Constructions of Language Competence

Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Assessing Second Language Interactions in Basic Adult Education

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Abstract

The current thesis is concerned with constructions and perceptions of what it means to be 'a competent language user' in the context of a language programme in basic Swedish called *Swedish for Immigrants* (SFI). A particular focus is given to the testing and assessment of oral interaction. The prevailing communicative approach to language teaching and testing makes it relevant to investigations of both language use and reflections on communicative experiences. The thesis is based on three studies. Drawing on insights from linguistic anthropology, multimodal interaction analysis, phenomenology and social theory, the three studies address different sociolinguistic perspectives on language testing and assessment. Whereas Studies I and II investigate paired speaking tests in the final national exam in SFI as a speech event, Study III builds upon focus group discussions with SFI participants with the aim of exploring the participants' reflections on communicative experiences.

Drawing on linguistic anthropological performance theory, Study I makes the case that the paired speaking tests can be analysed as *staged institutionalized performances* that put speaking and ideologies on display. Study I draws on an analysis of sequences in the test data where the participants expressed beliefs on language learning, language use and language competence. One important resource for the test takers to maintain the discussion in front of the examiners was to draw on dominant discourses on language and integration, such as stating the importance of learning Swedish, speaking only Swedish, attempting to find Swedish friends and taking responsibility for one's learning, making testing practices an important site for the reproduction of such discourse. The orientation to being 'a competent language user' was performed by indexing other images of being 'a good student' and 'a good immigrant'.

Study II takes an interactional practice in the paired speaking tests, word searching sequences, as its starting point. Word searches tap into two aspects of communicative language testing: vocabulary knowledge and the ability to negotiate meaning and solve interactional problems. The test takers drew on different embodied semiotic resources to negotiate participation and meaning or to display an avoidance to participating in the fellow test taker's word search. Overall, the participants prioritized the progressivity of talk over lexical precision. By avoiding using languages other than Swedish during the test, the test takers sustained and constructed a monolingual orientation to language competence.

Study III discusses how the SFI participants' lived experience of language constituted their understanding of what it means to be 'a competent language user'. Accordingly, the participants' comments primarily constructed a view of competence as made relevant through and being shaped in social interactions, making language competence a primarily relational construct. Corroborating the relational construction of language competence was the importance given to language assessments, both those made by others and internalized self-assessments. In the focus group discussions, overall, being 'a competent language user' was oriented to as a desired, but yet unstable and vulnerable subject position.

Taken together, the three studies address ideological, embodied, emotional and relational perspectives on language and language competence. By contrast, language testing practices are built upon a view of language competence as an individual and objective ability that can be measured. The main conclusions drawn in the thesis are that testing and assessment practices constitute a social practice where perceptions and constructions of language competence are constructed and regimented metapragmatically as well as interactionally. Furthermore, embodied experiences of language assessment made in institutional and everyday practices make competence a powerful concept influencing L2 users' self-perception and agency.

Keywords: *constructions of language competence, language ideologies, migration, language testing and assessment, Swedish as a second language, embodied interaction, lived experience of language, adult education, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology.*

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To Frank, Elis and Siri.

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III. Rydell, M. 2018. Being 'a competent language user 'in a world of Others – Adult migrants' perceptions and constructions of communicative competence. *Linguistics and Education* 45. Pp. 101–109. doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2018.04.004

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1 Introduction

The present thesis is concerned with constructions and perceptions of language competence among adult migrants in Sweden enrolled in a language programme called *Swedish for Immigrants* (SFI).[1] Learning a new language sheds light on the assumptions made on the 'nature' of language (Harris 1981:77–80, Heller 2007:9). A particular practice in which constructions and perceptions of competence are brought to the fore is language testing and assessments (both institutionalized assessments and those made in everyday life). The prevailing communicative approach to language teaching and testing makes it relevant to investigate both language use and reflections on communicative experiences. In this light, the present thesis sets out to investigate sociolinguistic perspectives on language testing and assessment with a particular focus on oral interaction. More specifically, this is done, on the one hand, by investigating paired speaking tests (a candidate-candidate discussion) in the final national test in SFI[2] as a speech event and, on the other hand, by investigating SFI students' perceptions and constructions of what it means to be 'a competent language user' as manifested in paired speaking tests and focus group discussions.

1.1 Language testing and assessment from a sociolinguistic perspective

Studying language testing from a sociolinguistic perspective is important for a number of reasons. Testing practices shape and confirm language learner identities, and, by passing tests, candidates can claim legitimacy as 'competent language users' (Jørgensen et al. 2011). With respect to adult migrant language learners, passing language tests has an increased symbolic value since such tests often perform a gatekeeping function in relation to other arenas such

[1] The official name of the language program has changed over time. The current official name is *Municipal adult education in Swedish for immigrants* (kommunal vuxenutbildning i svenska för invandrare). However, the commonly used term by both students and teachers, as well as in research, is SFI (e.g. Lindberg & Sandwall 2017, Rosén 2013). Henceforth, the abbreviation SFI will be used.

[2] See section 5.1.1 for a presentation of the paired speaking test.

as the labour market (Carlson 2002). As a core professional activity for teachers, assessment practices set out to make claims of the language abilities and communicative competence of individuals. Conversely, test takers need to interpret the task at hand and act accordingly in order to display themselves as 'competent language users'. In this sense, testing and assessments are prime sites for the construction and perception of knowledge (e.g. Foucault 1977, McNamara 2001, Shohamy 2001). In this light, testing oral interaction sheds light on tensions relating to assumptions made on the 'nature' of language competence, such as being *an individual ability versus a relational construct* (Chalhoub-Deville 2003, McNamara 1997, McNamara & Roever 2006; see also Studies II and III). Another issue that is brought to the fore in oral testing is the view of language *as an embodied practice* in relation to *the logocentric* view or the *lingual bias* prevailing in linguistics and in language testing (e.g. Block 2014, Goodwin 2004, Heughs 2004, Studies II and III). The 'lingual bias' is defined as 'the tendency to conceive of communicative practices exclusively in terms of the linguistic (morphology, syntax, phonology, lexis)', thus neglecting embodied and multimodal aspects of language use (Block 2014:56). Moreover, this study addresses how a *monolingual ideology* of competence is constructed and reproduced in language tests (e.g. Jenkins & Leung 2017, Shohamy 2011, Studies I and II) and how ideas of 'being a competent language user' are intertwined with such ideas as being 'a good immigrant' and being 'a good student' by taking responsibility for one's learning (Study I).

In the wake of globalization, the symbolic value of adult migrants' language competence has become increasingly salient. The importance placed on migrants becoming competent in Swedish concerns a contemporary 'language ideological consensus' (Salö 2016:7). A language ideology can be defined as a 'cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests' (Irvine 1989:255) that create a 'linkage of microcultural worlds of language and discourse to macrosocial forces' (Kroskrity 2000:2). Hence, language ideologies are never about language alone but should be understood in relation broader cultural discourses. As underscored by Miller, '[i]deologies are not floating in the "macro" world as intangible social beliefs and values but are locally generated and (re)constituted in "micro" interactions' (2014:21). From this perspective, the situated interactions studied in the present thesis provide an emic perspective with respect to language ideologies of what it means to be 'a competent language user' and how ideologies of language competence are reproduced in educational and institutional discourse. Hence, studying perceptions and constructions of language competence provides a window into contemporary language ideologies of what it means to be 'a competent language user'.

What is more, language competence serves as a feature for distinguishing between people (Stroud 2004),[3] and becoming competent in the receiving country's language indexes belonging to the new country of residence (Blackledge 2005, 2009, Milani 2007). Learning the official language is often perceived as a key to accessing the mainstream society and the labour market as well as forging a future identity that belongs to part of an imagined community (Carlson 2002, Fejes & Dahlstedt 2018, Norton B. 2013). Conversely, migrants' (perceived) lack of proficiency is often positioned as a threat to social cohesion, associated with unemployment and sometimes even constructed as a threat to national security (Khan 2014). From this point of view, adult migrants' language competence is given a symbolic value (e.g. Bourdieu 1991) that is taken as an index for non-linguistic tokens such as commitment to the new country of residence and of making an effort (cf. Allan 2013, Blackledge 2005, 2009, Milani 2007, Stroud 2004), giving adult migrants' language competence a political and moral valuation.

In the current thesis, a particular focus is given to the notion of *communicative competence* since it provides an important framework and rationale for communicative language testing. The advent of the communicative teaching paradigm in the 1970s put an emphasis on oral language and performance testing, where test takers are expected to produce language in an act of communication (McNamara 1996, Savignon 1983). Paired speaking tests provide a case in point of communicative language testing and serve as a commonly used format in both language classrooms and high and low stakes tests around the world (Lazaraton 2014).[4] The focus of oral skills have not only been notable in language teaching. Rather, living in 'communication culture' in globalized societies, '[c]ommunication becomes not just something workers are required to do, but something they are expected to be, or to become *good at'* (Cameron 2002:73)*,* which is of concerns to both L1 and L2 speakers.

The term 'competence' stems from a cognitive tradition, but has also been used in more practice-based approaches such as in *communicative competence* (e.g. Hymes 1972a), *interactional competence* (Kramsch 1986, Young & He 1998) or in *performative competence* (Canagarajah 2013). How knowledge should be defined is rarely discussed with students (Carlson 2002, Zachrison 2014), and students' perceptions and subjective experience of language have been described as 'neglected dimension in language learning' (Kramsch 2009:27). Given the emphasis on language use in communicative approaches to language teaching and testing, the relevance of investigating both language use as well as reflections upon communicative experiences become apparent. The current thesis does not set out to launch a new term or model of competence. Instead, my interest lies in the conceptual image of being 'a competent

[3] As noted by Rosén (2013:21-22), the name of the language programme itself contains a distinction and categorization of 'immigrants'.

[4] A test is considered high-stakes 'when a single test score is used as the main or sole factor in determining significant educational decisions' (Menken 2017:386).

language user', and how SFI participants orient to this image interactionally and metapragmatically in test discourse and in focus group discussions. Rather than treating language competence as a fixed and absolute concept, I treat competence as being shaped during intersubjective processes, and as a concept learners often positon themselves in relation to and by which they are positioned by others (Jaffe 2013, Kataoka et al. 2013). From this vantage point, language competence is treated in a broad sense as 'what it means to know a language well' (cf. Park 2010).

Furthermore, as Park maintains, 'competence is used as an extremely pervasive but frequently overlooked index for one's identity and social status' (2010:23). Given the symbolic value assigned to language competence, it is pertinent to pause and scrutinize perceptions and constructions of competence and how adult migrants perceive what it means to be 'a competent language user' (cf. Kramsch 2009:21). Moreover, with adult education being a space for 'forming the citizen of tomorrow' (Olson & Dahlstedt 2014:200), it is particularly interesting to study perceptions and constructions of competence in adult education. The fact that Sweden has a long tradition of adult education (e.g. Fejes & Dahlsted 2018) and that language education for adult migrants has been institutionalized for decades, makes Sweden an interesting case to study.

1.2 Aim and short summary of the studies

The prevailing communicative approach to language teaching and testing, with its focus on language use in different contexts, makes it relevant to investigate both language use and reflections on communicative experiences. Taken as a whole, the current thesis explores sociolinguistic perspectives on language competence and assessment from the perspective of SFI students and how perceptions of what it means to be 'a competent language user' are constructed interactionally and metapragmatically in test discourse and in focus group discussions. Instead of treating competence as a fixed object, 'there' to be studied and described, the three studies approach perceptions and constructions of being 'a competent language user' from different perspectives. The analytical focus is on spoken discourse (see chapter 5). This research interest is pared down to the following overarching research interests:

1) How can the test situation be understood?
2) What ideologies of language competence and what it means to be 'a competent language user' are constructed by SFI students?
3) How do communicative experiences impact SFI students' perceptions of what it means to be 'a competent language user'?

Studies I and II build on an interactional analysis of 27 video-recorded paired speaking tests in the final national test in SFI in the final course (course D), whereas Study III draws on six focus group discussions with SFI students. Question 1 is addressed in Study I through the discussion of speaking tests as stage institutionalized performances and in Study II through the lens of interactional practices in speaking tests. Question 2 is discussed in Study I and in Study III, and to some extent in Study II, and Question 3 is addressed in Study III.

Study I: *Performance and ideology in speaking tests for adult migrants* draws on linguistic anthropological performance theory (e.g. Bauman & Briggs 1990, Bauman 2004) and sets out to discuss a framework for analysing paired speaking tests. The article argues that paired speaking tests should be analysed as *staged institutional performances*, i.e. an audience-oriented discourse that put speaking and ideologies on display. As shown in the analysis, the SFI students display an orientation to dominant ideological discourses on language and integration, such as the importance of learning Swedish, speaking good Swedish, having Swedish friends, speaking Swedish only, and being a responsible and active student. Hence, 'a competent language user' is indexed by being 'a good student' and 'a good immigrant'.

Study II: *Negotiating co-participation: Embodied word searching sequences in L2 speaking tests* pursues the theme of investigating speaking tests as a social practice through the lens of a particular interactional practice: word searching sequences. Word searching sequences tap into two important aspects of communicative language ability – vocabulary knowledge and the ability to negotiate meaning. Drawing on an interactional multimodal analysis, Study II shows how participants prioritized the progressivity of talk rather than pursuing linguistic precision and how they draw on different embodied semiotic resources to negotiate co-participation or to display an avoidance to participate. In addition, by avoiding using other languages than Swedish, the test takers sustain a monolingual ideology in their display of being 'competent language users'.

Study III: *Being 'a competent language user' in a world of Others – Adult migrants' perceptions and constructions of communicative competence* addresses perceptions and constructions of what it means to be 'a competent language user' through the lens of a group of SFI participants and their lived experience of language (Busch 2017). Study III discusses how competence is perceived as a relational construct shaped by intersubjective processes in communicative practices. A particular focus is given to the role of assessments – both those made in institutional and everyday practices – pointing to how assessments become internalized by the speaker and impact the speaker's self-

perception of being or not being 'a competent language user'. Being a 'competent language user' is oriented to as a desired, yet vulnerable, subject position, and the relational view of competence stands in contrast to the view of language learning as an individual responsibility and achievement often expressed in dominant discourse.

1.3 Organization

Following this introduction, chapter 2 discusses the institutional framing of this thesis by addressing the development of SFI from a historical and contemporary perspective. Chapter 3 discusses constructions and perceptions of competence in relation to second language learning with a particular focus on the communicative teaching and testing movement. In addition, chapter 3 addresses ideologies of 'good language' and adult migrants' perceptions of competence. Chapter 4 sets out to discuss issues in relation to testing and assessing speaking, followed by chapter 5, which presents the data used in this thesis together with methodological and theoretical considerations and assumptions underlying the analyses in the three studies. Chapter 6 presents an extended summary of the studies upon which this thesis builds, and chapter 7 provides a concluding discussion on sociolinguistic perspectives on language assessment and testing, followed by a summary in Swedish (chapter 8).

Perceptions and constructions of competence are not context-free. In order to understand the discursive practices investigated in the current thesis, the following chapters serve to contextualize and address perceptions and constructions of adult migrants' language competence from a sociohistorical and sociopolitical perspective. As stated by Bauman, social life is

> discursively constituted, produced and reproduced in situated acts of speaking and other signifying practices that are simultaneously anchored in their situational contexts of use and transcendent of them, linked by interdiscursive ties to other situations, other acts, other utterances. (2004:2)

Hence, the following chapters on the sociohistorical context of SFI and discourses on adult migrants' language competence (chapter 2), frameworks underlying communicative language testing (chapter 3) and the testing of speaking (chapter 4) should not be read solely as a 'background', but rather constitutive in the situated meaning-making practices investigated in this thesis. As such, the situated interactions investigated in this thesis form part of an institutional, educational and societal discourse.

2 Language education for adult migrants in Sweden – the case of SFI

In order to contextualize the studies in the present thesis, the following chapter will discuss the development and the current status of the tailored language programme for adult migrants called *Swedish for Immigrants* (SFI).[5] The aim of the education programme is to provide students with a basic knowledge of Swedish by developing a functional second language. The programme promotes a communicative approach and is designed to provide linguistic tools for 'communication and active participation in daily, societal and working life and for continuing studies' (National Agency for Education 2017a). As stated in the Education Act, anyone over 16 years old, a resident of Sweden and in need of tuition in basic Swedish is allowed to enrol in the courses free of charge (SFS 2010:800, chapter 20 §7, §28)

The development of SFI from the 1960s until today is closely linked to migration to Sweden and the regulating of migration policies. It is regarded as one of the first government initiatives in the development of an integration policy and is still considered a cornerstone in Sweden's migration and integration politics (Dahlström 2004). Demographic changes due to migration and shifting migration policies have become palpable in SFI classrooms *inter alia* in terms of an increasing number of students and changing student populations. From this outlook, this chapter will start by addressing migration to Sweden from a historical and contemporary perspective (2.1), followed by a description of the development of SFI and of its current organization, its syllabus and those who are enrolled in SFI (2.2). Section 2.3 addresses how SFI finds itself in a 'nexus of discourses' (Rosén 2013:133) and how these discourses impact SFI and the view of adult migrants' language learning. The chapter ends with a short summary of previous studies on SFI (2.4).

[5] SFI is not the only educational programme for adults in Swedish as a second language in Sweden. SFI is the first basic language programme, and after passing SFI, students become eligible for continuing courses in municipal adult education. In addition, there are courses for exchange students at the universities and at private schools, and there are study associations that offer language instruction and individual tutoring. However, the focus in this thesis is on SFI.

A point to be made in this chapter is that SFI constitutes an educational setting surrounded by political discourses that become noticeable in the recurrent changes characterizing the language programme and in the symbolic value given to the language competence of adult migrants. These societal discourses on national identity, integration and employment become visible in situated classroom interactions (e.g. Karrebæk 2013, Rosén & Bagga Gupta 2015; see also Study I).

2.1 Migration to Sweden and migration policies

A frequent discursive image of Sweden is that, until recently, it has been an ethnically and linguistically homogenous country. This stereotype often obscures the fact that Sweden has historically been populated by diverse groups, both in terms of indigenous groups like the Sami and immigrants, e.g. Germans from the Hanseatic League in the Middle Ages, Finns, Wallons and Romani people settling in the 1600s and Jews in 1800s (Hult 2004, Milani 2008, Rosén & Bagga-Gupta 2013, Runblom 1994, Svanberg & Tydén 2005). Still, Sweden has unquestionably undergone considerable demographic changes since the second half of the 20th century. As pointed out by Gal (2018), there is no neutral way of talking about migration. This section mainly represents the perspective of state regulations and official statistics. While Sweden at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was largely a country of emigration, the country became a territory of immigration in the 1940s and onwards (Nilsson 2004). Meanwhile, it is important to note that Sweden, like many other countries, is a space for both emigration and immigration. However, with a few exceptions in the 1970s, immigrants have outnumbered emigrants since the 1930s (Statistics Sweden 2016). Subsequently, the portion of the population born outside Sweden has continually expanded. In 2000, 11 % of the population was born abroad, compared to 15% in 2012 and 18 % in 2016 (Milani 2008, Statistics Sweden 2013, 2016).

The demographic changes are not only manifested in the number of migrants. Since the 1950s, there has also been an increasing diversity in the characteristics of the immigrated population, concerning country of origin and reasons for migrating to Sweden. During the second half of the 20th century, the official migration policies and regulating laws have shifted, directly impacting immigration flows. While the 1950s and 1960s were characterized by work immigration, mainly from Germany, Greece, Turkey, the former Yugoslavia and the neighbouring Nordic countries, immigration was, for the first time, regulated and more restricted in the late 1960s (Borevi 2012, Nilsson 2004). Hence, following the new immigration regulations during the 1980s and 1990s, immigration was mainly characterized by asylum seekers and family

reunions from regions of conflict such as Chile, Iraq, Eritrea, the former Yugoslavia and Somalia. In 1995, Sweden became a member of the European Union, which granted EU citizens the right to live and work in Sweden. It is important to note, however, that shifts in the immigration population are not mainly due to official regulations in Sweden, but rather to circumstances in the world (Banke 2017). During the 2000s, deliberations and regulations, both at the EU level and at the national level, have been characterized by both a will to facilitate need-based work immigration, as well as to control and restrict undocumented migration (Parkhouse 2016). Following an international refugee crisis, a record of asylum seekers was noted in Sweden in 2015, which led to a dramatic shift in migration policies in the autumn of 2015. Briefly, this shift can be described as going from a generous migration policy with permanent residence permits for those granted residency to a standard targeting the EU minimum level with short temporary residency and constraints in the regulations for family reunions (Banke 2017, SFS 2016:752).

The increased mobility and diversification of immigrants does not, of course, only hold true for Sweden. Rather, this is characteristic of the situation in many countries. Some scholars (e.g. Blommaert & Rampton 2011, Creese & Blackledge 2018) use the notion *super-diversity* (Vertovec 2006, 2007) to stress this level of diversity, which Vertovec (2006:1) has described as a 'diversification of diversity'. Characteristic of super-diverse societies is a complex interplay of different features of the population concerning country of origin, migration channel, legal status, migrants' human capital (particularly, educational background), access to employment, locality and transnationalism (Vertovec 2007:1049). The notion of super-diversity has been criticized for its emphasis on being a recent Late Modern phenomenon and by only representing a Western perspective, which obscures the fact that from a historical and global perspective, diversity is commonplace (e.g. May 2014). However, as underscored by Milani, what is interesting here, is 'the way in which this increasing diversity has been perceived and officially addressed' (2008:28). In this thesis, this is discussed in the light of constructions and perceptions of what it means to be 'a competent language user' in the context of language education for adult migrants in Sweden.

2.2 The development of Swedish for Immigrants (SFI)

SFI can be considered a privileged language programme (Lindberg & Sandwall 2007). Ever since its inception, it has been provided free of charge to

those who need such instruction. Each municipality in Sweden is obliged, according to the law, to provide SFI courses within three months if there is a demand for them (SFS 2010:800 chapter 20, 29§). In addition, as of 2009, when the Language Act (SFS 2009:600) was issued, SFI finds support in 14§, which states that '[a]ll residents of Sweden are to be given the opportunity to learn, develop and use Swedish'.

