production and how the data was generated, the two researchers who gathered the data for this article provide individual positionality statements.

Liz Adams Lyngbäck

As a dual citizen of the United States and Sweden I am privileged in respect to migration status, education, social income, health care security and secure employment in a Swedish higher education institution. I am white, cis, heterosexual and linguistically, I also hold a position of privilege in relation to assumed native-speaker status of English, acceptably accented Swedish, and communicative competence in Swedish Sign Language with nearly unrestricted access to interpretation services in work related endeavors. In respect to disability, I am often confronted with societal attitudes about giving birth to a child with Down syndrome and courtesy stigma regarding intellectual and cognitive disability. Where sign language enables communication and life chances for hearing individuals with unclear speech and learning difficulties, it also functions as shifting my own disability kinship status higher up in the disability-Deaf hierarchy, which is problematic when I lose site of the harm this type of positioning can produce. In this project, my assumptions about which languages will bring higher status to learners, i. e. sign language for immigrant hard of hearing adults and English for black and brown deaf learners, also have to be considered to influence others as well as the research process.

Enni Paul

I move in positions of privilege, inhabiting Whiteness and current non-disability, working as an academic with perceived command of the majority language and academic literacies. However, I am also a minority language speaker (belonging to a linguistic group – Sweden Finns – granted minority language rights in Sweden since 2009), the child of working-class immigrants, and raised in a time when Finns in Sweden as well as speaking Finnish in Sweden was both classified and raciliazed/ethniczied. However, as shown by others (Löfdahl et al., 2024) even if experiences of shame (alongside with pride and resistance) haunts the Sweden-Finnish group, this minority group has also become invisible – so to say recruited to Swedish Whiteness (cf. Lundström & Hübinette, 2020) – with new immigrant/migrant groups becoming marginalized instead and made visible as the Other in Sweden. Thus, I have experiences of both being positioned in a marginalized group portrayed as 'disabled as language users' and at 'risk' of not learning 'good Swedish' (as a child) to places of privilege (later in life). These experiences have shaped how I come to view language teaching and learning, as a teacher and later as a researcher and a lecturer.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethics Statement

Funding

References

Adams Lyngbäck, L. (2016). *Experiences, networks and uncertainty: parenting a child who uses a cochlear implant* [Doctoral dissertation]. Stockholm University, Department of Education.

Adams Lyngbäck, L., & Andersson, S. (2024). Deaf, diverse and denied: Insights and challenges in responding to the educational and linguistic human rights of deaf immigrant students. In *Inclusion and Special Needs Education for Immigrant Students in the Nordic Countries* (pp. 216–232). Routledge.

Adams Lyngbäck, L., Hedman, C., Paul, E., & Rosén, J. (2025). Ethics in aesthetic space in the in-between in accommodated language education for adults: representing ethical-affective relations. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*.

Adams Lyngbäck, L., Larsdotter, M., & Paul, E. (2021). New Barriers and New Possibilities: Confronting Language Inaccessibility in and around a Pandemic. In H. Egard, K. Hansson, & D. Wästerfors (Eds.), *Stubborn inaccessibility: Understanding everyday resistance to inclusion for person with disabilities* (pp. 140–155). Routledge.

Ahlgren, K., & Rydell, M. (2020). Continuity and change. Migrants' experiences of adult language education in Sweden. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, *11*(3), 399–414. https://doi.org/10.3384/rela.2000-7426.ojs1680

Andersson, S., & Adams Lyngbäck, L. (2022). 'But I feel more at home in the Deaf world even if I can talk': D/deaf adolescents' experiences of transitioning from a mainstream school to a Deaf school in Sweden. *Deafness & Education International*, *24*(3), 249–266. https://doi.org/10.1080/14643154.2021.1970086

Bechter, F. (2008). The Deaf convert culture and its lessons for Deaf theory. In H.-D. L. Bauman (Ed.), *Open your eyes: Deaf studies talking* (pp. 60–82). University of Minnesota Press.

Biesta, G. J. (2015). *The beautiful risk of education*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315635866

Campbell, F. (2009). *Contours of ableism – the production of disability and abledness*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Canagarajah, S. (2023). A decolonial crip linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, *44*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amac042

Cannon, J., & Marx, N. (2023). Scoping review of research methodologies across language studies with deaf and hard-of-hearing multilingual learners. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, *62*(2), 1009–1037. https://doi.org/10.1515/iral-2022-0206

Carlson, M., & Jacobsson, B. (2019). Neoliberalising adult education. In M. Dahlstedt & A. Fejes (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and Market Forces in Education* (pp. 123–137). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429470530-9

Cioè-Peña, M. (2021). Raciolinguistics and the education of emergent bilinguals labeled as disabled. *The Urban Review*, *53*(3), 443–469. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-020-00581-z

De Meulder, M., Kusters, A., Moriarty, E., & Murray, J. J. (2019). Describe, don't prescribe. The practice and politics of translanguaging in the context of deaf signers. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *40*(10), 892–906. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2019.1592181

Duggan, N. (2024). *Deaf migrants in Swedish adult education: Language ideologies, repertoires, and translingual practices* [Doctoral dissertation]. Department of Linguistics, Stockholm University.