Despite its intentions, the language programme has received much criticism. As pointedly indicated by the title of the National Agency for Education's report (1997) *Who loves SFI?*, SFI has, time and again, been criticized in terms of alleged low efficiency, a lack of quality in its implementation and insufficient individualization, which subsequently has resulted in recurrent changes with respect to curricula, syllabi and organizational structures (Hyltenstam & Milani 2012, Lindberg & Sandwall 2007; 2017, Rosén & Bagga Gupta 2013). These recurrent changes have been motivated, on the one hand, by a will to address an alleged inefficiency, and, on the other hand, to what can be described as an institutionalization process that seek to integrate SFI in the national education system together with other school forms. Moreover, the recurrent changes can be seen as symptomatic of how SFI has been given a symbolic function in the political debate (see section 2.3) and how organizational changes are perceived as a 'quick fix' to a complex reality (Hyltenstam 1996).

2.2.1 SFI from 1965 to 2018: a short history

Following a government decision in 1965, SFI took shape as a provisional pilot activity to meet the needs of demographic changes due to increased migration to Sweden and as a consequence of a new political focus on the role of language in society (Hyltenstam & Milani 2012, National Agency for Education 1997). The tuition primarily targeted work immigrants (Rosén 2013) and was 'a joint responsibility of the state, trade unions and employers' (Lindberg & Sandwall 2007:81). The Swedish debate on language and migration pertained to an international discussion on providing language instruction for work migrants. In 1968, the Council of Europe dictated that foreign workers were entitled to at least 200 hours of teaching in the receiving country's official language, which came to serve as a bench-mark in the Swedish discussion (National Agency for Education 1997). Initially, the tuition was organized by private study associations through the form of study circles, with no formal curricula and no formal requirements for teachers (Lindberg 1996). In addition, the tuition could also be organized in larger workplaces during regular working hours. The first curriculum, manifested as recommendations to the study associations, was issued in 1971. The curriculum prescribed the so

called *direct method,* a form of audiolingual teaching method 'in an accordance with a structural view of language and behaviouristic learning theory' (Lindberg & Sandwall 2007:84).

Following years of deliberations discussing the need for more cohesive education, two government bills (SOU 1981:86, SOU 1981:87) prepared for organizational changes and a new status for SFI as part of the national education system. Finally, in 1986, SFI became a permanent programme with a formal curriculum and teacher qualification requirements, albeit modest ones (Lindberg & Sandwall 2007). The previously recommended direct method had largely been criticized as being too mechanical (Lindberg & Sandwall 2012). The curriculum now advocated a communicative approach, focusing *inter alia* on the active participation of students and individualized and learner-centred teaching. However, as surveys later showed, these ambitions were scarcely implemented, and as a consequence, a new SFI reform accompanied by a new curriculum was issued in 1991 (National Agency for Education 1997). The curriculum of 1991 aimed to facilitate a more flexible education that minimized the waiting period before enrolling in the language programme in order to increase its efficiency.

Still, the 1991 curriculum did not last long, and in 1994 SFI underwent considerable changes. This time change was motivated by a major national school reform, which marked an important shift in the history of the Swedish education system. First and foremost, the national educational system was decentralized, and the municipalities became the principal organizer of all schools. In addition, for SFI, this meant that the municipalities were, according to law, obliged to provide SFI classes within three months after applying, leading to an open enrolment policy for learning centres. Moreover, a new curriculum accompanied by syllabi was issued for all forms of schooling (including SFI), reflecting an important political change and view of knowledge. A new grading system was implemented for upper primary schools and secondary schools, shifting from a relative normative system to goal-based syllabi and a criterion-referenced grading system (Lindberg & Sandwall 2012). As a step towards integrating SFI in the national education system, SFI no longer had its own curriculum. Instead, SFI was issued a new syllabus pertaining to the common curriculum for non-compulsory school forms.[6] For the first time, SFI was accorded a formal grading system (*Pass*/*Pass with distinction*), and the implementation of the final national exam in SFI in 1996 (see section 2.2.3) marks an important step in the institutionalization of the programme.

[6] In the Swedish education system, there is one curriculum common for all compulsory schools and another curriculum for non-compulsory schools. Hence, the curriculum is quite general. Syllabi are issued for different subjects and courses. As the syllabi are issued by the National Agency for Education, they have a formal status and cannot be changed by individual schools.

Individualized and learner-centred teaching, together with a need to increase SFI's throughput, continued to be the focus of debates and surveys of SFI, leading to a new syllabus being issued in 2002. In order to meet the different needs of a diverse student group and to create attainable goals, a system of four courses with three study tracks that depended on estimated study pace of students, their prior schooling and knowledge of Swedish was implemented (see Figure 1). This was also the system in use during my data collection. Track 1 targets students with no or limited prior schooling, and track 3 targets students with greater previous experience in formal education. The courses range from beginning level up to intermediate level, approximately equivalent to B1/B1+ on the CEFR scale (Council of Europe 2001, National Agency for Education 2009).

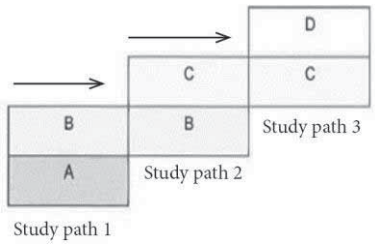

Figure 1. Study paths (1-3) and courses (A-D) in SFI implemented in the syllabus in 2002. This was the system in use during my data collection. The final course (course D) thus targets students from all study paths.

New syllabi were issued again in 2006, 2009, 2012 and 2017. Some changes were quite minor, such as the new syllabi in 2006 and in 2017, whereas others were the result of larger national education reforms (1994, 2012) or due to changes in the structure of the language programme (2002). As of 2007, the requirement to study civics as part of SFI was no longer part of the syllabus, thereby putting a stronger emphasis on SFI as primarily a language programme. Moreover, the syllabus stated that students in need of basic and functional literacy training should be provided teaching in order to acquire those skills. Following a substantial national school reform in Sweden, a new syllabus was put in place in 2012, introducing a new seven-step grading system (A-F), which is currently in use. This grading system mainly addressed the needs that had emerged in the primary and secondary school systems, but was imposed on SFI for the sake of a homogenized school system. In 2016, SFI was merged into the municipal adult education comprising courses up to secondary school level, and was thereby no longer considered a school form of its own, but still had its own syllabus and national tests. Following this organizational shift, a new syllabus was issued once again for SFI (National Agency

for Education 2017a), with slight modifications such as the addition of the need for students to develop digital skills and source criticism. 'Continuing studies' was added to the target domains 'everyday, societal and working life' describing the overall aim of the language programme. Moreover, the new syllabus foregrounds that the student should be able to take all courses within their study path:

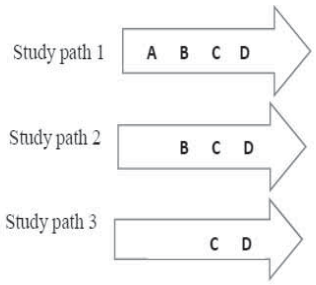

Figure 2. Study tracks and courses in SFI as of 2018.

This characterizing instability is noticeable in the current thesis as well. From the time I started collecting data in 2011 until the last data was collected in 2016, two different syllabi and grading systems had been in use. However, the underpinning communicative approach has remained, as well as the aim that students should develop functional language skills for participation in daily, societal and working life. During the entire history of SFI, the crucial role of language for participation in societal and working life has remained unquestioned, and the link between SFI and the labour market and integration policies has always been strong (Hyltenstam & Milani 2012, National Agency for Education 1997 Rosén 2013). Increasingly, the link to the labour market and that students should become 'employable' has been foregrounded.

Ever since its beginning, SFI has been struggled with professionalization and recognition (Hyltenstam & Milani 2012, Lindberg & Sandwall 2007, 2017). A parallel worth mentioning is that struggles for legitimacy are not only characteristic of SFI, but also of the primary and secondary school subject Swedish as a second language (Hyltenstam & Milani 2012, Sahlée 2017). Repeatedly being questioned leads to a stigmatization of the language programme.

2.2.2 Current organization, syllabus and participants enrolled in SFI

SFI is organized at the municipality level, but it is up to the municipality to decide whether the education should be provided by the municipal adult education, by private tendering or by study associations (*studieförbund*). In addition, SFI is provided for in state prisons. SFI is regulated by three main policy documents: the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), the regulation of adult education (SFS 2011:1108) and the current syllabus (National Agency for Education 2017a). According to Sandwall (2013:11), SFI is divided by policies for integration (to take active part in society), employment (SFI as a tool for becoming employable and self-supporting) and educational policies (a qualified language programme giving eligibility to further studies in the education system). The aim of the programme is for students to be provided with 'language tools for communication and active participation in daily, societal and working life for continuing studies' (National Agency for Education 2017a). The syllabus highlights flexibility and the need to facilitate work placement with language instruction and stresses the link between the education programme, employability and the labour market (Rosén & Bagga-Gupta 2013). The knowledge requirements are divided according to different skills following the Common European Framework of References (Council of Europe 2001): listening comprehension, reading comprehension, oral interaction, oral production and writing ability.

One political reform that had an impact on SFI is the Swedish Procurement Act, which has allowed for competitive tendering and corporate profit for private schools (Lindberg & Sandwall 2017, SFS 2007:1091). The school system has, as it were, become a market (Dahlstedt & Fejes 2018). The marketization and the competitive system has been particularly noticeable in SFI, where an important share is run through short-term private tendering. Due to the open enrolment policy and a competitive system, some schools receive new students every week. The official benchmark concerning the time allocated for each student to the language programme is 525 hours (§ 24 SFS 2011:1108), but the time frame is flexible depending on the individual student's needs.

Following increased migration to Sweden, the number of students enrolled in SFI is increasing year by year. In fact, a comparison between the years 2000 and 2013 shows that the number of students has tripled (National Agency for Education 2014). In 2011, when I started the data collection, about 102, 400 students were enrolled in SFI, and in 2016 when I finished collecting data, the number pf SFI students had increased to 150, 000 (National Agency for Education 2013a, 2017b).[7]

[7] The stricter migration policies issued in late 2015 have led to a decrease in the number of asylum seekers and immigrants. However, as stated in a recent report by the National Agency for Education (2018), the demand for language instruction in municipal basic education is still strong.

SFI admits students from all over the world with different linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds and of varying ages. From this vantage point, the SFI classroom can be described as a 'contact zone' (Pratt 1994), where people from all over the world meet. More than 160 first languages are represented among the students, with the most common first languages currently being Arabic, Tigrinja, Somali and Farsi. The age distribution among SFI students has been quite stable over the years. In 2016, the largest group, 56 % of the students, were 25-39 years old; 30 % were older than 39; and 14 % were younger than 25. 12% studied track 1; 42 % studied track 2; and 46 % studied track 3 (National Agency for Education 2017b). The prior formal education of those studying SFI varied from no formal education at all to completion of post graduate studies. However, 60 % of the students had undertaken at least 10 years of schooling. Notwithstanding that years of prior schooling is a rather fuzzy measurement, i.e. it is hard to say whether one year of schooling in one country is equivalent to one year of schooling in another country (cf. Simpson 2006:47), prior formal education and literacy are important aspects with respect to the students' success and how far they go, i.e. which course becomes their final course (National Agency for Education 2013a).

2.2.3 The national test in SFI

The final national test in SFI was implemented in 1996. At that time, the test was only constructed for the final course (course D). As of 2009, national tests for courses B and C have been provided by the National Agency for Education. The aim of the national tests is to guarantee equal assessment nationwide and to support teachers in assessment and grading (e.g. Ahlgren 2016). The national test is compulsory but is not an exit exam, i.e. students do not need to pass the test in order to pass the course, even though in practice, it is often used as an exit exam (National Agency for Education 2006a, Lindberg & Sandwall 2007:85). As of 2018, the importance given to the test has been further enhanced and institutionalized due to a change in the Education Act stating that the test result should be decisive for the final grade of the course (SFS 2010:800; see also section 4.1).

In accordance with the open enrolment policy and the fact that SFI has no fixed semesters, the national test is given on a recurrent basis during the year. How many times a year tests are administered depends on the municipality. As an illustration, the municipality of Stockholm organized 10 test dates in the academic year 2011/2012, which increased to 12 test dates in 2018, i.e. it is administrated once a month (Stockholms stad 2012, 2018). The students' regular teachers decide when the individual student is ready to take the test, i.e. when he or she is considered to have fulfilled the course requirements (National Agency for Education 2006a). It follows that the attainment for the

test is generally high (National Agency of Education 2017b). In 2016, 21, 800 students took the test (in the final course, course D) and 85 % passed.

The national test consists of different components that basically follow the syllabus division for aims and grading criteria with respect to listening comprehension, reading ability, oral production, oral interaction and writing ability (Ahlgren 2016). The national test is administered at the local schools, but since it is distributed by a national institution and thus belongs to a wider institutional context, it is likely to have a normative impact on the view of knowledge and subsequently on the teaching (Carlson 2002:92).

In contrast to many other countries, Sweden has a tradition of assigning the responsibility of assessing external tests (like the national test) to regular teachers at the local schools (Lundahl 2011, Skar 2013). Subsequently, assessment is a core professional activity for teachers. Hence, the administration of the test is decentralized and the organization of the assessment of the test can vary. A recent study on the practices of the speaking test of another final national test in the Swedish education system (the test in English) showed that despite efforts of standardization in the instructions accompanying the exam, the way the test is carried out varies greatly across schools (Sundquist et al. 2018).

A compilation of the results in the final national test (course D) between 2009 and 2012 show that the oral component differs in relation to the other components (reading ability, writing and listening comprehension), in terms of being the component with the highest attainment (Stockholm University & National Agency for Education 2013). Moreover, years of prior formal schooling did not seem to have an impact on attainment in oral language. By contrast, this was the case for the other components (the higher level of prior schooling, the higher level of attainment). The reason the oral component differs from the other components can be several. One reason could be the impact of the communicative approach to teaching, i.e. that speaking is often practiced inside and outside the classroom. Another possible reason is that oral language is a more 'general' ability that everyone is socialized to attain, whereas literacy practices such as tests in reading and writing are more linked to access to formal education. Due to the fact that it is up to the local teachers to decide when a student is ready to take the test, the high attainment of the oral component could indicate that most students reach requirements in oral language ability first, whereas the other abilities take more time to develop. A more pessimistic interpretation would be that the perceived difficulty in assessing speaking and related problems of reliability impact the assessment (Stockholm University & National Agency for Education 2013).

2.3 Intersecting discourses on adult migrants language competence

Discursive struggles over migration have become increasingly salient in public and political discourse in Sweden and elsewhere (cf. Gal 2018). According to political scientists Karin Borevi (2012), discourses on migration and migration policies in Sweden are closely associated to the development of the welfare state and Sweden's self-image as a progressive state. In general, there has been a discursive shift from the emphasis in the 1960s on what the state should do for newcomers to today's focus on 'what the newcomers can and should do for society' (Rosén & Bagga-Gupta 2013:82). While the 1960 and 1970s were characterized by an emphasis on multiculturalism and pluralism[8], *inter alia*, granting immigrants an opportunity to learn Swedish (Hyltenstam & Milani 2012, Runblom 1994), the beginning of a retreat from multiculturalism was noted in the 1980s (Borevi 2012, Dahlström 2004). Ever since, there have been competing ideologies; between discourses on rights and obligations, between Sweden's self-image as a humanitarian and progressive country and calls for stricter migration policies accompanied by political discourses foregrounding the responsibility for immigrants to learn about Swedish values, to acquire the Swedish language and to become employable (Borevi 2012, Milani 2008). The view of migration as a threat to social cohesion and national security has become an increasingly common rhetorical trope in current political and public discourse (Strömbäck et al. 2017). In line with this, there has been a shift towards a *rhetoric on requirements* in relation to adult migrants living in Sweden. Discourses on adult migrants' language learning and competence thus tap into wider discourses on migration and the nation state. Historically, language has played a constitutive role in the construction of nation states and to what is perceived as a culture through the Herderian paradigm of *one nation-one language –one people* (e.g. Anderson 1991, Pujolar 2007). A case in point of how this assumption still operates is the use of language tests in the regulation of citizenship, a current practice in most European countries (van Avermaet 2009). Language tests for naturalization point to how testing serves as a distinguishing feature with the ambiguous role of acting 'as mechanisms of exclusion in the name of national inclusiveness' (McNamara & Roever 2006:182). While Sweden has resisted implementing language tests for citizenship[9], the implementation of such a testing system has recurrently

[8] This is noticeable in the highly influential commission report (*Invandrarutredningen*) in 1975, which outlined the major principles for the immigration politics: equality – freedom of choice – partnership. As stated by Runblom, '[t]he freedom-of-choice goal supported immigrants' right to choose whether to retain their their homeland culture, to "become Swedes", or to blend traits from the homeland and Swedish culture (1994:208)'.

[9] As stated in a commission report on citizenship (SOU 1999:34), knowledge of Swedish was regarded important for integration. But an official language requirement for citizenship was

been suggested in political debates and in government bills (such as in 1991, 2002, 2011, 2015, 2018; see also Milani 2008 for a discussion on the proposal made in 2002 by the Liberal Party). In general, it is the language test that is the focus of this thesis (the national test in SFI) that has been suggested as a requirement in the regulation of naturalization.

As previous research on SFI has noted, a *deficiency discourse* often prevails in relation to SFI, where SFI students are positioned by their lack of abilities in Swedish and their lack of relevant work experience in relation to a perceived Swedish norm (Carlson 2002, Rosén & Bagga Gupta 2013). In accordance with this deficiency perspective, adult education serves as a means of remediating learners' deficiencies and as a 'space for citizen training' (Olson et al. 2018:95). As Hyltenstam and Milani (2012) maintain, these deficiency discourses should be interpreted in light of the symbolic function of SFI and of adult migrants' language competences in relation to migration and ideologies of language and the nation-state.

On a general note, language education for adult migrants 'has come to be viewed more as a process of integration than education' (Khan 2014:9). In this vein, SFI finds itself in a 'crossfire of discourses' (Carlson 2002:220) and in the intersection of different political agendas concerning integration, employment and national identity (e.g. Burns & Roberts 2010, Hyltenstam & Milani 2012, Lindberg & Sandwall 2012). Based on the idea that language is key to society, there is also a discourse on inclusion with respect to language instruction for newly arrived migrants (Fejes & Dahlstedt 2018). As a consequence, there has been a political focus on SFI as a means for solving other societal problems like unemployment and integration (Carlson 2002, Lindberg & Sandwall, 2012:405), by 'fixing the language problem' (Rosén & Bagga Gupta 2013:77). The instability described above in section 2.2.1 can thus be interpreted in light of the ideological linking of SFI and adult migrants' language competence into larger societal discourses on migration, integration, employment, national identity and language competence (Hogan-Brun et al. 2009, Milani 2007, Rosén 2013). Similar discourses have been reported in studies of language education for adult migrants in other countries such as Denmark (Bjerg Petersen 2010), the United Kingdom (Khan 2014, Roberts et al. 2007) and Australia (Burns & de Silva Joyce 2007), to mention a few. This creates a tension between long-term goals, such as developing linguistic resources, and short-term goals, such as making the students employable as quickly as possible (Lindberg & Sandwall 2017).

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considered inappropriate and unjust due to the fact that language learning and learning outcomes are dependent on many factors of which some are not in the control of individual learners. Adult immigrants' language learning was also considered an issue for the education system rather than for the migration agency.

All these societal discourses on national identity, integration and employment become visible in situated classroom interactions (e.g. Karrebæk 2013, Rosén & Bagga Gupta 2015, see also Study I). Moreover, shifting societal discourses become palpable in the different curricula and syllabi of SFI. In a study of curricula and syllabi regulating SFI between 1971 and 2006, Rosén and Bagga-Gupta (2013:75) note how the early days of SFI were characterized by a worker-oriented focus dealing with rights and duties in the work place and basic communicative skills. This worker-oriented focus has gradually shifted to a work-oriented focus enmeshed in discourses on employability (see also Fejes [2010] for a discussion on discourses on employability in relation to adult education). Furthermore, the strong emphasis on SFI as a labour market tool has led to an increasing demand on vocational language courses, leading to an instrumental view of language competence (Carlson & Jacobsson 2018, Sandwall 2013).

2.3.1 The duty to learn

The increasing rhetoric on requirements discussed above is, *inter alia,* palpable in discourses on language learning and learning 'good Swedish' and how this is achieved. This can be illustrated by a recent quotation from Ulf Kristersson, the leader of the Conservative Party:

> The situation now is that many people don't succeed with SFI. Then I think it's better to raise the demands and say that we expect, not only that you are there but that you learn Swedish and actually link the results to social benefits. (Swedish Public Radio, *Ekot* [the public radio's news programme] 2018, my translation)

Alleged low achievement by SFI students can, according to Kristersson, be solved by 'raising the demands' and by state benefits being conditional on successful achievements in the language course. In other words, SFI students dependent on benefits must pass SFI in order to keep their financial support. Underpinning this quote is the view of language competence as located in the individual and the construction of successful language learning as dependent on the individual's own effort (cf. Park 2010). Conversely, 'unsuccessful' learning can be explained by the individual's lack of effort (Lindberg & Sandwall 2017).

A key element in the Swedish welfare model is free access to education (Carlson 2002, Fejes et al. 2018). SFI courses are state-subsidized, and the municipalities are obliged by law to provide language courses if there is a demand. From this point of view, the quote above provides an example of Foucauldian 'governmentality', where the state enables learning by providing

free language courses, but the responsibility for learning lies with the individual student (Fejes 2010).

Like all adult education in Sweden, SFI is a non-compulsory school form. However, this is not true for all students. Students registered at an employment agency and dependent on government-funded benefits are often required to follow SFI courses as part of their so-called establishment plan, i.e. scheduled activities by the employment agency (Abdulla 2017). These students are subjugated to government control by reporting their attendance at the risk of losing their benefits if they fail to do so. The fact that SFI is part of a nexus of government agencies (National Agency for Education, the Employment Agency and the Social Security Agency) reinforces its institutional frame and the symbolic value of passing SFI. As noted by Carlson (2002), there seems to be a tension between 'freedom of choice', which has been a political leitmotif since the 1990s, and the requirement to study, and pass, SFI. In the law regulating the establishment of new arrivals, reformed in 2017 (SFS 2017:584), a formal 'learning duty' (*utbildningsplikt*) was introduced targeting unskilled migrants registered at an employment agency. As the law stipulates, members of this particular target group can lose their benefits if they do not follow the educational programmes (of which SFI can be one) assigned in their activity plan. In addition, the Social Democrats (the party currently in government) suggested during the electoral campaign in spring 2018 what they called a 'language duty' (*språkplikt*), an obligation to study Swedish for asylum seekers and other newly arrived migrants depending on social benefits.

The alleged low efficiency of SFI has not only been addressed by organizational changes and new syllabi as those described in section 2.2.1. Other political reforms have addressed perceived low efficiency of SFI and alleged lack of motivation of the students. One such reform is the SFI bonus (SFS 2010:1030), a bonus system for SFI students passing the SFI courses within a given time frame (12 months). Underpinning this reform was the idea that SFI students are not sufficiently motivated, and that a financial bonus will motivate them and thereby increase the throughput. The SFI bonus system operated only for a short time before it was abandoned, but was a reality during the time I collected the test data. Another example is the Official Report of the Swedish Government *Time for quick flexible learning* (*Tid för snabb flexibel inlärning* SOU 2011:19),[10] which suggested that newly arrived migrants should start SFI within a year and that the time studying SFI should be limited to a maximum of two years. Underpinning these proposals, and the recurrent critique of low efficiency (i.e. that some students take too long to pass the SFI requirements), is the idea that learning Swedish depends on the individual's effort, and if the student is motivated, that it should not take too long (Lindberg & Sandwall 2017). Such a view obscures the relational construction of competence (see Study III) and the highly different pre-conditions for learning in

[10] This report did not become a government bill and the suggestions were never implemented.

the target group (Kerfoot 2009, Lindberg 2004), as well as and how language learners are 'historically and sociologically situated active agents, not just information processing machines' (Block 2003:109). Nor do they improve the learning conditions from an organizational perspective (such as the teacher/student ratio or the open enrolment system). Instead, successful and, conversely, unsuccessful learning is located within the individual, and the completion rate in SFI would seemingly be easily improved if students were to be given a financial incentive or by restricting their time in SFI (Lindberg & Sandwall 2017).

In contrast to the negative image of SFI often depicted in debates and reports, surveys and interview studies show that SFI students are, by and large, satisfied with the language programme (e.g. National Agency of Education 1997, 2013b). Moreover, interview studies have foregrounded the empowering role of the education, in particular, for students who have limited or no prior access to formal education (Ahlgren 2014, Carlson 2002).

While uncontested claims that migrants are not motivated enough or do not make enough effort to learn Swedish 'constitute a frequent element in the dominant discourse on integration' (Lindberg & Sandwall 2017:124), this does not seem to be the case made in interview studies with adult language learners. Rather, interview studies show how adult language learners claim to be motivated to learn and often state the importance of learning the mainstream language (Ahlgren 2014, Carlson 2002, Cooke 2006, Miller 2014). From another perspective, it can be argued that adult migrants claim to be motivated to learn partly 'because they are "recognized" as social beings who *should* do so' (Miller 2014:26; see also Rosén & Bagga-Gupta 2013:69).

2.4 Previous research related to SFI

For a long time, SFI was a fairly under-researched educational programme (Rosén 2013), but a notable change in this regard has been observed in recent years. The great majority of studies relating to SFI have been qualitative studies drawing on ethnographic observations and interviews (Lundgren et al. 2017). Previous studies have addressed such issues as classroom discourse and communicative teaching (Lindberg 1995), and have included a longitudinal case study of a Greek woman's second language learning process (Granberg 2001) as well as studies on constructions of knowledge and learning in SFI from a sociological perspective (Carlson 2002), low literate SFI students and their visual literacy (Franker 2011), the construction and negotiation of identity positions and categorizations in classroom discourse and policy documents (Rosén 2013), SFI students' interaction and opportunities for learning

during their work placements (Sandwall 2013), life narratives from a longitudinal perspective (Ahlgren 2014), institutional talk between SFI students and career counsellors (Sheikhi 2013), embodied classroom interaction and the construction of 'learnables' (Majlesi 2014), literacy practices in and outside the classroom among five Kurdish SFI students (Norlund Shaswar 2014), sociocultural influences on adult migrants' learning process in basic adult education (Zachrison 2014), and the formation of teacher identity among teachers in initial literacy training (Colliander 2018).

Of particular interest for this thesis are the studies made by Carlson (2002), Rosén (2013), Ahlgren (2014) and Zachrison (2014). Carlson's (2002) sociological study discusses knowledge construction and perspectives on learning in SFI at macro-level (Sweden's history of education), meso-level (the institutional framework for SFI) and micro-level perspectives (interviews with SFI students, teachers, principals, career advisers, a school nurse and welfare case workers). According to Carlson, SFI is rooted in the Swedish welfare model and discourses on educational optimism, where education is regarded as inherently good and as a means of fostering 'good citizens' to take responsibility for their own life and learning. The SFI participants interviewed (12 Turkish women with limited prior schooling) emphasized how participating in SFI is empowering, but also how they are positioned in relation to a Swedish norm as being 'passive, traditional and backwards' - an image they tried to resist. The fact that a norm of Swedishness is pervasive throughout the language programme and how discourses of Swedishness, gender, language and migration are reproduced in classroom interactions and in teaching materials is discussed by both Carlson (2002), Rosén (2013) and Zachrison (2014). In particular, the categorization of being an immigrant in relation to Swedishness influences SFI students and leads to an 'othering' of them.

The categorizations and identity positions in relation to SFI are the focus of Rosén's study (2013). Combining classroom ethnography with discourse analytical studies of policy documents regulating SFI from its beginning in 1965 until 2011, Rosén investigates discourses surrounding SFI both in policy documents and how these discourses are reproduced in classroom interactions. Her study also shows how the discursive construction of the target group for SFI and of knowledge have shifted over time from a pluralistic caring perspective to a deficiency discourse and a focus on employability.

SFI students' reflections on communicative experiences have been addressed by Carlson (2002), Ahlgren (2014) and Zachrison (2014). In particular, communicative difficulties and a perception of being regarded as less knowledgeable due to limited access to linguistic resources in Swedish have been anchored in the participants' communicative experiences (Ahlgren 2014, Carlson 2002, Zachrison 2014). Drawing on Ricoeur's notion of 'narrative identity' and a longitudinal interview study with five adult second language speakers (who in the first data set had just finished their SFI studies), Ahlgren (2014) foregrounds how adult language learning is a demanding and time-

consuming process with considerable impact on one's self perception. This became palpable in the participants use of metaphors for describing language learning and use, e.g. 'journey' and 'struggle' causing 'stage fright'.

As pointed out by Lundgren et al. (2017) in a survey of research devoted to SFI, the national test in SFI has been given little attention despite its strong status, both from a societal perspective and within the language programme itself. The current thesis contributes a sociolinguistic perspective on testing and assessment practices by investigating paired speaking tests in the final national test in SFI as a speech event constituting a specific kind of institutional and classroom discourse. Furthermore, this thesis adds to the growing body of research devoted to SFI by examining how perceptions of what it means to be 'a competent language user' are constructed both metapragmatically and interactionally by SFI students in test discourse and focus group discussions.

2.5 Concluding remarks

In sum, section 2 has shown how SFI is a language programme vested in political and ideological interests, characterized by recurrent changes. Relatedly, the symbolic value of being 'a competent language user' has become increasingly salient in globalized societies. This has become apparent in dominant discourses on requirements in relation to adult migrants being responsible for becoming 'competent language users' in Swedish.

3 Constructions and perceptions of L2 competence

This chapter sets out to discuss different understandings and constructions of what constitutes language competence and what it means to be 'a competent language user'. Communicative approaches to language teaching and language competence have provided a rationale for the use and proliferation of speaking tests. In this chapter, a particular focus is therefore given to the communicative teaching movement and the models used to promote and to test communicative language ability in a second language context. The chapter starts by addressing models and theories in relation to communicative competence and communicative language ability (3.1). In addition, different critiques of the notion of communicative competence are discussed. Given that the communicative approach to language teaching and language learning often stresses the ability to use language in different contexts, it becomes necessary to discuss language as a social practice and how ideologies of 'good language' (3.2) are played out in social life. The chapter ends by addressing previous studies on adult language learners' perceptions of language competence and what it means to be 'a competent language user'.

As constructed conceptualizations of language competence, models of competence are formed in their sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts, and are subject to change. As such, models of competence should be understood as artefacts 'created to facilitate our conceptual thinking' (Chalhoub Deville 2003:375) in order to define, and establish limits, in relation to what constitutes language competence. Importantly, it follows that language constructs should be 'subjects to critical interrogations' and not taken for given (McNamara 2001:339). In contrast to discourses of language competence in public and political discourses (see 2.3), where language competence is treated in a simplified way and never really discussed in more detail, definitions on how to define language knowledge have been extensively discussed within linguistic and educational research. Conceptualizations of language knowledge have changed over time and have been subject to theoretical shifts. Accordingly, there is no consensus on how to define language knowledge, not even within theories of communicative language ability and communicative competence (e.g. Purpura 2008). A particular tension can be noted between the view of language competence as an underlying ability becoming observable in language use (i.e. first and foremost being a cognitive construct) and

language-use-oriented theories highlighting the dynamics of language use shaped in moment-by-moment negotiations (e.g. Chalhouab-Deville 2003, Kataoka et al. 2013, McNamara 1997; see also chapter 4 for a discussion on how this tension is particularly noticeable in the assessment of speaking), resonating with debates in second language acquisition-studies between cognitive and interactionist approaches to language learning (e.g. Ortega 2014).

Another point made in this chapter is that being 'a competent language user' in migration contexts is an ideologically loaded image caught in discursive struggles between a multilingual and diverse reality and a monolingual ideology.

3.1 The development of the notion *communicative competence*

One major arena for constructions of language competence is theoretical advancements in defining and 'modelling' language competence. Underpinning curricula, syllabi and language testing programmes, these models are crucial for an understanding of and, subsequently, the operationalisation of language competence. Theoretical debates on how to define language competence have been recurrent in applied linguistics and educational research. Dominating for the last 40-50 years or so in language teaching and testing, are models of communicative language ability, and one of the major contributions to this development is the notion of *communicative competence*. Originally proposed by the American anthropologist and sociolinguist Dell Hymes (1967, 1971, 1972a), communicative competence became a buzzword in applied linguistics in the 1970s. Its diffusion is mainly due to the advent of the communicative teaching paradigm as a reaction to grammar-based instruction, which took place around the same time. Hymes' work was in opposition to the dominating notion of competence as proposed by Chomsky, which contended that linguistic theory should be based on:

> an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attentions and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance'. (Chomsky 1965:3)

Hence, for Chomsky, the main interest was the universal and mental ability for language that humans possess, and that competence should be studied apart from performance. In stark contrast, Hymes argued that 'this idealized conception becomes inadequate as soon it is confronted with real children in a

particular environment' (1971:4). Criticizing Chomsky's notion of competence as too narrow and too concerned with idealized speakers and situations, Hymes set out to develop a sociolinguistic theory of language dealing with 'a heterogeneous speech community, differential competence and the constitutive role of sociocultural features' (1971:9). Stating that language use was ruled by social context, Hymes thereby criticized the prevalent dichotomy of competence (as knowledge of an abstract system) and performance (use of the knowledge) as being inadequate. This general point was made by adding *communicative* to *competence.* For Hymes (1971, 1972a), communicative competence comprised both *knowledge* (grammatical and sociolinguistic) and *ability for use* (including volatile and affective factors). If the current linguistic theory and view of language competence was too narrow, it needed to be expanded. Hymes acknowledged grammar as an important part of communicative competence, but it was useless if not put in relation to rules of use. As one of the most cited quotations goes:

> There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless. Just as rules of syntax can control aspects of phonology, and just as semantic rules perhaps control aspects of syntax, so rules of speech acts enter as a controlling factor for linguistic form as a whole. (Hymes 1972a:278)

Central to Hymes' understanding of competence to use language was the question of appropriateness according to the context. What counts as appropriate is learnt through participation in particular speech communities and is acquired by children through socialization, along with the acquisition of grammar, making communicative competence a *relational* construct. According to Hymes, researchers should be interested in how communication is conducted in particular contexts in particular speech communities through ethnographic studies.[11]

Even though the notion of communicative competence is widely used, its largest impact has been in education, particularly in language teaching and testing. Although the communicative approach to teaching was seen as promising in the 1970s, communicative competence for language education was for

[11] At the time, Hymes was not the only one engaged in departing from Chomsky's theory and moving towards a social approach. In 1970, the philosopher Habermas, pointed out a different direction for the emerging notion of communicative competence. Not concerned with education as such, Habermas considered communicative competence a promising direction for an expanded theory of language. If Hymes wanted to change the direction of ethnographic work and inform it by theory, Habermas was interested in developing a more general theory of language and meaning. Mirroring Chomsky, communicative competence was described as relating to 'an ideal speech situation in the same way that linguistic competence relates to the abstract system of linguistic rules' (Habermas 1970:369). However, in applied linguistics, it was Hymes' understanding of communicative competence that gained ground.

a long time undertheorized (Canale 1983). The work by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) marked a significant turn. Drawing on Hymes' work and others (e.g. Savignon 1972), Canale and Swain aimed to build a theory for second language programmes, teaching and testing. In educational settings, the question is not only what the students should learn and how to teach it, but also what to assess and how. Models of communicative competence and communicative language ability in language education and testing have therefore been quite specific, by dividing competence into different components. Canale and Swain (1980:29f.) proposed a model consisting of three components: *grammatical competence* (knowledge of lexical items, morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, phonology), *sociolinguistic competence* (the appropriateness of an utterance in relation to the context of use) and *strategic competence* (strategies to circumvent communicative problems). Canale (1983) later added *discourse competence* (the ability to form coherent and cohesive texts and knowledge of genres) to the model. As pointed out by McNamara (1996), one important difference between the work of Hymes and the model proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) is the treatment of *ability for use,* which was central to Hymes but deliberately omitted by Canale and Swain, who doubted that 'there is any theory of human action that can adequately explicate ability for use' (1980:7). Conversely, for Hymes (1972a:282), '[i]n speaking of competence, it is especially important not to separate cognitive factors from affective and volatile factors, so far as the impact of theory on educational practice is concerned.' Another difference is the relation between competence and performance. Refuting Chomsky's view of performance as 'an imperfect manifestation of an underlying system' (Hymes 1972a:272), Hymes argued for a broader understanding of performance. Drawing on Goffman's (1959) early work on performance, Hymes posited that

> performance of a person is not identical with a behavioural record, or the imperfect or partial realization of individual competence. It takes into account the interaction between competence (knowledge, ability for use), the competence of others, and the cybernetic and emergent properties of events themselves. A performance, as an event, may have properties (patterns and dynamics) not reducible to terms of individual or standardized competence. Sometimes, indeed, these properties are the point (a concert, play, party). (Hymes 1972a:283)

Whereas Hymes' work made the case for a sociolinguistic theory addressing both knowledge, ability for use and performance[12], Canale and Swain empha-

[12] Performance studies, in Hymes' sense, later developed as a research object on its own in linguistic anthropological work (e.g. Hymes 1975, Briggs 1988, Bauman 2004). See Study I for a discussion on how paired speaking tests can be analysed as performances

sized that '[c]ommunicative competence is to be distinguished from communicative performance, which is the realization of this competence' (1980:6). In language education, it was by and large Canale and Swain's view that gained ground. It follows that it became a central task for language educators and testers to create tasks to elicit the students' underlying language ability.

Subsequent models targeting language teaching and testing (e.g. Bachman 1990, Bachman & Palmer 1996, Celce-Murcia 2007) have defined communicative competence as a set of subcompetencies. These multi-componential models, often de-contextualized and general, distinguish between knowledge of form and structures (e.g. grammatical competence) and knowledge of use (e.g. sociolinguistic competence, interactional competence) together with strategic competence. Bachman and Palmer's model (1996), in particular, has had an immense influence in the language testing field. Bachman and Palmer's conceptualization of components underlying language use provided a model of both linguistic and non-linguistic components such as language knowledge, topical knowledge, personal characteristics and affective schemata. Communicative language ability is in Bachman and Palmers' model divided into *organizational competence* (grammatical competence and textual competence), *pragmatic competence* (sociolinguistic competence and illocutionary competence) and *strategic competence* (metacognitive aspects).

By introducing a model of communicative competence with separate components, the question arose how these components interact with each other. Since the communicative teaching paradigm to a large extent was a reaction to grammar-based instruction, a particular discussion was devoted to function versus form or meaning versus grammaticalness (Canale & Swain 1980:10). Another issue in adopting a framework of communicative competence into language education has been how to describe different proficiency levels of communicative competence, since the models as such do not provide any guidance. Later on, policy makers have tried to meet this need of describing different proficiency levels, with the transnational *Common European Framework of References* – CEFR (Council of Europe 2001) being a case in point. The CEFR divides communicative language ability into linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and pragmatic competence. Language use is described through five skills: writing, reading, listening, oral production and oral interaction, and language proficiency is described at six levels. The CEFR is based on a functional and social approach to language that describes linguistic resources and defines what learners *can do* with their language in different contexts. It is important to note that developments in language teaching and testing are not only underpinned by theoretical movements. Rather, as Spolsky argues (1990, 1995), the CEFR is a prime example of how political and economic interests impact educational planning by defining educational goals in precise terms such as in the notional-functional syllabus with its focus on real-world situations, functions and *can do*-statements (see also McNamara

2011 for a discussion on the global implemention of the CEFR and how it has affected testing practices).

3.1.1 Constructions of language competence in SFI: a communicative and functional approach

The syllabus of SFI and the theoretical framework of the national test in SFI provide an example of how the theoretical discussions outlined in 3.1 are implemented in an educational programme. As outlined in 2.2, since the SFI reform in 1986, a communicative and functional approach to teaching and expected learning outcomes prevails in the documents regulating SFI. The current syllabus states that students should acquire 'communicative language skills' and develop a 'functioning second language'. Communicative language ability is described as being based on knowledge of a language system and knowledge of how to use this system (National Agency for Education 2009, 2012a, 2017a). Moreover, the syllabus states that '[l]anguage correctness should be related to the content and the complexity of the language' and the teaching should be based on the learners' needs (National Agency for Education 2017a). The link to the CEFR was implemented in the syllabus of 2009 (Ahlgren et al. 2013) and remained until it was removed from the latest syllabus in 2017. However, the syllabus is still based on the CEFR's division of five skills (reading ability, writing ability, listening comprehension, oral production and oral interaction), which is reflected in the national test (2.2.3).

The communicative approach to language is also noticeable in the theoretical framework for the national test in SFI (Ahlgren et al. n.d., Ahlgren 2016). Originally, the national test in SFI drew on Bachman and Palmer's (1996) framework for communicative language ability. The assessment grid accompanying the exam reflected Bachman and Palmer's division between organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge (paraphrased in the test as a division between *language system* and *language use*) together with strategic competence. Following the new syllabus in 2012, the theoretical framework of the national tests was revised. The current theoretical framework is still inspired by different models of communicative competence and communicative language ability. In particular, the theoretical framework put forth a model inspired by Celce-Murica's model for communicative competence together with Halliday's model of register (see Ahlgren et al. n.d. for a fuller description). Celce-Murcia's model of communicative competence includes sociocultural competence, textual competence, interactional competence, linguistic competence and strategic competence. These aspects are reflected in the assessment grid accompanying the exam (see National Agency for Education 2012b). In the theoretical framework of the national test as well as in the syllabus there is an emphasis on the ability to use language in different contexts,

for different purposes and with different recipients, together with an emphasis on the ability to adapt one's language accordingly (Ahlgren et al. n.d., National Agency of Education 2017a). The assessment thus requires an understanding of the social context of language use.

Following the functional and communicative approach in the syllabus and the theoretical framework underpinning the test, the tasks in the test aim to, 'as far as possible resemble authentic situations' (Ahlgren et al. 2013:67, my translation). As stated in the syllabus, '[t]he starting point for the assessment should be the pupil's ability to use the Swedish language in a comprehensible way for different purposes in everyday, societal and working life and for continuing studies' (National Agency for Education 2017a, my translation). The target domains are thus mainly situated outside school.

3.1.2 Critiques of communicative competence and its use

Over the years, the notion of communicative competence and its use has been critiqued by several scholars for different reasons. Lillis (2006) points out how notions like context, speaker, speech community and appropriateness, which are treated as quite unproblematic by Hymes, have been subject to recent reexaminations by different scholars. As pointed out by Leung (2005:124), the recontextualization of the notion of communicative competence from Hymes ethnographically oriented work to educational contexts has resulted in an epistemic transformation 'from empirically oriented questions to an idealized pedagogic doctrine'. Instead of investigating language use in different contexts, language education has been informed by idealized models and idealized speakers. The target language and its 'rules of use' easily get treated as homogenous in language teaching, obscuring differences and underlying tensions and foregrounding a normative view (see, for instance, Fairclough [1992] for a discussion on the use of 'appropriateness' in course syllabi). Another central problem is that models of competence as those discussed in 3.1 tend to lead to 'an inert and decomposed knowledge view' (Leung 2014:135).

A central tenet in the communicative teaching paradigm is that language learning takes place through language use. However, drawing on Bourdieu, Norton B. (2013) argues that the right to speak and to be heard depends on social relations and power and should not be taken for granted. Other scholars have criticized the essentialist assumptions underlying the notion of communicative competence (e.g. Bucholtz 2003), its frequent alignment with monolingual ideologies and 'nativeness' (Canagarajah 2013, Miller 2014), how the logocentric view of competence obscures embodied perspectives on competence (Block 2014, Goodwin 2004, Kataoka et al. 2013), and the individual focus on competence as misleading (McNamara 1997; see section 4.2.2). Failing to see language as a situated practice, the individual and essentialist focus has often led to a view that communicative competence is something individuals have or lack (Blommaert et al. 2005).

Time and again, scholars have pointed out the need to extend communicative competence by using new notions like *symbolic competence* (Kramsch 2009), i.e. drawing on one's multilingual resources and semiotic choices to create subject positions, or
interactional competence[13] (Kramsch 1986, Young 2011) and *performative competence* (Canagarajah 2013) in order to highlight the role of negotiation and co-construction in meaning making and the practice-based nature of language, while others have launched alternative notions like *language expertise* (Rampton 1990), *linguistic repertoires* (e.g. Blommaert & Backus 2013, Busch 2012), *spatial repertoires* (Canagarajah 2018) or being a *resourceful speaker* (Pennycook 2012) to describe language use and language knowledge. Busch's (2012, 2017) extended take on linguistic repertoires also includes language ideologies and emotions like desire to know a language. Recent work in applied linguistics and educational research has thus moved away from the term 'competence' and its cognitive roots to emphasize more practice-based and multilingual approaches. By and large, these new notions still relate to communicative approaches to language use and learning. However, as argued by Shohamy, '[w]hile dynamic, diverse, and constructive discussions of multilingual teaching and learning are taking place within the language education field, the phenomenon is overlooked in the testing field, which continues to view language as monolingual, homogenous, and based on native-like constructs' (2013:230). The focus in the current thesis is not to suggest new terms, but rather to investigate perceptions and constructions of images of the 'competent language user'. While the notion of competence might not capture language use adequately (Canagarajah 2018), the image of being 'a competent language user' is a powerful language ideology in both public discourse and educational settings as well as in relation to speakers' self-perception as languaging subjects. In this light, the present thesis sets out to explore how SFI participants perceive and orient to images of being 'a competent language user' and what it means to know a language.