Duggan, N., & Holmström, I. (2024). Deaf migrants in Sweden: Exploring linguistic and bureaucratic challenges through the lens of Crip Theory and Crip Linguistics. *Multilingua: Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*. https://doi.org/10.1515/multi2023-0203

Duggan, N., Holmström, I., & Schönström, K. (2023). Translanguaging practice in adult education for deaf migrants. *DELTA: Documentação de Estudos em Lingüística Teórica e Aplicada*, *39*(1), 1–33. https://doi.org/10.1590/1678-460X202359764

Erevelles, N. (2018). Toward justice as ontology: Disability and the question of (in) difference. In E. Tuck & K. W. Yang (Eds.), *Toward What Justice?* (pp. 67–83). Routledge.

Fejes, A., Dahlstedt, M., Olson, M., & Sandberg, F. (2018). *Adult education and the formation of citizens: A critical interrogation*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351111355

Flores, N., & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing appropriateness: Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education. *Harvard Educational Review*, *85*(2), 149–171. https://doi.org/10.17763/0017-8055.85.2.149

Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (revised). Continuum.

Friedner, M. (2016). Understanding and Not-Understanding: what do Epistemologies and ontologies do in deaf worlds? *Sign Language Studies*, *16*(2), 184–203. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26191026

Friedner, M. I., & Kusters, A. M. J. (2014). On the possibilities and limits of "DEAF DEAF SAME": Tourism and empowerment camps in Adamorobe (Ghana), Bangalore and Mumbai (India). *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *34*(3). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v34i3.4246

Fritsch, K. (2016). Cripping neoliberal futurity: Marking the elsewhere and elsewhen of desiring otherwise. *Feral Feminisms*, *5*(2016), 11–26.

Green, E. M. (2014). Building the tower of Babel: International Sign, linguistic commensuration, and moral orientation. *Language in Society*, *43*(4), 445–465. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404514000396

Hall, K. Q. (2015). New conversations in feminist disability studies: Feminism, philosophy,and borders. *Hypatia*, *30*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12136

Hall, W. C., Smith, S. R., Sutter, E. J., DeWindt, L. A., & Dye, T. D. (2018). Considering parental hearing status as a social determinant of deaf population health: Insights from experiences of the "dinner table syndrome." *PloS One*, *13*(9), e0202169. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0202169

Hållander, M. (2019). On the verge of tears: The ambivalent spaces of emotions and testimonies. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *38*(1), 71–91. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-019-09663-2

Henner, J., & Robinson, O. (2023). Unsettling languages, unruly bodyminds: A crip linguistics manifesto. *Journal of Critical Study of Communication & Disability*, *1*(1), 7–37. https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.4

Heugh, K. (2021). Southern multilingualisms, translanguaging and transknowledging in inclusive and sustainable education. In P. Harding-Esch & H. Coleman (Eds.), *Language and the sustainable development goals* (pp. 37–47). British Council.

Hoffmann, E. G. (2008). *Standardization Beyond Form: Ideologies, Institutions, and the Semiotics of Nepali Sign Language* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Michigan.

Hoffmann-Dilloway, E. (2011). Lending a hand: Competence through cooperation in Nepal's Deaf associations. *Language in Society*, *40*(3), 285–306. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404511000194

Holmström, I., & Schönström, K. (2024). "They forget and forget all the time." The complexity of teaching adult deaf emergent readers print literacy. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, *62*(4), 2009–2036. https://doi.org/10.1515/iral-2022-0241

hooks, B. (2014). *Teaching to Transgress*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203700280

Humphries, T. (1977). *Communicating across cultures (deaf-hearing) and language learning*. Union Institute and University.

Kafer, A. (2013). *Feminist, queer, crip*. Indiana University Press. https://doi.org/10.2979/6841.0

Kusters, A., & Hou, L. (2020). Linguistic ethnography and sign language studies. *Sign Language Studies*, *20*(4), 561–571. https://doi.org/10.1353/sls.2020.0018

Kusters, A., Spotti, M., Swanwick, R., & Tapio, E. (2017). Beyond languages, beyond modalities: Transforming the study of semiotic repertoires. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *14*(3), 219–232. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2017.1321651

Larsdotter, M., Adams Lyngbäck, L., & Johansson, S. (in press). Ableism and Linguicism in Governmental Documentation – the Case of Swedish Sign Language (STS). *International Journal of Disability and Social Justice*.