[13] In some models, such as the one used in the theoretical framework of the national test on SFI (drawing in turn on Celce-Muricia's [2007] model) interactional competence refers to interactional management such as turn taking and topic initiation. Furthermore, interactional competence is often used a framework for oral interaction tests (e.g. Galaczi & Taylor 2018). I my studies I have chosen not to use the notion of interactional competence since my interest is on a broader image of what it means to be 'a competent language user'.

3.2 Being 'a competent language user' and ideologies of 'good language'

Since the advent of the communicative teaching paradigm there has been a considerable amount of literature devoted to discussing communicative approaches to curricula, language teaching and testing (e.g. Brumfit & Johnson 1978, Nunan 1991, Roberts 2004, Savignon 1983). However, as stated by Martín Rojo and Marquez Reiter, communicative competence is not only a question for education; rather, it is 'valorized in every social field according to linguistic ideologies' (2013:10). While models conceptualizing communicative competence used in language education, such as those described in 3.1, to a large extent describe communicative competence as an individual ability, scholars interested in communicative competence in everyday and institutional practices instead point to how communicative competence is formed in social practice (e.g. Hymes 1972a, Kataoka et al. 2013). Moreover, since syllabi with a communicative approach often foreground language use in different settings situated outside school, it becomes necessary to take account of a social theory of language use. Kataoka et al. describe communicative competence as 'the product of moment-by-moment negotiations within the act of communication and large-scale social structures, historical dynamics, and the actions and ideologies of institutions like the state' (2013:349). Furthermore, they point to how communicative competence is intersubjectively achieved and maintain that '[i]t invokes dynamics of authenticity, plurality, and mobility, and links people's ability to communicate with their moral valuation, rights to citizenship and belonging, and position in the hierarchies and structure of inequality, both local and non-local' (ibid.).

Hence, looking at language as a social practice makes it pertinent to take account of speakers' different social positions and the symbolic function of language. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who also criticized Chomsky's view of competence, aimed to develop a social theory of the role of language (e.g 1977, 1982, 1991). The Bourdieusian perspective has contributed to broadening the focus on language to see language as a practice, and Bourdieu's contribution (e.g. 1977) makes a strong case for the link between competence, practice and legitimacy. According to Bourdieu (1977, 1982), language cannot be separated from the speaker, and legitimacy concerns the relationship between linguistic resources and the speaker's social position and ability to speak with authority in different social spaces. As Bourdieu holds, this broader sense of competence leads to the insight that 'a language is worth what those who speak it are worth' (1977:652). Following this line of thought, linguistic resources do not have a value per se, but acquire their value in relation to a specific market (Bourdieu 1982). Being a competent speaker is thus not only about 'speaking correctly' and being understood, but also about being believed and respected. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:146) contend,

'[i]nequality of linguistic competence constantly reveal themselves in the market of daily interactions'. In this vein, being seen as a competent language user is closely associated with being a legitimate language user, and, as underscored by Park, this 'link between competence and legitimacy makes competence an effective resource for the reproduction of social distinctions' (2010:24).

In addition to the theoretical uses of the notion of competence (section 3.1), language competence is also a 'folk linguistic' concept, often understood in terms of 'being good at a language' (cf. Park 2010). Ideas of 'good language' and 'good speakers' are neither neutral nor objective; rather they are historically and contextually situated. It follows that ideas of 'good language' are political and perspectival, representing a point of view from a certain standpoint (e.g. Miller 2014, Park & Wee 2008, Spolsky 1995). In second language education, idealized conceptions of the native speaker serve as 'objective measures of good language' (Miller 2014:85).[14] As argued by Ortega (2014), the ideal speaker has been conceptualized as a native speaker with a monolingual upbringing, leading to an inevitable deficiency perspective on language learners. From this follows, then, that underpinning the notion of language competence is an ideology of monolingualism (see Studies I and II).

Furthermore, Sjögren (1996) notes how the importance of learning good Swedish, with its touch of common sense, is a collective image aimed at creating a sense of order in a diverse and changing society. Incrementally, this leads to the view of 'good Swedish' as a key to inclusion in society. As Sjögren further notes, 'the more the importance of language is foregrounded, the more deviations from the standard language become delicate for those who listen' (1996:36, my translation). Thus, an important language ideology in relation to language competence is the valorization of the standard language and linguistic correctness. As argued by Gal, '[c]ontrary to the common sense view, standardization creates not uniformity but more (and hierarchical) heterogeneity' (2006:21). As a consequence, for those who do not 'speak correctly' or strive to achieve good speakerhood it becomes necessary to express loyalty to the standard (Silverstein 1996; see also Study I). In this light, linguistic knowledge and norms of correctness become features for positioning people and for 'constructing opposing social groups' (Milani 2008:38). Discourses on language competence in migration contexts pertain to what Busch has called 'pre-Babel fantasies' (2012:517), where linguistic diversity is constructed as a problem against the imaginary of a common and unified language

[14] The rating scale for Certificate of Proficiency in English (Cambridge English Proficiency) in 1975 provides an historical example of the link between the 'competent language user' and a certain type of native speaker. The highest level of oral proficiency was described as follows (Vidaković & Galaczi 2013:331):

Excellent His command of spoken English approaches that of a soundly educated native speaker of English.

and universal understanding (see also Cameron 2002). In this vein, perceptions and constructions of competence and 'good language' lie at the heart of discursive struggles between a multilingual reality and a monolingual ideology (e.g. Silverstein 1996, Hogan-Brun et al. 2009; see also Studies I and II).

Hence, when discussing language competence, idealization of language and speakers form part of our understanding of 'competent language users'.

3.3 Adult language learners' perception of language competence

In educational settings, theories of language knowledge as a formal construct (i.e. communicative competence and communicative language ability), inform course syllabi and testing programmes. However, as stated by Kramsch (2009:4), for learners, language is a 'lived embodied reality' rather than a formal construct. In this vein, investigations of perceptions and subjective experiences of language provide an important complementary perspective on language in relation to cognitive and usage-based approaches to language (Busch 2017). Explorations of adult language learners' perceptions of language learning and use often provide a broader perspective on language by highlighting embodied and emotional aspects of language (Ahlgren 2014, Kramsch 2009, Pavlenko 2006). Furthermore, language learners are often objectified in models of language competence and in syllabi. Hence, investigating language learners' perceptions shifts the focus from language to speakers (Kramsch 2009). Considering dominant discourses of the symbolic importance for migrants to learn the receiving country's mainstream language, it becomes important to investigate adult migrants' perceptions of communicative competence. Even though language learning and communicative experiences have been investigated, relative little attention has been given to adult language learners' perceptions of competence, based on their lived experience of language (see Study III). Perceptions are based on embodied experiences of being in the world and are formed in and through discursive practices (Busch 2017). As foregrounded in Study III, language assessment practices, those made in both educational and everyday practices, and experiences of being seen or not seen as a competent language user, form an important part of the adult language learners' perception of competence (Study III). Since perceptions take shape in social experience, they are constructed in accordance with the speaker's social position. Hence, investigating expressed beliefs on competence provides a window into contemporary language ideologies and constructions of competence (Study I, Study III).

Interview studies with adult language learners' often broach perceptions of 'good language' ('good Swedish', 'good English' and so on). However, perceptions of 'good language' often remain as a quite vague phenomenon associated with a native like construct (Miller 2014). Furthermore, perceptions of competence are rarely unitary among different learners. Meanwhile, knowledge of vocabulary and grammar often holds a key position in perceptions of what it means to be competent in a language (Carlson 2002, Zachrison 2014). In Carlson's interview study, both SFI teachers and students emphasise the role of grammar, even though the teachers did so more than the students. Carlson (2002) notes how, for many teachers and language learners, grammar enjoys the status of corresponding to 'proper language education' and grammar is linked to a sense of structure and security. However, closer scrutiny of why grammar and vocabulary are needed point to the fundamentally social aspect of language, since for many language learners it is in language use that vocabulary and grammar become relevant (Study III; see also Hymes 1971:8 which underscores 'a social component at the heart of grammar').

Meanwhile, interview studies with adult language learners do not only foreground the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. As adults, these students often need to participate in different social arenas, such as in institutional encounters at governmental agencies, going to see a doctor or dealing with issues related to being a parent. This often leads to adult language learners' foregrounding the importance of managing independently in social encounters, of understanding and of being understood (Carlson 2002, Zachrison 2014, see also Study III). More importantly, as adults, they are used to being able to participate in different social settings in their previous country of residence. Migration often entails a loss of symbolic, cultural and economic capital, and migrants often need to re-evaluate their language competence. From this perspective, migration can represent a loss (Busch 2017, Marquez Reiter & Martín Rojo 2013), and language learning in migration contexts is driven by a desire to regain one's voice, a process that impacts on adult language learners' perceptions of competence.

3.4 Concluding remarks

The focus on communicative language teaching has been to 'promote the development of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative events' (Savignon 2006:675) and to develop a pedagogy based on learners' needs. Models of communicative language ability have tried to pin down what resources are needed in order to communicate effectively and to make meaning. However, models of language competence and of different proficiency levels construct language competence as an ostensibly objective and transparent construct to be achieved by individual learners. Even though

scholars in education like Savignon (1983) considered communicative competence to be a dynamic concept, being primarily interpersonal rather than intrapersonal, the individual focus of competence has dominated. The individual view of competence is highly institutionalized, with band descriptions and grading criteria describing the linguistic resources of an individual and what the individual student can do with his or hers linguistic resources, and scores or grades given to individuals.

The communicative approach to language learning and competence, with its focus on language use, has led to a proliferation of speaking tests, which we now turn to.

4 The testing and assessment of speaking

One of the most important arenas where constructions and perceptions of competence play out is in language testing practices and language assessments. *Language testing* refers to a ritualized practice of collecting information about learners' language competence carried out by institutional representatives (i.e. language teachers and testing bodies), whereas *language assessment* is more broadly defined as conscious and unconscious judgments based on observations of a speaker's language competence, occurring in both institutional and everyday practices. From this perspective, language testing is part of language assessment, but not necessarily the other way around.

Developments in language testing are not only motivated by theoretical and methodological considerations such as those discussed in section 3.1. Rather, testing, as an instrument of powerful institutions, can also be closely linked to political and economic conditions in society (McNamara 2011, Spolsky 1995, Weir 2013). Therefore, this chapter starts by addressing the sociopolitical context of language testing and assessment, followed by a discussion on the development speaking tests. A particular focus is given to previous research on paired speaking tests and how they can be understood as a speech event.

One of the points made in this section is that testing and assessment of oral interaction shed light on tensions between different assumptions made on the nature of language, such as being an individual or a relational construct. Moreover, testing is a social and ideological practice, which makes the reproduction of language ideologies in testing practices interesting to study.

4.1 The sociopolitical context of language testing and assessment

Testing and assessment as a gatekeeping activity in order to sort and select is a human activity that has been established for centuries (e.g. Foucault 1977, McNamara & Roever 2006, Spolsky 1995). An often cited example of the inherent social and political character of language assessment is provided in the story of the *shibboleth* in the Bible, in the Book of Judges, where the pronunciation of the Hebrew word 'shibboleth' was used to distinguish between friends and enemies (Spolsky 1995, McNamara & Roever 2006; see also McNamara 2012 for an extended discussion of language tests as shibboleths).

According to the biblical story, the 'result' was highly consequential since it led to the killing of those pronouncing the word 'wrong' and thereby revealed belonging to the outgroup. Spolsky (1995, 1997, 2017) attributes the birth of examinations to the Imperial Chinese system of selecting civil servants, which was imported to Europe in the 16th century, first to religious schools and, later, to the secularized school system. Some of the early examination systems, like the French *Baccalauréat*, which marks the end of the secondary school system and was introduced by Napoleon I at the beginning of the 19th century, are still in use today (Spolsky 2017).

In his book *Discipline and Punish,* the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1977) discusses how examinations (alongside the founding of prisons) were established in France in the 18th century in order to control and discipline. The disciplinary power of examinations is achieved through the surveillance and documentation of individuals. Typically, this is achieved by a 'compulsory visibility' where the students are the 'visible' ones, which leads to a process where 'subjects' become 'objects' to be observed and categorized. In testing practices, there is a tradition of emphasizing individual differences. Foucault's writings are particularly interesting in relation to communicative language testing, with its focus on productive skills, such as the testing of oral interaction. In paired speaking tests, the candidates have the interactional floor more or less to themselves, thus enhancing the visibility (and subsequently the vulnerability) of the test takers. Moreover, as pointed out by Foucault, examinations provide a mechanism for linking power to the 'formation of knowledge' (1977:187). In this sense, testing practices construct and reproduce what counts as valuable knowledge. Tests are powerful instruments, and in all testing practices there is an inherent power imbalance between the assessor and the assessed.

The 'inevitable uncertainty' in obtaining reliable assessment was pointed out in one of the earliest articles on assessment (Edgeworth 1890:662), and psychometric approaches to language assessment have strived to achieve valid and reliable tests. Modern language testing, as an institutional practice based on standardized and 'objective' tests, took shape in the second half of the 20th century, within and in relation to developments in psychology and psychometrics (i.e. the statistical measurement of psychological tests). Hence, language testing, as a discipline, was rooted in psychology and psychometrics before it became a field in applied linguistics. However, as pointed out by McNamara and Roever, 'through marrying itself to psychometrics, language testing has obscured, perhaps deliberately, its social dimension' (2006:1).

During the 21st century 'testing has become big business' (Spolsky 2017:375) and has 'assumed increased importance in economic, educational and socio-political affairs of society' (Weir 2013:1). The use of examinations to control the education system and teaching is one of the most pervasive mechanisms of testing (McNamara & Roever 2006, Shohamy 2001, 2006).

Increasingly, test results are used as part of the political concern for accountability where test results are interpreted as representative of the quality of teachers' performances, the quality of schools and the education system as a whole (Lundahl 2011, Spolsky 2017). McNamara and Roever see this 'politicization of assessment' as the 'most striking feature of current developments in language assessment' (2006:213). The link between language tests and political interests is most noticeable in relation to migration, such as language requirements (and subsequently language tests) in regulations of citizenship. This is a practice in many countries today, but closer inspection shows that the language requirements for obtaining citizenship in different countries vary (van Avermaet 2009). As McNamara and Roever (2006:182) rightly point out, the different levels of requirement set for being granted citizenship in different countries show that these requirements are first and foremost political. The increased use of politically motivated language tests has provoked discussions on ethics in language testing and the development of ethical codes for testers (McNamara & Roever 2006, Saville 2009, Spolsky 2017).

Hence, throughout its history, language testing has had a social and political side. Accordingly, language tests constitute an important site for the reproduction of dominant ideologies and for constructing images of the 'competent language user' (see Study I). The educational psychologist Samuel Messick's seminal work on validity (e.g. 1989), stressed the need to investigate social values imbedded in testing practices and the social consequences of testing. This has, *inter alia*, been taken up by the movement known as *Critical Language Testing* (Lynch 2001, Shohamy 2001, 2006, 2017). As argued by Shohamy, 'there is ample evidence that tests have an effect on curriculum change, teaching and testing methods, redefinition of language knowledge, motivation to teach "test language", narrowing the linguistic knowledge'(2006:103).

Notwithstanding these important insights, it is important to note that language testing and assessment do not only have an impact on issues in relation to curricula, teaching and knowledge construction. They also deeply affect learners (Shohamy 2001). Language assessments made in institutional and everyday practices are pervasive mechanisms influencing L2 users' self-perception, both in a potentially empowering way as well as the opposite (see Study III). Classroom-based assessment, comprising both formative (i.e. assessment *for* learning) and summative assessment (i.e. assessment *of* learning, such as tests), is a recurrent classroom practice. Appropriately used, assessment can be an important instrument and a pedagogical tool for enhancing students' learning (e.g. Hill & McNamara 2011, Lundahl 2011).

Meanwhile, the implementation of national tests or external testing instruments like PISA is decided at a political level. Sweden, as elsewhere, has seen an increasing use of national standardized tests and a public and political belief in testing as a way to control, evaluate and improve the education system. In 2017, a change in the Swedish Education Act shifted the status of the results of the national tests from being advisory in the teacher's grading to 'be given

special consideration for grading' (SFS 2010:800, chapter 20, 37a§, my translation), hence making the test scores more decisive. Around the same time, the government, for the first time in the last 30 years or so, decided to *reduce* the number of compulsory national tests in the Swedish secondary school. Hence, national tests are not uncontested but subject to political changes.

4.2 The development of speaking tests

The youngest sub discipline in language testing is the assessment of second language speaking (Fulcher 2003). Even though oral language ability was generally acknowledged to be important throughout the 20th century,[15] speaking skills were often omitted from language tests, or given a limited role, since it was considered unfeasible to test speaking in a valid and reliable way (Fulcher 2003, Spolsky 1995, Vidaković & Galaczi 2013). On a general note, the development of speaking tests has been driven by two concerns. On the one hand, the proliferation of speaking tests has been motivated by societal needs, i.e. in terms of employability and meeting language requirements in workplaces. On the other hand, there has been a concern for tests to reflect constructs of communicative language ability, and classroom teaching practices leading to an increased use of speaking tests (e.g. Ducasse 2010). Moreover, oral language ability is often seen as a central ability among learners (Rydell 2016).

How tests are constructed sheds light on how 'ideal' competence is perceived. A brief look at the history of oral testing will show that the understanding and subsequent operationalization of language competence changes over time. One interesting example is provided by the Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) offered by the University of Cambridge University Local Examinations Syndicate (and later Cambridge ESOL Assessments), one of the first modern language tests established in 1913 and seen as increasingly viable (see Weir, Vidaković & Galaczi 2013 for a historically overview of Cambridge language assessments). The 1913 version of the test included an oral component consisting of a conversation with an examiner, a dictation and reading aloud. In addition, pronunciation was tested in an essay on phonetics. Tasks like reading aloud were used until the mid-1980s, when the communicative approach to the speaking construct gained importance and made room for tasks such as the paired format (Vidaković & Galaczi 2013; see also section 4.2.1 for a discussion on the paired format). Even though oral testing was introduced early in the British tradition, for a long time it remained 'seriously undertheorized' (McNamara & Roever 2006:44).

[15] Of course, oral language has been of importance to language education longer than that, such as in classical rhetoric and in pedagogical approaches such as the Reform Movement based on spoken language in the 19th Century (Weir 2013).

Another contribution to the development of modern oral tests is generally attributed to the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), developed in the 1950s by the American Army's Foreign Service Institute's test for staff stationed abroad (McNamara 1996). The proliferation of the Oral Proficiency Interview from the 1950s onwards and the growing body of research on the OPI 'brought up the issue of whether a single type of interaction (i.e. an interview) is sufficient to assess oral proficiency and whether it is representative of conversation' (Vidaković & Galaczi 2013:271). The critique of the OPI led to the use of multiple test formats of which pair and group orals became important. As noted by Lazaraton, 'the research on individual candidate discourse seemed to ebb in the 2000s, when the focus shifted to a relatively new speaking test format, what is known as the pair (or group) oral' (2014:1382), which we now turn to.

4.2.1 Paired speaking tests

Paired speaking tests provide a case in point for communicative language testing. Underpinning the use of the paired format is the idea that a discussion between students will elicit a wider range of their communicative competence and entails more symmetrical and collaborative interaction and a wider range of speech functions in comparison to teacher-student interaction, which tends to be dominated by students answering the teachers' questions (Ahmadi & Sadegi 2016, Brooks 2009, Taylor 2001). It is important to note, however, that the choice of test format does not only pertain to theoretical issues of how to define and measure speaking ability, but also to practical issues (Vidaković & Galaczi 2013).The fact that it is cost- and time-efficient to test in pair and group constellations has also been put forward as an advantage (e.g. Ducasse & Brown 2009). The paired format was introduced by the University of Cambridge Examination Syndicate in the 1980s (Ducasse 2010). Following the advancements of theories of communicative competence and communicative language teaching, pair- and group discussions became popular in language classrooms and as a testing format in the 1980s and 1990s (Vidaković & Galaczi 2013), and are now used in high and low stakes tests around the world. The fact that the CEFR expanded the traditional four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) to five by dividing speaking into oral interaction and oral production has also led to an increased use of the paired format as it is regarded as being suitable for assessing oral interaction.

Many language tests, such as the one investigated in this thesis, use multiple formats (e.g. Taylor 2003; see also section 5.1.1), such as a paired task and an individual task. In a comparison between the paired task and an individual task, Brooks showed that'[w]hen the test takers interacted with other students in the paired test, the interaction was much more complex and revealed the co-construction of a more linguistically demanding performance than did the

interaction between examiners and students' (2009:341). Galaczi's (2008) influential study on paired speaking tests in the Cambridge First Certificate in English illustrates how different interactional patterns could be distinguished in the test discourse as either being *collaborative* (equally distributed turn taking where the test takers engaged in each other's ideas and gave listener support), *parallel* (equally distributed turn taking, but where the test takers did not engage in each other's ideas) or *asymmetrical* (one of the test takers dominating interactionally). The collaboratively driven speaking tests were rewarded when scored for 'interactional management', leading Galaczi to the conclusion that being able to engage in a collaborative discussion is a sign of a higher level of interactional competence. Hence, collaborative and cooperative interaction have been pointed out as important benefits of the paired format. Relatedly, positive washback (i.e. how tests impact classroom practices) has been reported in the sense that the paired speaking tests encourage peer interaction in language classrooms (Együd & Glover 2001, Galaczi & Taylor 2018).

4.2.2 Issues in testing and assessing speaking

Alongside the increased popularity of the paired format in language tests, a growing body of research on interaction in speaking tests has emerged (e.g. Brooks 2009, Ducasse 2010, Galaczi 2008, 2014, Lazaraton & Davis 2008, Nyroos et al. 2017; see also Taylor & Wigglesworth's [2009] special issue in *Language Testing*). Research on interaction in paired speaking tests has addressed diverse issues such as discourse patterns (Brooks 2009, Galaczi 2008, 2014), divergent understandings of the task (Sandlund & Sundquist 2013) and code-switching in repair sequences (Nyroos et al. 2017). A number of studies have addressed the so-called 'interlocutor-effect', i.e. how interlocutors' characteristics such as personality (Ockey 2009), gender (Brown & McNamara 2004), proficiency level (Davis 2009, May 2009) and familiarity with one another (O'Sullivan 2002) influence the discourse produced. In addition, research on interaction in speaking tests has investigated the construct of interaction in relation to how raters (May 2011) and candidates perceive it and how the construct of interaction can be used in designing rating scales (Ducasse 2010), as well as how the test situation impacts on the test discourse (Luk 2010, Simpson 2006; see also Studies I and II).

Testing and assessing speaking is considered to be a difficult endeavor (e.g. Luoma 2004, Vidaković & Galaczi 2013). A main concern for testing bodies is to provide fair, reliable and valid testing practices. Meanwhile, interaction is difficult to control and oral assessment 'has presented a whole array of difficult and at times controversial issues' (Vidaković & Galaczi 2013:257). In particular, issues of *variability*, *co-construction* and *authenticity* have been

raised in relation to the testing of speaking. Studies drawing on *Conversational Analysis* (see section 5.2) have brought attention to how the performance in speaking tests is a joint accomplishment achieved in interaction (e.g. Brown 2003, Lazaraton 2002, Galaczi 2014, Nyroos et al. 2017, Young & He 2008). This has led to tension, to say the least, between the view of performance as a projection of an individual ability and the view of social interaction as co-constructed (Jacoby & Ochs 1995, McNamara 1997, McNamara & Roever 2006). Co-construction is defined as 'the joint creation of a form, interpretation, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality' (Jacoby & Ochs 1995:171). Research, such as Brown (2003), showing that the examiner's behaviour, i.e. in terms of interactional support in an OPI, has an impact on the candidate's performance and the subsequent scoring of it, led to efforts in standardizing tests and the interactional frame such as the use of scripted instructions and a focus on examiner training. But the fact that interaction is co-constructed, i.e. dynamic and based on moment-to-moment negotiations (e.g. Jacoby & Ochs 1995, Swain 2001), makes the practice of standardization difficult. This becomes even more so in the case of paired speaking tests, where the interactional floor is given to test takers. However, the view of language use as something that needs to be standardized and a fixed object with testable features also shifts the focus 'from the relativity of interpersonal communication' (Kramsch 1986:370), which at worst can stand in the way of achieving and displaying communicative competence. Hence, there is a tension between ensuring reliability through standardizing testing procedures and collecting evidence of test takers' communicative competence through interaction.

Likewise, collaboration in paired speaking tests, which is seen as one of the benefits of the paired format, has also been considered problematic in the test literature. The co-construction of the performance makes it a challenge to give individual grades (May 2009), which is generally required. Moreover, the pairing of the test takers in relation to their proficiency level, familiarity with each other and personality may influence the result. Investigations of such issues have presented contradictive findings, and as noted by Lazaraton 'while test taker proficiency level, gender, familiarity, and the like do influence the discourse produced with a partner, it is unclear if these variables impact the outcome scores on the test' (2014:1383). However, instead of regarding the interlocutor as a problem, managing complexity and diversity in interaction through negotiation strategies can be considered an integrated part of what it means to be able to communicate in a language (Brooks 2009, Canagarajah 2013). Insights like these have provoked an ongoing discussion within the testing field on whether the constructs in use are sufficiently rich or need to be expended in order to capture relevant aspects of language use and communicative language ability (Galaczi & Taylor 2018, Harding 2014). Relatedly, Norton J. (2013) makes the case for an extended definition of co-construction

to include how test takers and examiners interpret and interact with examination materials (i.e. interlocutor frames, topics) and how the *in situ* interaction in a test situation is interdiscursively connected to the participants' previous experiences and expectations.

The view of language as a situated practice also leads to the problem of making generalized claims of test takers' communicative competence based on observations of a performance in a specific setting like testing (Chalhoub-Deville 2003, McNamara 1996). The need to justify the generalized claims made in language tests has been met by argument-based approaches to validity, i.e. frameworks for justifying claims on students' language ability based on particular observations (i.e. tests) and the inferences of these claims to non-test settings (see Kane [1992] and Bachman & Palmer [2010] for comprehensive frameworks on argument-based approaches to validity). An important step in this procedure is the *generalization of test scores* to provide an argument for why observations of a test performance say something about the candidate's language ability in other contexts (such as work or study life). This is a particular problem in performance testing, with performance being highly situated (McNamara 1996). Meanwhile, argument-based approaches to validity do not resolve the inherent incompatible views of performance as a projection of an individual ability and performance as co-constructed and achieved in interaction. As argued by McNamara over 20 years ago, '[t]he focus of the ability of the candidate in conversational approaches within second language assessment views the candidate in strangely isolated light, it is he or she who is held to bear the brunt of the responsibility for the performance, in this sense the inevitable gap between a test and real life appears unusually stark' (1997:452f). This has, to some extent, been met by including aspects of interactional competence (such as turn-taking management, topic management and interactive listening) into grading criteria and assessment grids, thus acknowledging the dynamic and co-constructed nature of interaction (e.g. Ducasse 2010, Galaczi 2014, Galaczi & Taylor 2018).

Ducasse (2010) investigated how teachers and students oriented to the construct of interaction through verbal protocols while watching video-recorded paired speaking tests in Spanish. The construct of interaction was defined in terms non-verbal interpersonal communication, interactive listening and interactional management. Both students and teachers highlighted to role of embodied signs such as gestures and gaze in the test taker

s' meaning making. Furthermore, while watching the videos, the students recalled difficulties in managing the interactional flow and interpreting the fellow test taker's interactional cues. Negotiating co-participation and the use of embodied semiotic resources are investigated interactionally in Study II in this thesis. Notwithstanding important additions on including interactional competence and attempting to account for co-construction, the institutional practice is still focused on individual ability, since scoring and grading, in the end, is applied to individuals.

On another note, preoccupation with the features of spoken discourse in test talk in relation to 'normal conversation' led to the so-called *authenticity debate*, i.e. whether the discourse produced in test settings corresponded to the target language use domain, either by the cognitive process triggered by the task or by the interactional pattern (Galaczi & Taylor 2018, Lazaraton 2002, van Lier 1989, Luk 2010; see also Young & He [2008] for an overview of discourse studies on the OPI). Interaction in speaking tests was, as it were, accused of being 'unauthentic' (e.g. see Luk [2010] for a discussion on how students and teachers perceive interaction in group orals to be 'unnatural'). The authenticity debate lead to an increase of empirical studies on discourse produced in test settings. Meanwhile, as argued by McNamara and Roever, 'the gap between the evidence obtained under test conditions and inferences about performance in non-test conditions is a given in assessment' (2006:48). From another perspective, interaction in test situations can be understood as a social practice and a speech event in its own right, rather than being 'inauthentic' and 'unnatural' (Study I; see also Lazaraton [2014]). The following section will discuss how paired speaking tests can be seen as staged institutionalized performances, thus representing one type of performance 'in the communicative life of a society' (Hymes 1972a:284).

4.2.3 The speaking test as a speech event

Tests are sometimes discussed in terms of being more or less 'context-rich' or 'context-specific'(Galaczi & Taylor 2018:12) by constructing a social context in the test (such as role play and given social settings), obscuring the fact that the test situation is a context in itself. In order to understand the language performed in a test setting, it is important to investigate it as a 'speech event in its own right' (Galaczi 2008:92). A speech event in Hymes' understanding is 'governed by rules or norms for the use of speech' occurring in a particular speech situation (Hymes 1972b:56). From this perspective, the speaking test is a speech situation, and the paired task is a speech event. The paired speaking test is a complex interactional activity, where the test takers are both addressing each other and the teachers acting as examiners, who are listening and assessing the conversation (cf. Eklund Heinonen 2009; see also Study I). The speaking tests are framed by what Linell labels 'a pre-interactional framing' (2011:175), impacting the participants' understanding and expectations of the speech event. This is achieved though talk about the speech event as 'a test' or 'an oral test' and by deciding in advance where, at which time and between whom the speaking test should take place. Hence, the test takers are highly aware of the fact that it is a test. As argued by Perren (see also Stevenson [1985] for a discussion on validity and authenticity, drawing on Perren's quote below):

> The traditional oral test has often been one of 'conversation' in which the student is required to demonstrate his ability under conditions fondly supposed to be representative of real life – in a two-way conversation. In theory this is a sort of work-sample test in which all the elements of skill in spoken language can be used. But, of course, it is complete nonsense to suppose that the situation of examiner-candidate is representative of 'real life' or 'social communication'; both participants know perfectly well that this is a test and not a tea-party. (1967:26)

The use of the paired format instead of, or in addition to, an OPI changes the institutional asymmetry in a conversation between a candidate and examiner, but it does not, of course, change the fact that the conversation is part of a test. Importantly, the move towards pair and group orals has not eliminated the examiners from the interaction - they still form part of the conversations as addressees even though they may remain silent (see Study I). The awareness that the situation has an impact on the interaction has mainly been discussed in terms of test takers' anxiety and 'communicative stress' (Brown & Yule 1983:34) and possible ways of reducing it. However, the test situation also influences the discourse produced in the sense that the test situation constitutes a speech event. Following Hymes, investigating the test situation sheds light on how a performance is not only about an individual ability but about the interaction between a person's competence, the competence of others and 'the emergent properties of the event themselves' (1972a:283). Hence, the co-construction of the spoken discourse in not only based on the interaction between the participants, but also in relation to the context. The view of speaking tests as a social practice and as a speech event thus leads to the need to consider the test situation as a context. This thesis draws on understandings of context from a dialogic point of view, where context mutually shapes the unfolding interaction at the same time as it is shaped by it (eg. Goodwin & Duranti 1992, Linell 2009). From this perspective, a closer investigation of the discourse produced in test settings provides insights into speaking tests as a speech event.

More generally, speaking tests can be understood as *institutional talk* (Drew & Heritage 1992), informed by an institutional goal (here assessment and grading), carried out by at least one institutional representative (here the teachers acting as examiners) and entailing possible constraints to the interaction (here the scripted instructions and the 'rules' for the performance [see 4.4.2] and the discussion topic given by the examiners, but decided upon by the national test constructors). As research has shown, the test situation entails contextual constraints on the interaction, i.e. through the avoidance of negotiation of meaning (Luk 2010, Study II). Drawing on Goffman's (1959) work on team performances, Luk (2010) shows how students in a paired speaking test orient towards positive impression management leading to 'colluded talk',

where the test takers team up and cooperate through agreements and avoidances of negotiation of meaning. According to Goffman, 'participants cooperate together as a team or are in a position where they are dependent upon this cooperation in order to maintain a particular definition of the situation' (1959:96). In the current thesis, contextual constraints and avoidance strategies are discussed in Study II. The avoidance of the use of languages other than Swedish constructed a monolingual orientation in the test discourse and, at times, a possible contextual constraint on the meaning making. Investigating contextual constraints in the interaction in test settings is of central importance, since it is the observations of the performance that underlie the claims made of test takers' language ability.

Study I draws on performance theory from linguistic anthropology in order to analyse the speaking tests as *staged institutionalized performances.* Performance, in the linguistic anthropological sense, is characterized by a responsibility towards the audience for a display of communicative competence (Bauman 2004). Moreover, a performance 'puts the act of speaking on display, objectifies it' (Bauman & Briggs 1990:73). Study I confirms Luk's (2010) findings, that this display can lead to a consensus-driven interaction achieved by agreements. This can be viewed in light of the test situation as a particular kind of speech event in a stressful situation, leading to the importance of solidarity strategies (Luk 2010, Simpson 2006). It is important to note, though, to reach an agreement can be part of the topic, thus encouraging consensus-driven interaction (see Appendix A). As discussed in 4.1, other studies have identified collaborative and cooperative interaction in test discourse in terms of higher level of interactional competence. On another note, the post-test interviews with the participants in the current thesis, showed that the test takers claimed to prefer the paired task over the individual task. One reason for this was that they felt that they obtained support from each other. Similar findings are reported by Egÿud and Glover (2001) and Fulcher (1996).

Given the fact that many adult language learners have limited experience in formal schooling, their experience in institutionalized testing varies and can influence their understanding of the test event. Simpson (2006) investigated how different expectations of the test event among adult ESOL learners with low levels of prior schooling led to divergent understandings of the tasks. In light of this, Simpson argues for the need for explicit training before participating in tests and for questioning 'whether it is fair to expect migrant learners with little or no previous education experience to possess appropriate and adequate frame interpretations for a speaking test. If not, other alternative assessment approaches may have to be explored' (Simpson 2006:53). Furthermore, the understanding of the speech event and the experience of participating in it does not only vary amongst students, but also amongst teachers who act as examiners (Simpson 2006, Sundquist et al. 2018; see section 4.4.1.).

Much of the research conducted on paired and group oral tests is based on tests in university settings and in relation to academic studies (e.g. Brooks

2009, Davis 2009, Ducasse 2010, May 2009, Nakatsuhara 2013, O'Sullivan 2002) or from larger commercial tests such as the Cambridge testing battery, TOEFL and IELTS or preparation courses for the tests (Galaczi 2008, 2014, Norton J. 2013). Few studies address language testing in groups of adult migrants in educational contexts (Simpson [2006] being a notable exception).[16] It is therefore of importance to investigate interaction in test settings in basic adult education where the participants have different linguistic, educational and cultural backgrounds.

4.3 Concluding remarks

As can be seen from the discussion above, language testing, in particular oral testing, sheds light on the underlying tensions in language assessment with respect to theoretical, educational and practical issues in 'measuring language' (McNamara 1996, Spolsky 1995). A particular tension can be noted between the view of communicative competence as an *individual or a relational construct* (see also Studies II and III), also pertaining to the view of language use as *objective and measurable* in relation to language as a *local and situated practice*. Language tests based on a communicative approach, such as the one investigated in the present thesis, often stress the ability to adapt language use to the social context and to the recipient in real-world settings (see section 3.1.1). This leads to the importance of investigating language use in different settings (e.g. Elder et al. 2017) and the importance of investigating speaking tests as a speech event (Luk 2010, Study I and Study II). The current thesis adds new knowledge to these fields in a migration context by investigating speaking tests as a speech event through the lens of performance theory (Study I) and by investigating a particular kind of interactional practice in the speaking tests (Study II).

[16] Research conducted in relation to the so-called LADO testing (language analysis for the determination of origin of asylum seekers) also provides an exception (e.g. Eades 2009, McNamara 2012). LADO tests constitute an analysis of asylum seeker's speech and linguistic profile in order to determine the asylum seeker's origin and right to asylum. It is, therefore, quite different from an educational assessment.

5 Analysing spoken discourse: data presentation, methodological considerations and theoretical outlines

This chapter describes the data on which the three studies are based on, and discusses methodological considerations and theoretical outlines for analysing spoken discourse.

5.1 Overview of data

The present thesis is based on the following sets of data:

a) 27 video-recorded paired speaking tests in the final national test in SFI (course D) [17]
b) 53 audio-recorded post-test interviews with the test takers and questionnaires with background information
c) 6 audio-recorded focus group discussions with 31 SFI-participants

The participants in the paired speaking tests and the post-test interviews (a and b) are the same, whereas the focus group discussions were conducted at a later stage. Hence, c) are with other participants than in a) and b), who had most likely finished their SFI studies by then. In total, 85 SFI students from seven learning centres participated. The paired speaking tests comprise approximately 5.5 hours of recordings, the post-test interviews approximately 6 hours and the focus group discussions 4.5 hours. Participation was voluntary and the participants signed a consent letter following the guidelines laid out by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet 2011). The participants were informed that they had they right to turn off the camera and withdraw their participation at any stage.

[17] Initially, there were 30 video-recorded paired speaking tests, but three of them were removed for different reasons; one due to the fact that one of the test takers contacted me afterwards and wanted her test to be removed from the data set, one due to initial technical problems (two minutes of sound missing) and one because a test taker was missing, and I was asked to step in to 'enact' his part.

As outlined in section 2.2.2, one of the major characteristics of SFI is diversity. This is reflected in the data. Among the participants, 24 first languages reported by the participants were represented: Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Greek, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Kurdish, Laos, Pare, Farsi/Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Rumanian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Thai, Tigrinja, Tigre and Urdu. The participants' time in Sweden varied from 10 months to 20 years, and on average, the participants had been in Sweden for approximately three years. Their age varied between 18 years and 48 years. Among the participants, students from all study tracks are represented, and their prior schooling varies from one year to completed post graduate degrees. All grades are represented in the data.[18] The large majority of the students passed the test (45 students out of 53, i.e. 85 %).[19]

5.1.1 The paired speaking tests

The oral component of the national test consists of two tasks, one individual task testing the criteria for oral production and one paired task testing the criteria for oral interaction. The focus in the current thesis is on the paired task. Even though the data reflects tests based on different syllabi (National Agency for Education 2009, 2012a), the overarching aim of oral interaction and the paired format has more or less remained the same. As stated in the syllabus from 2009, the aim of oral interaction is that 'the student should be able to participate in both informal and more formal situations in daily, societal and working life', which was reformulated in the syllabus from 2012 to 'the student can, with some adaptation to purpose and their interlocutor, communicate in both informal and more formal situations in daily, societal and working life' (National Agency for Education 2012a).[20] Meanwhile, these changes have not affect the paired format in the test, which has remained the same. The fact that the national test has a theoretical framework based on research in applied linguistics (Ahlgren 2016, Ahlgren et al. n.d., see also section 3.1.1) probably makes the test formats in use less susceptible for the recurrent changes in the syllabi described in 2.2.1. The assessment grid accompanying the is based on a holistic assessment, targeting features such as adaptation to purpose, content

[18] Two grading systems are represented in the data: G (pass)/VG (pass with distinction) and A-F (A excellent – F fail). The syllabus in use from July 2012 introduced the A-F system, but students who had enrolled in SFI while the previous syllabus was in use had the right to follow that syllabus. Each component of the test I graded. The test is then graded based on a overall assessment of the grades given to each of the components.

[19] This corresponds quite well with the attainment on the oral component (course D) of the tests given between 2009 and 2012, which were reported to be 82 % (Stockholm University & National Agency for Education 2013).

[20] The only difference between the syllabus from 2012 and the current syllabus is that the syllabus from 2017 has added 'continuing studies' to the domains (National Agency for Education 2017a).

and range, comprehensibility, fluency and an analytical assessment including aspects such as interactional management (including strategies to solve interactional problems), pronunciation and variation and accuracy in vocabulary grammar (National Agency for Education 2006b, 2012b). The focus of this thesis is not on the teachers' assessment but on a sociolinguistic understanding of the test situation and of the interaction produced in the tests.

As described in section 2.2.2, due to an open enrolment policy, SFI has no fixed semesters. Instead, students begin and complete the SFI courses continuously during the year. As a consequence, the national test is given on a recurrent basis throughout Sweden with varying numbers of students on each test date. Another consequence of the open enrolment policy is that there are several different test versions in use. Since the national test is a recurrent activity, administered all over Sweden regularly during the year, I wanted the data to reflect this practice. To this end, I collected data from different learning centres, that had administrated the test on different occasions, in different parts of Sweden. Another reason for not collecting all data at once was the fact that I considered the first part of the data collection a pilot study. Subsequently, I started analysing the first data set before I continued to collect more data.

Table 1. Overview of the test data.

Learning centre	Date	Different test versions in use	Number of video-recorded tests
A (pilot)	November 2011	a	1
B (pilot)	January 2012	b	1
C (pilot)	February 2012	a	4
D	December 2012	c	8
C	December 2012	c	4
E	February 2013	a	1
F	March 2013	d	2
G	June 2013	e	6
Total: 7		**Total: 5**	**Total: 27**

As shown in Table 1 above, the test data consists of 27 paired speaking tests, stemming from seven learning centres, collected between 2011 and 2013 and comprising five different test versions and 12 topics. Hence, what brings the data together is neither the place, the time, the participants nor the discussion topics. Rather, the link between the different paired speaking tests is the fact that they are understood and enacted as paired speaking tests. The number of

speaking tests video-recorded in each learning centre varied depending on how many tests were scheduled on the particular test occasion and how many students and teachers were willing to participate. At some of the learning centres, I was only able to film one test, either because only one test was scheduled or there were no more willing participants, whereas in another learning centre, I could record all the speaking tests planned that day. What is more, in some learning centres, the teachers were more willing to give me permission to record when the number of test-taking students was quite small.

Each paired speaking test lasted between 7 and 17 minutes. The official recommendation is for the test to last approximately 15 minutes, including the examiner's instruction, and to conduct the test with two examiners present (Ahlgren et al. 2013, National Agency for Education 2012b). This was the case at four of the learning centres (A, B, C, D), whereas in three of them (E, F, G) there was only one examiner present.

In the paired task, the test takers are provided with a given topic to discuss. Accompanying each test, are four to five topics from which the examiner can choose. At the start of the exam, the examiner is supposed to read a scripted instruction (Appendix A, my translation)[21], that goes as follows:

> You should discuss for about 10 minutes. It's important that you listen to each other, ask each other questions and ask each other if you don't understand. Keep in mind that the discussion is between the two of you. I will only listen. What you are going to discuss is this question (hand out the task sheet).

Hence, the written instruction puts the emphasis on staged interaction, i.e. that the students should give a 'team performance' in front of the examiners (Goffman 1959; see also Study I). In the collected data, the instruction could be performed differently, but all examiners emphasized that the test takers should discuss with each other (see also Study I, pages 539-540 for an illustration of how the metacommunicative frame of the paired speaking test could be negotiated). Since students enrolled in SFI represent a highly diverse group, the topics tend to be quite general, where the test takers are supposed to discuss a dilemma and possible solutions, evaluate different statements or to engage in a decision-making task (Ahlgren 2016, National Agency of Education 2012b; see also Appendix A.). The test takers are provided with a mind map, or other visual or written support for the topic, which the test takers can use if they need support. In addition, the examiners are encouraged to ask follow-up questions to support the test takers' conversations if necessary.

The paired speaking tests were video-recorded using one camera. The camera was placed dialogically behind the examiners, since the test takers often

[21] This written instruction was introduced in 2012, but instructions to the examiners accompanying prior tests foregrounded the same aspects. As of 2012, the role of the examiner as a silent partner have been further accentuated. Overall, in the collected data 2011-2013, examiners stressed their role as silent audience.

turned to examiners, and placing it behind the test takers may have resulted in their turning away from the camera.