Lindahl, C. (2015). *Tecken av betydelse: En studie av dialog i ett multimodalt, teckenspråkigt tvåspråkigt NO-klassrum [Signs of Significance : A Study of Dialogue in a Multimodal, Sign Bilingual Science Classroom]* [Doctoral dissertation]. Institutionen för matematikämnets och naturvetenskapsämnenas didaktik, Stockholms universitet.

Löfdahl, M., Järlehed, J., Wojahn, D., Milani, T. M., Rosendal, T., & Nielsen, H. L. (2024). Navigating whiteness from the margins: Finnish, Somali, and Arabic speakers' experiences of racialization,(in) visibility, and (im) mobility in Gothenburg, Sweden. *Multilingua*, *43*(1), 119–150. https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2023-0075

Lundström, C., & Hübinette, T. (2020). *Vit melankoli: En analys av en nation i kris. [White melancholy: An analysis of a nation in crisis.]*. Makadam förlag.

McRuer, R. (2018). *Crip times: Disability, globalization, and resistance* (Vol. 1). NYU Press.

Medina, J. (2012). Hermeneutical injustice and polyphonic contextualism: Social silences and shared hermeneutical responsibilities. *Social Epistemology*, *26*(2), 201–220. https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2011.652214

Medina, J. (2013). *The epistemology of resistance: Gender and racial oppression, epistemic injustice, and resistant imaginations*. Oxford University Press.

Medina, J. (2018). Resisting racist propaganda: Distorted visual communication and epistemic activism. *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, *56*, 50–75. https://doi.org/10.1111/sjp.12301

Meek, D. R. (2020). Dinner table syndrome: A phenomenological study of deaf Individuals' experiences with inaccessible communication. *The Qualitative Report*, *25*(6), 1676–1694. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4203

Mufic, J., & Fejes, A. (2022). 'Lack of quality' in Swedish adult education: A policy study. *Journal of Education Policy*, *37*(2), 269–284. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2020.1817567

Murray, J. J., Hall, W. C., & Snoddon, K. (2019). Education and health of children with hearing loss: the necessity of signed languages. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, *97*(10), 711. https://doi.org/10.2471/BLT.19.229427

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. University of California Press.

Palfreyman, N. (2018). *Variation in Indonesian Sign Language*. Mouton de Gruyter.

Piepzna-Samarasinha, L. L. (2018). *Care work: Dreaming disability justice*. Arsenal pulp press.

Piepzna-Samarasinha, L. L. (2022). *The future is disabled: Prophecies, love notes, and mourning songs*. Arsenal Pulp Press.

Reagan, T. (2020). Social justice, audism, and the d/Deaf: Rethinking linguistic and cultural differences. In R. Papa (Ed.), *Handbook on Promoting Social Justice in Education* (pp. 1479–1510). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-14625-2_108

Rosén, J. (2013). *Svenska för invandrarskap? Språk, kategorisering och identitet inom utbildningsformen Svenska för invandrare*. Örebro universitet.

Samuels, E., & Freeman, E. (2021). Crip temporalities. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *120*(2), 245–254. https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-8915937

Schwartz, M. A., Elder, B. C., Chhetri, M., & Preli, Z. (2022). Falling through the cracks: Deaf new Americans and their unsupported educational needs. *Education Sciences*, *12*(1), 35. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12010035

Sépulchre, M. (2022). Disability, justice and freedom as non-domination. *The International Journal of Disability and Social Justice*, *2*(1), 11–30. https://doi.org/10.13169/intljofdissocjus.2.1.0011

Snoddon, K. (2020). The social and epistemological violence of inclusive education for deaf learners. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, *9*(5), 185–213. https://doi.org/10.15353/cjds.v9i5.695

Thoutenhoofd, E., & Adams Lyngbäck, L. (2023). Bimodal bilingual teacher training in Sweden. *Sign Language Studies*, *23*(4), 555–576. https://doi.org/10.1353/sls.2023.a905539

Zembylas, M. (2007). The power and politics of emotions in teaching. In P. A. Schutz & R. Pekrun (Eds.), *Emotion in education* (pp. 293–309). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012372545-5/50018-6

Zembylas, M. (2022). Affective and biopolitical dimensions of hope: From critical hope to anti-colonial hope in pedagogy. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, *19*(1), 28–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/15505170.2020.1832004