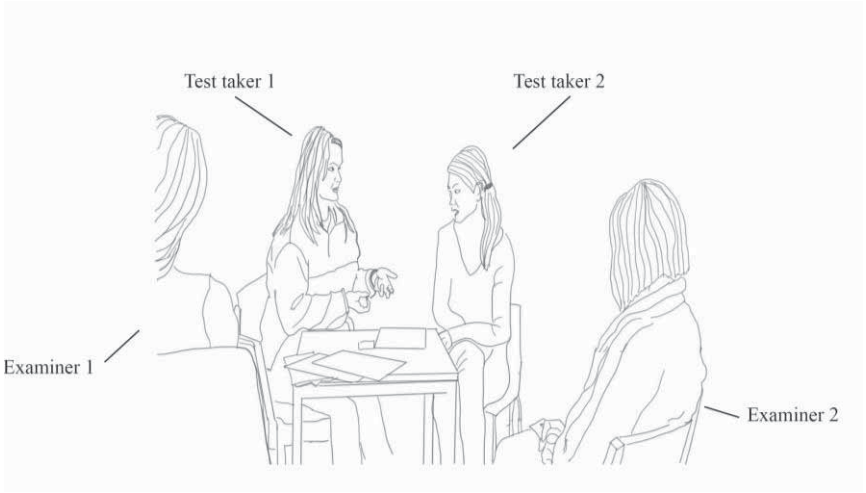

Figure 3. Illustration of a paired speaking test.

From this position, the camera's angle represents the examiners' perspective, i.e. the main audience, rather than that of the test takers. The speaking tests took place in regular classrooms or in smaller group rooms at the learning centres. The size of the room also had an impact on how I could place the camera. As soon as I had started the camera, I left the room, as I wanted to minimize the effect of my presence. In most of the speaking tests, there were two test takers and two examiners. If I had stayed in the room, my presence would have resulted in the institutional representatives outnumbering the two test takers. A consequence of leaving the room before the test started was that I had no control of whether the participants moved out of the camera angle. This happened on a few occasions, as one of the examiners in the room moved to create distance with the test takers.

The preliminary analysis of the pilot study showed that embodied semiotic resources like gaze direction and gestures were very important in the participants' negotiation of the interactional frame. Thus, the main reason for choosing to video record was to capture embodied and multimodal aspects of the interaction. It is important to note, however, that a camera does not capture everything. Rather, the video represents a certain angle and 'gaze', which subsequently impacts the analyst's viewpoint. Moreover, video-recording can be problematic. The main objection to using a camera is that it creates an intrusion that can possibly have an impact on the participants. This is particularly relevant in high stakes settings where decisions are made about the participants. The camera was only on during the paired task and not during the individual task in order for the examiners and the test takers to have one task that

was not video-recorded. In a couple of tests, before the test officially 'started', there were instances of 'camera behaviours' (Duranti 1997:118), where the participants commented on the camera's presence (cf. Åhlund 2015:39). Meanwhile, in the post-test interviews, I asked whether the test takers had thought of the camera during the test. With two exceptions, all participants claimed to have forgotten about the camera when the test started.

5.1.2 The post-test interviews

The aim of the post-test interviews was to collect background information about the students and to capture their experiences and view of the speaking tests. The post-test interviews were conducted immediately after the paired speaking tests, often in the hall outside the classroom where the speaking tests took place. The national test is very time consuming, both for teachers and for students. In general, the learning centres cancelled all other teaching during the test days. Hence, most of the time, it was calm in the hall outside the classrooms, but during breaks it could be quite noisy. The interviews were conducted in Swedish (see section 5.1.3 for a discussion of the use of Swedish in interviews and focus group discussions).

Background information (e.g. time in Sweden, prior schooling and initial study track) was collected through a questionnaire and during the interview. The interview was conducted as a structured interview with scripted standardized questions as a starting point, but there was also room for follow-up questions if necessary. The interviews addressed questions such as how the participants had experienced the test and the discussion topic, how they had prepared for the exam and what they thought of the two test formats in use – an individual task and the paired task. All test takers participated in these interviews except one, who did not have time to stay after the test.

In the current thesis, the post-test interviews have mainly been used as background information about the participants and to account for their experiences with the speaking test (see section 4.3.1; see also Rydell 2016).

5.1.3 The focus group discussions

The focus group discussions were conducted in a later phase. Even though the focus group discussions took place in a less regimented space than testing, they still form part of an institutional and educational discourse, as they took place at the participants' regular learning centre. The focus group discussions took the form of conversational group interviews with the researcher as mod-

erator. During the discussions, the SFI participants had several addressees, including me as the researcher and their fellow students, and the discussion focused on both individual as well as shared experiences (e.g. Wibeck 2010).

Table 2. Overview of the focus group data.

Groupe	Learning centre	Date	Number of participants	First languages	Time in Sweden
1	G	December 2015	5	English, Kurdish, Somali	2–8 years
2	G	December 2015	6	Tigrinja	1–2 years
3	G	December 2015	5	Arabic, Kurdish, Laos, Somali	1–8 years
4	G	December 2015	4	Arabic, Tigrinja, Turkish	2–4 years
5	A	February 2016	5	Arabic, Japanese, Rumanian, Somali	8 months–20 years
6	A	February 2016	6	Arabic, Tigre, Tigrinja	2–7 years

Four group discussions were conducted in December 2015 at one learning centre in a medium-sized town in central Sweden (learning centre G), and an additional two focus group discussions were conducted in February 2016 in an inner-city learning centre in the capital of Sweden (learning centre A).

Both learning centres were part of the test data, but the SFI participants are not the same. The discussions lasted between 40 to 60 minutes, with five to seven participants in each group.[22] The participants were either students at the final course in SFI (course D) or they had recently finished course D and were taking vocational training courses together with the SFI group. I had no previous acquaintance with the students. The group discussions took place in group rooms, in a classroom and, for one group, in the teachers' recreation room (without teachers being present). The focus group discussions were conducted as semi-structured group interviews, based on scripted questions as a starting point for the discussion, but allowing for follow-up questions and for directions initiated by the students (see Appendix B). The questions addressed such issues as what it means to be good at a language, how one knows if one is good at a language, how one learns a language and how they assessed their own linguistic resources.

[22] See Study III for a more detailed description of the participants who were in focus in that study.

The group discussions were conducted in Swedish, my first language and the second language of the participants. Using a language other than the participants' first language is, by and large, not recommended in focus group discussions (Stewart et al. 2007). Nevertheless, in this study, Swedish was used for both practical and methodological reasons. Swedish is the lingua franca used in class and in the participants' everyday lives. The use of Swedish as an important lingua franca was particularly stressed by students who did not speak English. The 31 participants in the focus group discussions represent a diverse group, with nine first languages represented. Therefore, it would have been difficult to engage enough interpreters. Furthermore, several participants displayed a negative stance towards interpreters (see Study III). From a methodological point of view, it was important to treat the participants as legitimate speakers of Swedish. After the group discussions, several of the participants asserted that they enjoyed the opportunity to practice and use their Swedish (see also Ahlgren [2014] for a similar line of argument and experience). On the whole, they had developed oral skills and were able to communicate in Swedish. Undeniably though, the participants had differential access to linguistic resources in Swedish, and some of the discussions flowed more easily than others. Importantly, the participants would probably have expressed themselves differently if the discussions were conducted in their first language.

Bourdieu has argued that research interviews are characterized by an important asymmetry where:

> The *market of linguistic and symbolic goods*, which is set up in each interview, varies in structure according to the objective relation between the investigator and the investigated, or which is the same thing, between capitals of all kinds – especially linguistic capitals – with which they are endowed. (1996:19)

From this perspective, the choice of interview language has a symbolic function. Following Bourdieu (1996), it remains important to reduce what he calls the symbolic violence inherent in interviews. For this reason, I chose to conduct focus group discussions (rather than individual interviews), where the SFI students were in the majority and where they could get support from each other (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann 2014:191) and had the opportunity to translate for each other. The local teachers helped me arrange the groups so that there would be, when possible, at least two speakers with the same first language. The participants were told to help each other translate when necessary and did on a few occasions translate to Arabic and Somali. English was also used a couple of times by me and some of the participants.

5.2 Analysing spoken discourse and communicative experiences: methodological and theoretical outlines

As outlined in previous sections, the data that the three studies are based on are video recorded paired speaking tests (Studies I and II) and audio-recorded group discussions (Study III). The starting point for the analysis was repeated listening and watching (e.g. Cameron 2001). A second step consisted of transcribing the spoken discourse. All recordings were transcribed, and the selected excerpts were transcribed in more detail (see section 5.2.1 for a methodological and theoretical discussion on transcription). The analytical focus is on situated interaction and metapragmatic discourse in relation to communicative experiences and perceptions and constructions of language competence. Metapragmatic discourse is defined in the 'ways in which people think and speak about language and language use; about what language and communication is or ought to be; and what the reasons for this might be' (Karlander 2017:28). The three studies have different research aims and analytical foci (see chapter 6 for an extended summary of the studies). However, all three studies are united by a common core of theoretical assumptions. Following Jones (2016:25), 'the study of spoken discourse is an interdisciplinary project that draws on fields such as linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, sociology and critical theory'.

This thesis is based on a dialogic view of language (Bakhtin 1981, 1986, Linell 2009, Vološinov 1973) and phenomenological approaches to the lived experience of language (Busch 2017, Merleau-Ponty 2012[1945]). Language is understood as action and as a fundamentally social phenomenon where 'language and the world are everywhere interconnected' (Hanks 1996:119). Social reality and meaning making is created, maintained and reproduced in language use. In this light, language is *relational*. Following Linell '[d]ialogism assumes that others are co-constitutive of selves; others are involved at all levels of social life and individual lived experience' (2009:42). This resonates with phenomenological thinking. From a phenomenological point of view, our understanding of language is based upon our experiences and how we, through speech, learn to think 'according to others' (Merleau-Ponty 2012[1945]:184, italics removed). By contrasting the Cartesian view of private selves, Merleau Ponty points to how being in the world entails being 'outside ourselves in the world' and how 'life-world appears between the subject and the world within the focus of perception' (Ihde 1973:67). Accordingly, the participants' perception of competence is formed by experiences of being a social actor in the world and in relation to other social actors (see Study III).

For Merleau-Ponty, language is primarily a bodily phenomenon. Moreover, contrary to the Cartesian dualism of body and mind, Merleau-Ponty conceived of the lived body (*corps vivant*) as a unit, simultaneously perceiving and being

perceived, both an object and a subject. Placing the body at the centre of human action leads to a view of language as an *embodied social action* drawing on different semiotic resources that make the action visible and subject to the interpretation of others (e.g. Block 2014, Goodwin 2000, 2013, Mondada 2016). Language as an embodied practice is investigated to different degrees in the three studies (see 5.2.1).

Meanwhile, the analysis of verbal interaction is still central in all three studies. It follows that the *utterance* is a central unit of analysis, together with *addressivity* and *intersubjectivity*. An utterance should not be analysed in isolation but rather in relation to its sequential position, i.e. what previously has been said and done and what comes after. The importance of analysing turn-taking within its sequential position in the unfolding interaction has been put forth by *Conversation Analysis – CA* (e.g. Sacks et al. 1974, ten Have 2007). Moreover, following a CA tradition of analysing L2 spoken discourse, the analytical focus is on what the participants are able to say and do with the linguistic resources at their disposal, not on their deficiencies (cf. Firth & Wagner 1997, Gardner & Wagner 2004). In this light, the studies investigate interaction as co-constructed and as cooperative action (e.g. Goodwin 2000, 2013).

Intersubjectivity holds a central position in both conversational analysis and phenomenological work. In CA work intersubjectivity refers to an establishment of a sufficiently shared understanding that allows for the progressivity of talk (e.g. Heritage 2007), whereas in phenomenology intersubjectivity is a broader concept referring to the 'possibility of being in the place where the Other is' (Duranti 2010:16). In this sense, intersubjectivity is a fundamental aspect of all human experiences (Duranti 2015). In this thesis, both understandings are used in the study of situated interaction (Studies I and II) and in the analysis of the reflections of lived experiences of language (Study III). Overall, the studies are 'engaged but not identified with CA' (Rampton 2017:7).

Furthermore, another concept that is important for the analysis of the utterances, is the Bakhtinian notion of *addressivity* (1986). This notion foregrounds how all utterances are addressed to someone and how the addressees are constituitive of what is being said. In particular, this is important for the analysis of the test discourse, where the test takers have multiple addressees, and where the institutional representatives, i.e. the examiners, remain silent. It follows then that *silence* is also important for the understanding of the speech event (see also Hanks 1996:112).

Studies I and II set out to investigate speaking tests as a social practice and as 'a speech event in its own right' (Galaczi 2008:92). The starting point for analysing the context, i.e. the test situation, is 'from the perspective of the participant(s) whose behaviour is being analyzed' (Goodwin & Duranti 1992:4), and where the context both shapes and is shaped by the interaction. The speech event is thus analysed interactionally together 'with reference to

the whole social context in which they occur' (Cameron 2001:52), in particular in relation to language ideologies of adult migrants' language competence (Study I). Following Bakhtinian dialogism (Bakhtin 1981; 1986) an utterance can never be analysed and understood as a single unit belonging to an individual, since '[e]very conversation is full of transmissions and interpretations of other people's words' (Bakhtin 1981:338). What we have heard becomes a part of what we say, and accordingly dialogue is both situated and transcending situations and becomes 'constitutive of consciousness, society, and culture' (Bauman 2004:5). This pertains to what Linell has termed *double dialogicality*, which 'makes us see an act or utterance both in its singularity and its wider sociocultural belongingness' (2009:53). From this perspective, Study I discusses how dominant discourses become reproduced in the situated test talk, and Study III addresses how communicative experiences and the embodiment of the voices of others become constitutive in the participants' perceptions of competence.

5.2.1 Transcribing and translating L2 spoken discourse

Working with recordings necessarily involves transcribing at different stages of the research process. During this process, the act of transcribing serves different purposes. It is both a crucial analytical step in interpreting the spoken discourse as well as an important means of representing the data to readers (Bucholtz 2000, Ochs 1979). Transcribing talk is not only a technical endeavour, and there is no objective way of transcribing talk. Instead, transcribing is an act pertaining to theoretical, methodological, esthetic and ideological issues (Bucholtz 2000, Linell 2005, Ochs 1979). As stated by Duff and Roberts , '[i]f talk is a social act, then so is transcription' (1997:167). The goal, then, for the researcher is not to try to be neutral, but to be reflexive (Bucholtz 2000).

In essence, transcription is concerned with transforming embodied spoken language into a written medium. In this vein, a transcription is a written text adhering to the original spoken discourse to different degrees (e.g. Linell 2011). Speech is multidimensional and multimodal, and humans generally draw simultaneously on several embodied semiotic resources in communicative practices. The richness of spoken discourse entails consequences for the act of transcribing. First and foremost, transcription is a selective process (Ochs 1979). Thus, a central task is to decide what to represent in the transcript and how (Bucholtz 2000, Linell 2011). These choices should be guided by the analytical focus. Meanwhile, most transcripts end up being a compromise

(Duranti 1997) between, on the one hand, 'faithfulness' to the original embodied interaction and, on the other hand, accessibility and being reader-friendly. Multilayered transcriptions that are too fine-grained, in particular, struggle in terms of accessibility and readability. In addition, multimodal transcripts present challenges with respect to temporality and selection of images. What is more, there is no consensus on how to do multimodal transcripts (Mondada 2016).

It is important to note that there is no such thing as a final transcript (Duranti 1997). One way to be reflexive about transcription is to do different kinds of transcriptions through 'a layered approach' offering different readings' (Roberts & Duff 1997:170). As argued by Linell (2005), linguistics is deeply influenced by a *written language bias*, which, *inter alia,* is manifested in the assumption that the written language can represent speech (Bucholtz 2000). Another consequence, is that spoken discourse in transcriptions is given a seemingly static and structural look, making it difficult to 'capture the ambiguities and indeterminacies, which were there to be negotiated and temporarily resolved in the actual communicative activity' (Linell 2005:32). Hence, rather than representing language as a fixed object (and being consistent throughout the three studies), I have chosen to use somewhat different ways of transcribing in the three studies with respect to the different research objectives of the studies. In particular, the three studies draw on interactional analyses represented in different types of transcriptions with respect to detail level and representation of multimodal aspects. In Study I, the focus is mainly on what the participants said and how they co-constructed different stances. Embodied resources like nods were marked in the transcript; otherwise the transcripts from Study I focus on verbal interaction. Study II addresses how embodied semiotic resources like gaze, gestures and body posture are used together with speech. To this end, the transcripts used in Study II are based on a multimodal approach (e.g. Goodwin 2013). Study III focuses on what the participants say in the focus group discussions and, to some extent, how this is said (in particular, how different prosodic means are used to embody and contrast different voices). The transcripts draw on conventions developed in CA research and multimodal CA (e.g. Goodwin 2013, ten Have 2007).

How to transcribe L2 talk has in many ways been treated as a controversial topic, especially concerning how the speakers are represented. It is commonly argued that representing L2 features, like deviations in grammar and idiomatic expressions, runs the risk of stigmatizing the speakers (Bucholtz 2000, Roberts & Duff 1997). From this perspective, it is tempting to standardize, or as the term goes, 'clean up', the L2 speakers' language (cf. Bucholtz 2000). However, engaging in correcting non-standard varieties is an ideological process as well, since it leads to the erasure of both non-standard varieties and the linguistic diversity among the participants (Bucholtz 2000). Such erasure is itself a language ideological process (Irvine & Gal 2000) and can be seen in the light of 'verbal hygiene' (Cameron 1995). Moreover, the link between a

non-standard L2 variety and stigmatization is not a direct causal relation, but is created and maintained by an indexical link between a particular way of speaking and a social status (e.g. Jaffe 2016). In contemporary globalized societies, it remains crucial for people to challenge these kind of inferences. In addition, studies on second language interaction have shown that deviations in relation to the standard rarely stand in the way of meaning making and that the participants rarely orient to 'deviations' (e.g. Canagarajah 2013, Gardner & Wagner 2004, Sundberg 2004).

Although it is important to be aware of the fact that non-standard varieties are often stigmatized, it was a methodological choice to treat the participants and their speech as legitimate, despite not being proficient. To this end, the analyses in the three studies are based on the participants' own words and ways of expressing themselves (see also Ahlgren [2014] and Zachrison [2014] for similar lines of argumentation). From this perspective, I bring my own ideology to the transcription (Duff & Roberts 1997). This is not to say that all transcripts of L2 spoken discourse should be conducted in this way. But in this particular study, with its focus on perceptions and constructions of competence, it was important to adhere as much as possible to the speakers' own ways of expressing themselves and not correct their speech.

One crucial problem, though, is that written language is underdeveloped in its capacity to convey nonstandard varieties (Bucholtz 2000, Duranti 1997). The crux of the matter lies with 'dealing' with L2 varieties in an ideological context where standard language and correctness have a strong symbolic value. I have retained L2 features like non-idiomatic expressions, incongruencies and deviations in word order. I have, to a large extent, used standard orthography and not marked deviations in pronunciation. The translations into English adhere as much as possible to the Swedish originals (cf. Åhlund & Aronsson 2015). Since Study III focuses more on what is said than how, the transcripts and the translations have been more modified than in Studies I and II (see Study III). All three studies represent both the Swedish original as well as the English translation. As Duff and Roberts argue (1997), representing both the original version together with the translation is a way to capture, in Bourdieu's terms, the 'whole social person' (1991:54). Moreover, only using the English translation would make 'a significant ideological statement about the power of English to represent everyone and everything' (Duff & Roberts 1997:170).

All names are anonymized in the transcripts.

5.2.2 Notes on reflexivity

When I started this research project, I was, in several ways, close to the activity of language testing in SFI. As a former SFI teacher and a test constructor for the final national test in SFI, my research interest at the very beginning

was very much practice-oriented. This interest could be paraphrased as research questions concerning 'how are speaking tests enacted at the learning centres?' This interest was later developed into more theoretical approaches of understanding paired speaking tests as a social practice, how perceptions of competence are constructed during, and in relation to, language assessment and testing practices and the language ideological part of adult migrants' language competence.

Being an insider has both advantages and disadvantages. As an insider, it is often easier to gain access to the field of interest. Moreover, being close to the object of inquiry provides an important understanding of the practice of interest and what is at stake for different stakeholders. However, being an insider is also problematic, since it often leads to a position where practices and underlying assumptions are taken for granted (Cameron 2001:57). As such, the insider runs 'the risk of not seeing the viewpoint from which it [the viewpoint itself] is stated, and thereby producing an account which says exactly what the researcher's position in the field allows him or her to say – and nothing else' (Salö 2018:27). Therefore, a crucial step in the research process is to create a distance in order to endorse critical thinking (Carlson 2002). This can be achieved by reflexivity in the research process (e.g. Ahlgren 2014, Bourdieu 1996, Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, Salö 2016). One way to be reflexive in research is to describe, as explicitly as possible, the collection of data and the choices made in the analysis (Ahlgren 2014), which I have tried to do in this chapter. Thus, the aim is not for the researcher to achieve self-effacement but 'vigilant self-awareness' (Bucholtz 2000:1461). Importantly, though, reflexivity is not only about an individual's self-awareness in relation to the research process. Rather, reflexivity should be understood as a process of scrutinizing the position from which the research object is constructed and as collective, rather than individual, reflexivity. Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of 'epistemic reflexivity' and Bachelard's ideas of rupture, Salö (2016, 2018) discusses how reflexivity implies a rupture with commonsensical understandings and pre-given constructions of the research problem. By contextualizing and historicizing SFI, perceptions and constructions of competence and language assessments as a social practice, I have aimed to create an understanding of the presuppositions made in the fields (adult education and language education) that I was invested in when I started the research process.

6 Summary of Studies

Taken as a whole, the current thesis explores sociolinguistic perspectives on language testing and assessment, on the one hand, by investigating paired speaking tests as a particular kind of social practice and, on the other hand, by investigating how perceptions of what it means to be 'a competent language user' are constructed - interactionally and metapragmatically - in test discourse and in focus group discussions during reflections on communicative experiences. Instead of treating competence as a fixed object, 'there' to be studied and described, the three studies approach perceptions and constructions of being 'a competent language user' from different perspectives, as outlined below. Studies I and II draw on an interactional analysis of 27 video-recorded paired speaking tests in the final national test of SFI, whereas Study III builds upon an analysis of focus group discussions with SFI participants.

6.1 Study I – Performance and ideology in speaking tests for adult migrants

Study I is motivated in a sociolinguistic interest in the test situation and the focus is on how test takers stage being 'a competent language user' in paired speaking tests and how they express their beliefs with respect to language competence, language use and language learning in an interactional context where their language ability is being assessed. In order to create a framework for analysing paired speaking tests, Study I draws on performance theory from linguistic anthropology (e.g. Bauman & Briggs 1990, Bauman 2004), and the Bakhtinian notion of *addressivity* (1986). As Bauman and Briggs state in their seminal paper on performance, '[p]erformance puts the act of speaking on display – objectifies it' (1990:73), and following Bauman, *performance* 'resides in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence, subject to evaluation for the skill and efficacy with which the act of expression is accomplished' (2004:110). This is exactly what happens in language assessment, in general, and in paired speaking tests, in particular – language is objectified, and evaluating the candidates' communicative competence is part of the teachers' professional practice. The paired speaking test is a complex interactional setting, where the test takers have

multiple addressees. They are simultaneously addressing each other and the examiners who are listening and assessing the conversation.

Performance studies have mainly focused on cultural performances like storytelling and verbal art (e.g. Bauman 2004; Briggs 1988; Hymes 1975), rituals (e.g. Schieffelin 1985) and artistic performances (e.g. Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). Common to all descriptions of performance is a view of performance as an *audience-oriented* discourse. What follows from this, then, is that inherent in performance is the risk of failure and of losing face (Howe 2000). A crucial difference in this context, though, is the audience's (i.e. the examiners') silence and the fact the evaluation of the test takers performance is not given directly afterwards, i.e. the test takers' do not know whether they have passed or not at the end of their exam. By using the notion of *addressivity,* Bakhtin (1986) points to how an utterance is always addressed to someone, and the addressee(s) are constitutive of the utterance. Thus, even though the examiners remain silent to a great extent, they form an important part of the conversation as addressees. The institutionality and the power imbalance between performers and audience adds a layer to this particular kind of performance, and foregrounds the vulnerability of the performers. In this light, Study 1 adds to the body of research on performance by investigating institutional performance.

A general challenge for the test takers is to keep the discussion going in front of the examiners. The main argument put forth in Study I is that speaking tests should be analysed as *staged institutional performances* where not only speaking, but also ideologies, are put on display. Examining embedded ideologies in language tests provides insights into testing as a social practice (Spotti 2011). As Study I shows, language ideologies become embedded in testing practice and are manifest in the performance, making testing an important site for the reproduction of dominant language ideologies. One important resource for the test takers to keep the discussion going and thereby assume responsibility for the audience was to draw on dominant discourses on language and integration. During the test, the test takers stated the importance of learning Swedish and expressed how learning 'good Swedish' is achieved through a preferred behaviour by, for instance, only speaking Swedish, making an effort to find Swedish friends, avoiding people of the same nationality and taking responsibility for one's success in studying. In this sense, the orientation to being 'a competent language user' was performed by indexing other images of being 'a good student' and 'a good immigrant'.

Moreover, the role of the standard language and the need to learn it was given an iconic (Irvine & Gal 2000) status as something necessary in the course of the interactions. A corollary to the claimed importance of the standard language is the celebration of linguistic correctness and, contingently, the treatment of linguistic diversity in the student group as problematic. Hence, in the test taker's display of being 'a competent language user', a monolingual

ideology was indexed by expressing loyalty to the standard language and linguistic correctness.

The view of successful language learning thus has moral implications when linked to a preferred behaviour, both inside and outside the classroom. Arguably, entrenched ideas of the communicative teaching paradigm and of SLA, i.e. that a language is learned by using it and the importance of exposure to it, need to be treated with sociolinguistic awareness. Otherwise, these pedagogical beliefs will reinforce an un-reflected strong monolingual ideology where second language speakers should only speak Swedish and avoid using other languages. Subsequently, then, migrants' 'lack of language skills get conflated with lack of appropriate cultural and behavioural attributes' (Allan 2013:57).

Inherent in institutional talk are constraints on what is considered to be an appropriate contribution (Drew & Heritage 1992:22), and the orientation to dominant discourses could be seen, as it were, as 'safe topics'. Hence, these beliefs do not necessarily need to be interpreted as reflecting the views of the test takers themselves; rather, as Goffman holds, 'the performance serves mainly to express the characteristics of the task that is performed and not the characteristics of the performer'(1959:83), i.e. that they reveal something about testing as a social and institutional practice. The orientation to dominant discourses can also be understood from a dialogic point of view. According to Bakhtin (1981), internalizing others' discourses and others' words are part of all meaning-making activities and part of 'our ideological interrelations with the world' (Bakhtin 1981:342). From this vantage point, the test discourse revealed an ongoing dialogue with current values and ideologies in society. These enunciations were co-constructed by the test takers through the use of agreements and affiliation tokens in the interaction (such as statements like *I agree* and through embodied actions such as nodding). Performance is an interactional accomplishment, and the analysis in Study I shows how acts of stance-taking and interactional alignments (like agreeing with each other) constitute important resources for accomplishing the performance.

Study I also has implications for testing practices. At the heart of communicative language testing lies observations and interpretations of what the test takers are able to do with their language. Communicative language testing struggles with ideologies of authenticity, i.e. how to create 'authentic tasks' that generate 'authentic language use'. Likewise, a common critique to the paired format is that it entails 'unauthentic interaction' since it is staged. As stated by Luk, for test takers 'staging a performance to present the best possible impression of themselves as interlocutors in front of the examiner might have resulted in a form of ritualized and colluded talk that does not represent an authentic replica of ordinary conversations' (2010:49f.). However, instead of only looking at linguistic features in the spoken discourse and treating test talk as 'unauthentic', performance should be seen as an interactional accom-

plishment in its own right (Bauman 2004), where assuming responsibility towards an audience and managing the examiners' silence is part of what the test takers are able to do.

6.2 Study II – Negotiating co-participation: Embodied word searching sequences in paired L2 speaking tests

Study II pursues the theme of investigating speaking tests as a social practice and as a speech event. In Study II, this is achieved through the lens of a particular interactional practice – the activity of searching for a word. Vocabulary knowledge is often used as an index of competence and as a salient feature for distinguishing between different L2 proficiency levels (Iwashita et al. 2008). At the same time, the ability to negotiate meaning (i.e. through the use of gestures, confirmation checks, clarification questions, etc.) and manage communicative breakdowns has been foregrounded in communicative language testing (Canagarajah 2006, Harding 2014). Word searching sequences thus tap into several aspects of communicative language ability: vocabulary knowledge, the ability to negotiate meaning and to solve interactional problems. As discussed in Study I, a main challenge for the test takers in the paired speaking test is to keep the discussion going. As a 'performance team' (Goffman1959), the test takers depend on each other in order to display and maintain the image of being 'competent language users' in front of the audience (i.e. the examiners). Hence, a potential critical interactional moment is when the test takers encounter troubles in finding a word or knowing how to continue the conversation. Moreover, there is a potential tension, in this particular setting, between the display of lexical precision and ensuring the progressivity of talk. In this light, the aim of Study II is to explore how embodied semiotic resources are used to negotiate meaning and co-participation in word searching sequences in an interactional context where the participants' language ability is being assessed. The focus in Study II is on extended word searching sequences or sequences where the speaker actively searches for the interlocutor's assistance.

Word searches are a common interactional practice occurring many kinds of interaction. Word searches have mainly been studied in L1 talk (Goodwin & Goodwin 1986, Hayashi 2003), L2 talk (predominantly L1-L2 talk, e.g. Brouwer 2003, Gullberg 2011, Kurhila 2006) and in aphasic speech (e.g. Helasuvio et al. 2004). Importantly, searching for a word is not only an internal process. Rather, the use of different embodied semiotic resources (like gaze and body posture) makes word searching a visible activity manifested by both verbal and non-verbal features, which can invite others to participate

(Goodwin & Goodwin 1986). It is common for word searches to contain two phases: first, a self-directed phase (often made visible through gaze aversion), and then, if the speaker does not find a solution, an other-directed phase inviting the interlocutor to join in the word search (i.e. by looking at the interlocutor and using gestures). Word search behaviour has been found to be more or less similar across languages and between first and second language speakers (e.g Hayashi 2003, Gullberg 2011), but with respect to L2 talk, word searches can be more frequent and elaborated (Gullberg 2011). Moreover, the frequency can be dependent on the interactional setting and the discourse produced.

Study II shows, in line with previous research (e.g. Goodwin & Goodwin 1986, Greer 2013, Gullberg 2011, Hayashi 2003), how embodied semiotic resources constitute a fundamental aspect of word searching sequences that make word searches public. The investigated word searching sequences in Study II were performed differently. As a visible practice, word searching sequences are subjugated to the interpretation of others and the negotiation of co-participation. In this light, embodied semiotic resources, in particular gaze and body posture, were used either to signal that the speaker was holding the turn or for inviting the interlocutor to participate in the word search. Inviting fellow test takers to participate in the word search through embodied semiotic resources like gestures, gaze direction, circumlocutions and word coinage did, in several cases, allow the participants to jointly achieve the word search. However, an invitation was not always taken up by the recipient, who could display an avoidance or hesitancy to participate in the word search by not confirming, correcting or proffering a candidate solution or by delaying his or her contribution. By avoiding further negotiation of meaning, the participants prioritized the progressivity of talk. In both achieved and abandoned word searches, the participants oriented towards manifesting sufficient intersubjective understanding, allowing the discussion to move on rather than pursuing linguistic precision.

Negotiating meaning and co-participation in word searches build upon closely attending to the other test takers' bodily conduct. The difficulty of co-participation in word searching sequences pertains to the predictability of the missing item and whether the other test taker has access to it. Meanwhile, the test situation also entails limitations to the negotiation of meaning, which can explain why some test takers avoided participating in the word search even though they were invited to do so. Following Goffman, avoidance 'is the surest way for a person to prevent threats to his face' (1967: 15). Thus, instead of orienting to the other test taker expressing difficulty or displaying one's own lack of understanding and thereby putting the image of being 'competent language users' at risk, avoidance of negotiation of meaning becomes an interactional resource allowing the discussion to move on. A dilemma between the institutional task of assessing individuals in an interactional context where a conversation is co-constructed has been put forth by language testers. As

shown in Study II, negotiating co-participation and co-construction also presents a challenge for the test takers (see also Ducasse 2010).

An argument put forth in Study II is that, although it has been established that word search behaviour is more or less similar across languages, it remains critical to treat word searches as a highly situated practice. Hence, the fact that the speaking tests are staged (see Study I) has consequences for how the word searches are enacted and achieved. Previous studies on L2 word searches have pointed out how the use of L1 or other languages constitute important resources and commonly used strategies for negotiating meaning and solving word searches (Kurhila 2006, Lin 2014, Siegl 2016). However, in assessment practices, the use of other languages is often associated with a deficiency perspective, and language tests are a case in point where students are expected to behave monolingually (Shohamy 2013). As discussed in Study II, in the data set as a whole, the use of languages other than Swedish was generally avoided. The use of linguistic items associated with languages other than Swedish did occur, albeit rarely. However, when this was the case, they were used in a 'marked' fashion (cf. Kurhila 2006:110) surrounded by different interactional 'signs of perturbation' (Silverman & Peräkylä 1990), such as pauses, hesitation marks and repetitions. Consequently, the deficiency perspective on using other languages was reproduced in institutional talk, enhancing a monolingual ideology of competence (Shohamy 2011; see also Study I).

In the word searching sequences studied, the test takers sought assistance mainly from the other test taker and not the teacher(s), who could be seen as a more knowledgeable party. This is interesting in light of other studies on word searches with both L1 and L2 speakers, where relying on the L1 speaker to solve the word search is a common strategy (e.g. Gullberg 2011, Kurhila 2006). Of course, of relevance to the interactional context at hand, is the fact that it is part of the instruction that the test takers should mainly discuss with each other and not address the examiners. Hence, by not turning to the examiners the test takers oriented to 'managing on their own' in their display of being 'competent language users'.

6.3 Study III – Being 'a competent language user' in a world of Others – adult migrants' perceptions and constructions of communicative competence

Drawing on an analysis of six focus group discussions with SFI students, Study III sets out to bring the voices of SFI students in to a discussion on perceptions of competence in relation to their lived experience of language (Busch 2017). How to define language competence is an ongoing discussion within applied linguistics and educational research. For the past 40 to 50 years

or so, the notion of *communicative competence* has held a central position within applied linguistics in general and in educational linguistics in particular. Following Kataoka et al. (2013), communicative competence is shaped by language ideologies and the education system, negotiated and contingent upon both situated interactions as well as larger social structures. From this vantage point, Study III discusses how perceptions and constructions of competence are shaped in intersubjective processes.

From the perspective of educational policy and language assessment, students are often 'objectified' through descriptions like *can do*-statements and wordings in grading criteria and syllabi using third person formulations.[23] However, for learners, language is instead more 'a lived reality than a formal construct' (Kramsch 2009:4). In order to explore a group of SFI students' perceptions of competence, Study III draws on the concept of the lived experience of language (Busch 2017), inspired by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (2012[1945]). For Merleau-Ponty, language is considered primarily a bodily phenomenon, and our knowledge is constructed through our bodily experience of being in the world. Subjects come into being in interdiscursive practices and in interaction with others – an intrinsically dialogic and intersubjective process (Busch 2017, Kramsch 2009, Merleau Ponty 2012[1945]). The concept of lived experience of language thus emphasizes the intersubjective dimension of language.

The starting point for investigating the lived experience of language is the experiencing subject. Following Busch, '[m]oments of lived experience of language inscribe themselves to the linguistic memory' (2017:343). The focus group discussions should also be treated as an interactional event in and of itself and as a social practice (cf. Briggs 1986, Talmy 2011). Hence, the statements made in the group discussions are not to be seen as 'objective truths' or a 'mirror of reality'. Rather, what is interesting is what the participants say in this particular setting and how they orient to and construct perceptions of competence in an institutional and educational setting. The analytical focus is not on summarizing themes, but rather on investigating the discursive constructions of lived experience of language (Busch 2017) in relation to perceptions of competence. Study III focuses on themes that emerged during the discussions, for being either recurrent or being treated as significant in one way or the other by the participants. Importantly, reported events in interview discourse should not be seen as a mere reflection of reality. Rather, they point to how the reported experiences were lived and how they gain meaning in talking about them (Hanell 2017, Ochs & Capps 1996).

[23] One of the criteria for oral interaction provides an example: 'The student chooses and uses functional strategies to solve problems in the interaction' (National Agency for Education 2012a/2017a).

Study III points to how lived experience of language constitutes the participants' understanding of what it means to be 'a competent language user'. Accordingly, the participants' comments primarily constructed a view of competence as made relevant and being shaped in social practice. By doing so, the participants oriented to competence as a primarily *relational construct* shaped in intersubjective processes within specific ideological and social conditions. This was manifested in different ways in the focus group discussions outlined below.

A frequent discursive image that emerged during the discussions was *managing on one's own* as a sign of being a competent language user. This view was extended in comments describing how being able to interpret for others was a sign of competence. Corroborating this view were the negative feelings and experiences attached to being in need of an interpreter. SFI, like many other language programmes, is underpinned by an overarching functional approach in the syllabus stating what students can do with their language in domains such as daily, societal and working life. Hence, orientations to subject positions such as managing on one's own in social encounters and being responsible for one's own learning resonate both with the communicative and functional approach to language in the SFI syllabus and with contemporary neoliberal ideologies on 'own responsibility' and 'self-improvement' (Carlson 2002, Park 2010, Sandberg et al. 2016). However, this seemingly individual perspective is constructed in relation to others. Thus, being 'a competent language user' can be described in terms of orienting towards different subject positions, both as a speaker as well as someone who is understood and respected (cf. Bourdieu 1977). Moreover, managing on one's own as a sign of competence constitutes a holistic approach to what it means to know a language (Carlson 2002).

Further corroborating the relational view of competence was the importance given to assessments, both those made by others as well as internalized self-assessments, made in both institutional and everyday practices. Assessments could serve both as being empowering as well as having a negative impact on the speaker's self-perception and confidence, which ultimately could lead to silencing. One of the most pervasive functions of assessments is that they become internalized through the process of self-surveillance and self-censorship, sometimes leading to silencing (cf. Bourdieu 1977, Foucault 1977). Disciplinary power, exercised through surveillance, is relational (Foucault 1977) and represents a powerful mechanism that can be assigned to symbolic others like teachers and shopkeepers or internalized by oneself and having a decisive impact on the participants' perception of themselves as competent or non-competent language users. The embodied experience of internalizing the view of the other was made relevant in relation to linguistic correctness and speaking incorrectly. Labels like 'grammar' and 'vocabulary' came up frequently during the discussions (cf. Carlson 2002), and became icons both of what it means

to know a language and what is difficult to learn. The embodiment of the symbolic power of linguistic correctness is manifested in experiences of shame, embarrassment (cf. Bourdieu 1998) or 'being out of place' (Salö 2015). Hence, the feeling of shame or inadequacy is due to the transgression of a norm, sometimes leading to silencing. Silence is thus given a relational dimension (Fivush 2010). Moreover, the comments made by the participants show how the meaning attached to negative experiences in communicative practice play a central role in the participants' self-perception (Busch 2012). Emotional aspects in relation to perceptions of competence were also foregrounded in terms of self-confidence, in the sense that being 'a competent language user' implies gaining self-confidence as a speaker, which in turn is based on an intersubjective process. The emotional aspects extend the functional view of language competence used in adult education (cf. McNamara 2011).

Furthermore, the central role given to others and the relational view of language and competence was accentuated by the frequent use of reported speech in the participants' comments and reflections upon their communicative experiences. Using reported speech and embedding the voices of Others underscores the affective and relational aspect of how competence is perceived and constructed. Importantly, inner speech or reported thought should not be considered as a mere reflection of an inner world, but rather how the 'outer comes in' (Vološinov 1973:93) and how the reported utterances were received by the speaker. Moreover, the excerpts analysed in Study III show how other-attributed reported speech was more commonly used than self-attributed reported speech. This is interesting in the light of discourses on individual responsibility. Reported speech is frequently used in tellings and in interview discourse (e.g. Miller 2014), and assigning an utterance to someone else is 'closely associated with the assignment of responsibility' (Duranti 2015:130). The use of other-attributed reported speech illustrates how the participants embodied and embedded the voices of Others in their perceptions of competence and point to a perceived limited agency in becoming 'a competent language user'.

In sum, the lived experience of language is central to our understanding of being social actors and languaging subjects in the world, shedding light on the relational aspect of language and, ultimately, how being 'a competent language user' is constructed as an unstable, vulnerable and ambiguous subject position.

7 Concluding discussion

The communicative language movement has put an emphasis on language use in specific contexts (e.g. Savignon 2006). By emphasizing language use, the scope of 'what it means to know a language' has broadened to include how speakers act in relation to others and in different settings. Relatedly, researchers in the language testing field have stressed the need for language testing to interact with the field of sociolinguistics to enhance the understanding of language use (Harding 2014, McNamara & Roever 2006). This thesis contributes with a sociolinguistic perspective on language assessment by investigating paired speaking tests as a speech event and by discussing SFI students' perceptions and constructions of what it means to be 'a competent language user'. Language testing and assessment are understood as social practices where perceptions and constructions of language competence are constructed and regimented metapragmatically as well as interactionally. Moreover, one of the main arguments in this thesis is that language testing constitutes a situated and specific social practice that impacts the discourse produced. This thesis has made the case that paired speaking tests can be analysed as *staged institutionalized performances* (Study I). As put forth by Norton J. (2013), how test takers act in a speaking test is dependent on their interpretation of the event itself. A better understanding of the test situation as a speech event can thus help students and teachers to prepare for the test.

Furthermore, taken together, the three studies can be seen in light of different tensions in relation to the view of language competence. The three studies have addressed *ideological*, *embodied* and *relational* perspectives on language and the image of being 'a competent language user'. Conversely, in institutional practices like assessment, testing and grading, language competence is often seen as an *objective and individual ability that can be measured* (such as in the models of competence discussed in section 3.1). By contrast, this thesis has discussed the *relational* view of language and language competence. The relational view of language has been discussed from the perspective of the test takers and how they attend to others – the other test taker, the examiners listening and assessing, and the role given to others in reflections upon communicative experiences, ultimately leading to the internalization and embodiment of the voices of others.

The focus of this thesis has been on oral interaction. On a general note, there is an inherent dilemma between the institutional need of 'measuring language' and the insight that language use is dynamic and situated (e.g. McNamara 1996, Spolsky 1995). As Merleau-Ponty underscores, communication comes without any guarantees (2012[1945]:194). Ambiguity, or indeterminacy, is a fundamental aspect of language (e.g. Cameron 1995, Harris 1981, McNamara 2012). This ambiguity is further accentuated in L2 interaction when words and expressions have not yet been conventionalized in the speaker's language use. What follows from this, then, is the importance of negotiation of meaning and the creative use of words and expressions and multimodal resources. As noted by Harris, the ability to do so 'is one of the most important aspects of linguistic creativity' (1981:154). The ability to draw on different semiotic resources to negotiate meaning has also been stressed in recent work on language use in multilingual and diverse settings (e.g. Canagarajah 2013, Rhymes 2014, Seidlehofer 2009). Furthermore, negotiating meaning, managing different L2 varieties and communicative breakdowns and their solutions has been identified as a future key area for communicative language testing (Harding 2014). The ability to solve interactional problems is also stressed in the grading criteria for oral interaction in SFI (National Agency for Education 2012a/2017a). Certainly, differential access to linguistic resources constitutes a challenge to successful negotiation of meaning and for achieving intersubjective understanding. Meanwhile, the possibilities of negotiation of meaning are context-dependent. As shown in Study II, overall, the test takers prioritized the progressivity of talk in their staged conversation, which sometimes led to an avoidance of negotiation of meaning or meaning making. One of the rationales for the use of the paired format is to encourage negotiation of meaning, which it in many ways does (e.g. Galaczi 2008). Undeniably though, there is an idealized view in language testing of how tasks and different test formats, like the paired format, can elicit 'the desirable language'. Arguably, if the test situation constrains the possibility of negotiation of meaning, it affects the inferences and conclusions drawn about the test takers' language ability.

Furthermore, by investigating speaking tests as a social practice, embodied aspects of language use have been foregrounded (e.g. Block 2014, Bucholtz & Hall 2016, Goodwin 2013, Study II). Previous studies of interaction in test settings have highlighted the role of the examiner and how the examiner's interactional behaviour (i.e. through the support given) has consequences for the co-construction of the test taker's discourse (Brown 2003). In Study I, another aspect of examiners' interactional behaviour is foregrounded as a challenge – namely silence. Analysing the speech event, and thereby looking beyond linguistic features of spoken discourse (i.e. beyond the *lingual bias* (Block 2014), provides an enhanced understanding of what the test takers actually manage to perform (e.g. assuming responsibility in front of an audience).

Even though language testsers acknowledge non-verbal features to be important for oral interaction (e.g. Galaczi & Taylor 2018, National Agency for Eudcation 2012b), language testing still has a tradition of evaluating 'disembodied speech', *inter alia* evidenced by the fact that few studies have, to my knowledge, addressed multimodal and embodied aspects of interaction in test settings (Ducasse 2010, Jenkins & Parra 2003, Gan & Davidson 2011 being exceptions) and the growing market of speaking tests delivered digitally and scored by automatized computer programmes (Galaczi & Taylor 2018:13). In contrast to the logocentric view dominating linguistics in general and language assessment in particular (Goodwin 2004, Harris 1981, Heughs 2004), Study II shows how embodied resources are crucial for the negotiation of meaning.

What is more, as argued by Kataoka et al. 'collaborative, embodied aspects of instruction and socialization challenge the 'individual cognition' assumption of traditional approaches to communicative competence' (2013:346). This is relevant in light of Study II. Investigating word searching sequences in speaking tests taps into issues of co-construction and individuality. Ideologies of individuality are pervasive in testing (cf. Foucault 1977:189ff.) and are highly institutionalized, since test scores and grades are given to individuals. Following the advent of the communicative testing movement, there has been raised awareness of the social character of performance testing and the co-construction of interaction (e.g. Chalhoub-Deville 2003, Ducasse 2010, Galaczi 2014, McNamara 1997, 2001, McNamara & Roever 2006, Norton J. 2013, Swain 2001). On a general level, the question of individuality and co-construction has been addressed from the perspective of testers by addressing issues such as how to define a relevant construct of interaction and if individual grades should be assigned or not (e.g. May 2009) or by investigating different aspects of the so-called 'interlocutor effect' (see 4.2.2). This thesis does not provide any answers to such issues. The individual view of knowledge is highly institutionalized and, in many ways, necessary. Instead, this thesis has sought to show that what we consider individual aspects are part of a larger relational construct. In this vein, individual aspects of communicative competence always represent a limited view of what it means to be 'a competent language user'. Arguably then, it follows that interpretations of a person's language competence solely based on tests should be treated caution.

As argued in Study II, how to display individual language knowledge in a conversation is also of concern for the test takers and may, in cases of interactional troubles, present a challenge. As put forth in Study II, even when the test takers orient to the display of vocabulary knowledge as an individual responsibility (i.e. by holding the turn extendedly and not seeking assistance from the interlocutor), it is important to underscore that this is contingent upon cooperative embodied interaction among all participants. Hence, following Vološinov (1973:34), 'every sign, even the sign of individuality, is social'.

Another aspect of individuality in relation to ideologies of language competence that has been addressed in different ways is how *managing on one's*

own is an emblem of being 'a competent language user'. This image is constructed metapragmatically in the instruction to the test takers before the paired speaking test (see section 5.1.1), enacted interactionally in the test takers' team performance by not turning to the more knowledgeable party (i.e. the examiner) in word searching sequences and by being discursively constructed in the focus group discussions. This image is also rooted in functional and communicative of frameworks for language teaching, where aims and proficiency level descriptions are described in terms of what the students *can do* with their language in different contexts (e.g. Council of Europe 2001; see also section 3.1). Likewise, 'managing on one's own' fits with the political discourse stating that the aim of language instruction for adult migrants is for the migrants to become employable so they can 'manage on their own' in society. From this perspective, communicative approaches to language competence both resonates with how learners' express their needs and the politicization of language competence, giving communicative approaches to language programs and language tests a market value. Related to managing on one's own in social interaction is the orientation to being responsible for one's own learning. This reflects contemporary discourses on language learning for migrants that often posit that it is a duty to learn Swedish, and that doing so is mainly dependent upon the individual learner's motivation and responsibility (see section 2.3). However, as discussed in Study III, seemingly individual achievements are constructed in intersubjective processes and are not dependent only on the individual.

Yet another ideology that has been discussed in relation to constructions and perceptions of language competence is *monolingualism*. Studies I and II both show how a monolingual orientation to language competence is sustained in testing practices. Language testing practices are in general based on monolingual constructs and monolingual behaviour (Shohamy 2011). This is interesting in light of recent debates in sociolinguistic and educational research. In recent years, there has been a proliferation of new terms suggesting a paradigm shift in the view of multilingual speakers, linguistic practices and educational research, shifting away from the term 'competence' (e.g. Blommaert & Backus 2013, Canagarajah 2013, 2018, Pennycook 2016). Instead, in order to foreground the multilingual and multimodal practice-based nature of language, terms like *translanguaging* and *polylanguaging* have been suggested (see Pennycook [2016] for an overview). At the same time, it remains important to investigate settings that sustain a more traditional view of language and language competence, such as testing practices (see also Charalambous et al. [2017] for a study on classroom discourse in Cyprus where the students avoid using all the linguistic resources at their disposal since Turkish is seen as 'the language of the enemy'). From this perspective, Studies I and II provide insights into how a monolingual ideology of language competence is sustained and reproduced both metapragmatically and interactionally in test discourse.

Significantly, there are also differences between the studies. Comparing the discourse produced in test settings with focus group discussions points to the existence of competing ideologies. Where the test discourse displayed a monolingual orientation, some participants in the focus group discussions constructed a multilingual view of language competence by being able to translate for others, and some participants rejected the view of the importance of learning Swedish by claiming English to be sufficient in certain contexts.

Another difference is between what is expressed metapragmatically and how the participants act in interaction. In both Study I and Study III, the participants highlight the symbolic value of linguistic correctness, whereas in the interactional practice investigated in Study II, the participants rarely oriented to linguistic correctness (here, in terms of precision or lexical accuracy). In many cases, the participants prioritized the progressivity of talk rather than finding a correct form of a lexical item – either by displaying intersubjective understanding of the linguistic and embodied resources that they found appropriate to use, or by avoiding negotiation of meaning and moving on with the discussion. Hence, the symbolic value of linguistic correctness is expressed metapragmatically as a 'loyalty to norms of correctness' (Gal 2006:17) rather than oriented to in interaction. As shown in a large body of studies on L2 interaction, linguistic correctness is not necessary for meaning making (e.g. Canagarajah 2013, Kurhila 2006, Seidlehofer 2009, Sundberg 2004). Instead, as Bourdieu (1977) holds, the recognition of the importance of 'correct language' rather than the knowledge of it constructs the symbolic value of language competence. From this perspective, claiming the importance of linguistic correctness and knowing 'perfect Swedish' serves as a mechanism of arrangement on a linguistic market for those who do not (yet) have access to the resources considered valuable. As argued in this thesis, the image of being 'a competent language user' in relation to migration is a powerful language ideology, where successful language learning has a moral valuation linking the image of 'a competent language user' with being 'a good student' and 'a good immigrant'.

Testing and assessment are key elements of education. Meanwhile, language assessment is a practice that goes beyond institutional practices taking place in language classrooms. As shown in Study III, language assessments made in both institutional and everyday practices form part of the participants' lived experience of language and impact their self-perception. As such, language assessments should not be seen as a neutral practice. Language testers often hold that '[w]hatever attributes or abilities we measure, it is important to understand that it is these attributes or abilities and not the persons themselves that we are measuring (Bachman 1990:20; see also Erickson [2015] for a similar line of argument). This is, of course, a professional stand-point. Yet, it must be seen as naïve. As discussed in Study III, language assessments, both

those made by others as well as those internalized by the speaker, are pervasive practices affecting a speaker's self-perception and agency, sometimes leading to silencing (see also Shohamy 2001, 2017). From this perspective, the role of language assessments point to the relational construction of language. The relational view of language brings to the forefront the existential experience of being positioned in relation to others and the emotions attached to these experiences. Following Jaffe (2013), communicative competence needs to be socially and interactionally sanctioned, leading to being 'a competent language user' as a situated and vulnerable subject position, depending on others. Overall, in the investigated discursive practices in the present thesis, being a 'competent language user' is oriented to as a desired subject position. Meanwhile, it is important to note that being a desired and highly valorized subject position means vulnerability for those who strive to achieve it (cf. Bourdieu 1998). Subsequently, experiences of not being able to 'live up' to the ideal of the standard language and linguistic correctness become anchored in speakers' lived experience of language.

In sum, investigating language testing and assessment from a sociolinguistic perspective sheds light on the assumptions made about language competence and what it means to be 'a competent language user'. This thesis should not be read as an argument against assessment and testing, since 'there is no human society where assessment will not occur' (McNamara 2012:459). However, since testing and assessment practices are important, they need to be examined more closely. Language testing and assessment are both peripheral and central part to applied linguistics. On the one hand, being a specific professional practice with the aim of creating valid and reliable testing practices (McNamara 2012), testing and assessment practices are often viewed as peripheral. On the other hand, language testing and assessment are also central to the field of applied linguistics as well as sociolinguistics, since it deals with fundamental assumptions and constructions of 'language competence'. Considering the fact that testing has become 'big business' (Spolsky 2017:375) and are important for individuals, it remains important to investigate language testing and assessment practices from a sociolinguistic perspective.

8 Sammanfattning

Föreliggande avhandling undersöker uppfattningar om vad det innebär att vara ”en kompetent språkbrukare” med fokus på vuxna andraspråksinlärare som studerar sfi.[24] Språktestning och bedömning av språkfärdighet (både institutionell och sådan som sker spontant i vardagliga sammanhang) utgör särskilda praktiker då uppfattningar om språklig kompetens aktualiseras. I denna avhandling studeras därför testning och bedömning i ett sociolingvistiskt perspektiv med ett särskilt fokus på muntlig interaktion och sfi-deltagares uppfattningar om språklig kompetens och vad det innebär att vara ”en kompetent språkbrukare” så som de kommer till uttryck, interaktionellt och metapragmatiskt, i testsamtal (parsamtal i de nationella slutproven) och i fokusgrupper.

Parsamtal (ett samtal mellan två testtagare inför bedömare) är motiverat av och idéhistoriskt rotat i det paradigm som kallas *kommunikativ språkundervisning* (t.ex. Lindberg 2005, Savignon 2006) som växte fram under 1960- och 1970-talen som en reaktion mot den traditionella grammatikfokuserade undervisningen. Den har bland annat inneburit ett ökat fokus på språkanvändning i olika sociala sammanhang. I kommunikativ språktestning förväntas ofta testtagarna producera språk på ett eller annat sätt och parsamtal är ett typexempel på kommunikativ språktestning. Parsamtal är intressanta att studera närmare eftersom de belyser spänningen mellan att se språklig kompetens som en individuell färdighet och något som kommer till uttryck och samkonstrueras med andra i interaktion.

Avhandlingens sociolingvistiska perspektiv tar sig uttryck bland annat genom att bilden av språklig kompetens ses som situerat, både till det sammanhang det kommer till uttryck i och förankrat i sin tid. Det innebär att synen på språklig kompetens är historiskt föränderligt samtidigt som det ger en inblick i samtida språkliga ideologier. Kappan ägnar därför en stor del åt att kontextualisera avhandlingens studier i ett sociopolitiskt och sociohistoriskt perspektiv. Språklig kompetens ses inte heller som ett ”fast objekt” som finns där färdigt att analyseras, utan avhandlingens tre studier närmar sig konstruktioner och uppfattningar om språklig kompetens och ”den kompetente språkbrukaren” genom olika angreppssätt. Kappan diskuterar därför synen på språklig kompetens i olika perspektiv, så som modeller av språklig kompetens inom

[24] Det officiella namnet är *kommunal vuxenutbildning i svenska för invandrare*, men i avhandlingen används den vedertagna förkortningen *sfi* (se även Rosén 2013 och Sandwall 2013).

kommunikativ språkundervisning och testning, ideologier om en ”god svenska” och andraspråkstalares egna uppfattningar om språklig kompetens.

Kommunikativt inriktad språkundervisning betonar vikten av att kunna använda språket i olika sociala sammanhang och anpassa det efter syfte och mottagare, ofta utanför undervisningen. Sfi är ett tydligt exempel där målet är att deltagarna ska utveckla ”språkliga redskap för kommunikation och aktivt deltagande i vardags-, samhälls- och arbetsliv samt fortsatta studier” (SKOLFS 2017:91). Det gör det relevant att undersöka både språkbruk och reflektioner över kommunikativa erfarenheter. På ett övergripande plan kretsar avhandlingen kring följande forskningsintressen:

1) Hur kan testsituationen förstås som en språkbrukssituation?
2) Vilka uppfattningar om språklig kompetens kommer till uttryck i testsamtal och i fokusgrupperna?
3) Hur påverkar sfi-deltagarnas kommunikativa erfarenheter deras syn på språklig kompetens?

Avhandlingen bygger på en kappa och tre separata studier (artiklar). Studie I och II bygger på interaktionella analyser av videoinspelade parsamtal i de nationella slutproven i sfi (kurs D) medan studie III baseras på analyser av fokusgruppsdiskussioner med sfi-deltagare. Frågeställning 1) diskuteras i Studie I och i Studie II. Frågeställning 2) behandlas ur olika perspektiv i alla tre studierna. Studie I och studie III tar fasta på sekvenser i testsamtalen och i fokusgrupperna då språklig kompetens, språkanvändning, kommunikativa erfarenheter och språkinlärning diskuteras, medan Studie II diskuterar vilka semiotiska resurser som aktualiseras interaktionellt i ordsökningssekvenser. Frågeställning 3) behandlas slutligen i Studie III.

Studie I diskuterar hur lingvistisk antropologisk *performance*-teori (t.ex. Bauman & Briggs 1990, Bauman 2004) tillsammans med Bakhtins (1986) begrepp *addressivitet* (att ett yttrande alltid är riktat till någon och den man riktar sig till påverkar det som sägs), kan utgöra ett ramverk för att analysera interaktionen i parsamtalen. Performance definieras som en publikorienterad diskurs. I det här fallet utgör bedömarna publiken och blir på så vis en del av interaktionen i egenskap av addressater. Studie I argumenterar för att parsamtalen kan analyseras som institutionell performance där det talade språket objektifieras och ideologier synliggörs. Studie I fokuserar på tillfällen då testtagarna tar upp synen på språklig kompetens, språkinlärning och språkanvändning. Analyserna visar att deltagarna orienterar sig mot samtida ideologier om språk och integration, så som vikten av att kunna bra svenska, vikten av språklig korrekthet och att språket lärs genom att bara prata svenska, helst ha svenska vänner och att ansvaret för att lära sig ligger hos den studerande. Dessa ideologier samkonstrueras av deltagarna genom interaktionell samstämmighet, det vill säga att testtagarna håller med varandra. Bilden av ’den

kompetente språkbrukaren' sammanfaller på så vis med 'den gode invandraren' och 'den gode studenten'.

Studie II utgår från ordsökningssekvenser som en interaktionell praktik och diskuterar hur dessa utförs och hur provsituationen påverkar de resurser som används. Ordsökningar ringar in flera viktiga områden inom kommunikativ språkundervisning: ordkunskap, förhandling om mening och förmågan att lösa problem i interaktionen. Ordsökningssekvenserna analyseras som en synlig förkroppsligad praktik (t.ex. Goodwin & Goodwin 1986, Goodwin 2013). Genom användandet av olika kroppsliga resurser så som blickföring, kroppshållning, gester, förhandlar testtagarana deltagande i ordsökningssekvenserna. Analyserna visar hur dessa resurser både används för att hjälpa varandra och gemensamt lösa ordsökningen och skapa mening eller för att undvika att delta i den andres ordsökning. Det leder i vissa fall till ett undvikande av förhandling om mening. Överlag orienterar sig deltagarna mot att upprätthålla samtalet och gå vidare än att orientera sig mot lexikal precision. Till skillnad från andra ordsökningsstudier med andraspråkstalare undviker deltagarna här att använda andra språkliga resurser än svenska (t.ex. Kurhila 2006, Lin 2014, Siegl 2016). På så vis orienterar de sig mot och upprätthåller en monolingvistisk bild av språklig kompetens.

Studie III undersöker sfi-deltagares syn på språklig kompetens och vad det innebär att vara ”en kompetent språkbrukare” utifrån deltagarnas kommunikativa erfarenheter. Känslan av att vara eller inte vara en kompetent språkbrukare är en känsla deltagarna förhåller sig till inte minst via erfarenheter av att inte bli sedd som en. Att vara ”en kompetent språkbrukare” konstruerades i fokusgruppsdiskussionerna som en åtråvärd, men sårbar position. Utifrån fenomenologisk språkforskning diskuteras hur uppfattningar om språklig kompetens formas i intersubjektiva processer och i levda erfarenheter (Busch 2017). Studie III diskuterar således språklig kompetens i ett relationellt perspektiv och lyfter bland annat fram emotionella perspektiv och hur att vara ”en kompetent språkbrukare” är en subjektsposition som skapas i relation till andra. Bedömningar av ens språkförmåga (både de som utförs av lärare i utbildningssammanhang och de som yttras i vardagliga sammanhang) har betydelse för individer som levda erfarenheter och formar talares självuppfattning, vilket ytterligare förstärker det relationella perspektivet på språklig kompetens. Bedömningar kunde även införlivas hos talarna vilket kunde leda till en sorts självcensur där de tystnade av rädsla för att låta ”fel”. Det relationella perspektivet på språklig kompetens står i kontrast till hur lyckad språkinlärning i offentlig debatt ofta framställs som i huvudsak beroende på individens vilja, ansvar och ansträngningar.

I globaliseringens kölvatten har vuxna migranters språkkunskaper tillmäts ett allt större symboliskt värde, där lyckad språkinlärning ses som tecken på lojalitet och tillhörighet med det nya landet. Detta har lett till en ökad ”kravretorik” som bland annat har tagit sig uttryck i tal om språkplikt och betoning av

det egna ansvaret för att lära sig svenska. I den allmänna debatten om vuxna invandrares språkkunskaper råder ofta en ensidig och förenklad syn på språk och språkinlärning. I den här typen av diskurser framställs ofta framgångsrik språkinlärning som något som endast bygger på individens vilja och ansträngning. I kontrast till den förenklade bilden av språk och språkinlärning som ofta styr diskursen kring vuxnas andraspråksutveckling, har studierna i denna avhandling undersökt den ideologiska synen på språklig kompetens, språklig kompetens som en relationell konstrukt och språk som en situerad förkroppsligad praktik. Denna syn står i kontrast till ideologier om språk som en individuell färdighet, ett beskrivbart objekt som går att mäta och i huvudsak logocentriskt. Det skapar i förlängningen en spänning i relation till det institutionella behovet av att mäta språk och bedöma individer. Den relationella synen på språk har både tagit sig uttryck i hur deltagarna förhåller sig till andra (den andre testtagaren, lärarna som lyssnar och bedömer och i beskrivningar av kommunikativa möten med andra) och hur de är beroende av andras bedömningar för att känna sig som kompetenta språkbrukare. Det relationella perspektivet tar sig även uttryck genom att deltagarna införlivade andras blick och röster i sina utsagor.

Språktestning har inom tillämpad språkvetenskap setts som ett specialiserat, och i viss mån perifert, fält. Denna avhandling har dock diskuterat och visat på hur bedömning och testning av språk blottlägger olika antaganden om vad det innebär att kunna ett språk och att vara ”en kompetent språkbrukare”. På så vis är bedömningspraktiker centrala inom tillämpad språkvetenskap och för uppfattningen och konstruktionen av vad det innebär att vara ”en kompetent språkbrukare”. Ett annat huvudargument har varit att testpraktiker, i det undersökta fallet parsamtal, bör ses som en specifik språkbrukssituation vilket påverkar interaktionen. Detta synsätt har även konsekvenser för språktestning. Det som går att fånga och bedöma i en testsituation representerar en begränsad del av språkanvändning. Det är därför viktigt att konsekvenserna av testning inte är för stora.

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SFS 2011:1108 Förordning om vuxenutbildning [*Regulation of Adult Education*]
SFS 2016:752 Lag om tillfälliga begränsningar av möjligheten att få uppe hållstillstånd i Sverige. [*Temporary law on restrictions on residenship in Sweden*]
SFS 2017:584 Lag om ansvar för etableringsinsatser för vissa nyanlända invandrare. [*Law on establishment contributions for newly arrived immigrants*]

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SOU 1981:87 Svenskundervisning för vuxna invandrare, del 2. Kartläggning av nuläget. [*Swedish tuition for adult immigrants, part 2*]
SOU 1999:34 Medborgarskap [*Citizenship*]
SOU 2011:19 Tid för snabb flexibel inlärning. Utredning om tidsbegränsning i svenskundervisning för invandrare. [*Time for flexible learning. Investigation of time restrictions in Swedish tuition for adult immigrants*]

APPENDIX A. Example of a paired task in the final national exam (National Agency of Education n.d.).

Paruppgift: Diskussion (Kurs D)

Syftet med paruppgiften är att testtagarna ska diskutera en fråga utifrån en tankekarta och komma överens om vilka faktorer de anser vara viktigast. Uppgiften avser också att pröva testtagarnas förmåga att föra diskussionen framåt genom att framföra och efterfråga information samt uttrycka och bemöta åsikter med enkla argument.

Instruktioner till testtagarna. Hela instruktionen läses upp av testledaren:

Ni ska diskutera i cirka 10 minuter.

Det är viktigt att ni lyssnar på varandra, ställer frågor till varandra och frågar varandra om ni inte förstår.

Tänk på att det är ni som ska prata med varandra, jag kommer bara att lyssna.

Det som ni ska diskutera är denna fråga (lägg fram uppgiftsbladet):

Skolverket

[My translation]: **Paired task: Discussion** **(Course D)**

The aim of the paired task is for the test takers to discuss an issue based on a mind-map and come to an agreement on which factors they believe are the most important. The task also aims to test the test takers ability to take the discussion forward by putting forward and asking for information and expressing and receiving views using simple arguments.

Instructions to the test takers. The entire instruction should be read by the examiner:

You should discuss for about 10 minutes.

It's important that you listen to each other, ask each other questions and ask each other if you don't understand.

Keep in mind that the discussion is between the two of you, I will only listen.

What you are going to discuss is this question (hand out the task sheet):

APPENDIX B. Questions used as stating points for the group discussions.

Vilka språk kan ni?

Varför läser ni sfi?

Är det viktigt att kunna svenska? Varför?

Vilka språk använder ni? I vilka sammanhang?

Vad kan man när man kan ett språk bra? Hur vet man det?

Vad är viktigt att kunna?

Hur lär man sig ett språk?

Hur bra är ni på svenska?

Vad är lätt att lära sig? Vad är svårt?

Vad är kommunikativ kompetens?

Vad vill ni göra i framtiden?

What languages do you know?

Why do you study SFI?

Is it important to know Swedish? Why?

What languages do you use? In which contexts?

What is it that you know when you know a language well? How do you know if you know a language well?

What is important to know?

How do you learn a language?

How good are you in Swedish?

What is easy to learn when learning Swedish? What is difficult?

What is communicative competence?

What do you want to do in the future?