Language learning strategies and teaching practices in adult L2 education: The case of Swedish for Immigrants

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This article highlights the use and co-construction of language learning strategies (LLS) in second language education for adults with short previous education. In a case study, we explore how LLS are used and co-constructed by one student and one teacher. The data for the article was created in an action research programme comprising two Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) schools, and the methodology used was classroom observation based in linguistic ethnography. In accordance with Griffiths (2013, p. 15) LLS are defined as "activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning". For the analysis of LLS, Oxford's (1990) taxonomy was chosen. In the chosen case the teacher and student co-constructed direct and indirect strategies. In their co-construction, they sometimes seemed to work together, both using a strategy initiated by one of them, and sometimes appeared to have opposite goals, so that the teacher-initiated strategies turned out as complicated for the student, while the student-initiated strategies were counteracted by the teacher. Some of the LLS promoted by the teacher that were difficult for the student seemed to demand literacy skills that he had not yet developed. This underlines the importance of adapting teaching to the language and literacy competences of the individual learner. It also highlights the importance of further research on LLS with this group of students in order to find strategies that work in the process of developing functional literacy skills.

Keywords: language learning strategies, Swedish for Immigrants, adult education, second language learning

1 Introduction

The focus in this article is the use and co-construction of language learning strategies (LLS) in second language (L2) education for adult immigrants. We want to create an understanding of how one student and one teacher participate in the co-construction, i.e. the collaborative development, of LLS.

Due to increased international migration, many countries need to organize second language education for newly arrived adults. In Sweden, basic education in the Swedish language for adults is given through Swedish for Immigrants (SFI).

The aim for SFI is that students develop a functional second language, to enable active participation in everyday social and work life (Skolverket, 2018a). In order to individualize the education for this highly heterogeneous group of students, SFI is structured into three different study routes: 1–3, and four courses: A–D, intended for learners with different backgrounds and goals. Study route 1 (courses A–D) is mainly intended for those people who lack or have a very short experience of schooling, and study route 3 (courses C–D) for those who have reached secondary school level or above. A certificate from course D is often a requirement for employment and further education.

In the Swedish Education Act (2010:800, 20 Ch. 2) it is stated that SFI education should be directed towards the needs and preconditions of the individual adult students. The aim to adapt the education to the individual learner's interests, experiences, knowledge and goals is also expressed in the syllabus for SFI (Skolverket, 2018a). However, SFI has repeatedly been criticized in official documents for not offering the students an individualized education (Skolinspektionen, 2018). The number of SFI students has increased since the end of the 1990s. In 2014, there were about 125,000 students and in 2017 the number had increased to about 160,000 (Skolverket, 2014; 2018b). Of these students, 18% had six years earlier experience of schooling or less (Skolverket, 2018b). At the same time, there is a growing shortage of SFI teachers and an increasing demand for development of teacher education for these teachers. Consequently, the SFI education is facing considerable pedagogical challenges. Research is scarce into the language learning strategies (LLS) of adult L2 learners with a short educational background and programmes that, like SFI, have a very functional aim.

In this article, we analyse material from a case study on SFI education for individuals who had a short or no former schooling on arrival in Sweden. These adult students face the challenge of learning Swedish as a second language and developing emergent literacy at the same time. One way of individualizing L2 education for this group of adult learners is mobilizing and developing their language learning strategies (LLS) and creating an education where LLS promoted by the teacher resonate with LLS preferred by the students (Griffiths 2013, p. 168). Here a detailed exploration is undertaken of how LLS preferred by one adult L2 learner correspond to LLS promoted by one teacher when they interact during one lesson. The intention is to offer an insight into how the LLS created may promote the language development of the student in focus, and also to create an understanding that is of relevance for other adult L2 learners with a similar educational background.

2 Language learning, strategies and second language acquisition

Research on LLS has been carried out since the mid-1970s. The publishing of Rubin's article on 'the good language learner' in 1975 is often described as seminal for the establishment of the research field (e.g. Dmitrenko, 2017, p. 7). The division of strategies into the three groups – cognitive, metacognitive and social/affective – done by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and by O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, and Russo (1985) has been influential in the LLS research field. Ellis (1994, p. 555) summarizes the tentative general conclusions that metacognitive strategies are "more evident in advanced learners" and that

"[s]uccessful learners appear to use learning strategies more frequently and in qualitatively different ways than learners who are less successful."

In this article, language learning strategies are, in accordance with Griffiths (2013, p. 15), defined as "activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning". Griffiths' definition starts out from her view that LLS are 1) of an active nature, 2) conscious, 3) the result of learners' choice, 4) goal-oriented, 5) regulate learning, and 6) focus on learning. Furthermore, we argue with Oxford (2017, p. 48) that LLS are mentally directed but also take the form of physically observable expressions. Creativity and flexibility are characteristic of learners' strategy use. The LLS are combined in different ways, e.g. in clusters or chains of strategies organized in order to fulfil the learners' motives. Strategies can, in accordance with cognitive theory, be taught and learned (Griffiths, 2013, p. 122). When learners make decisions on which strategies to use, the context is of central importance. Which strategies are appropriate varies according to different "personal and contextual factors." Following Oxford (2017, p. 48, 66), we argue that LLS are characterized by sociocultural as well as psycholinguistic aspects and that both mental and observational aspects are necessary in defining and researching them. Thus, in this study we combine a sociocultural perspective with a cognitive/educational psychologic perspective on the LLS of the learner and teacher in focus.

A large number of taxonomies of LLS have been suggested (e.g Cohen & Chi, 2001; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Poulisse, 1989; Purpura, 1999; Wenden, 1991; Wenden & Rubin, 1987). Two taxonomies that are widely used are Oxford's (1990) and O'Malley and Chamot's (1990). The taxonomy of LLS chosen for this analysis is Oxford's (1990) for three reasons. Firstly, this taxonomy is very comprehensive, and secondly, the structure of the taxonomy with two major groups, *Direct* and *Indirect strategies*, gives structure and overview. Direct strategies are subdivided into *Memory strategies*, *Cognitive strategies* and *Compensation Strategies*. *Indirect Strategies* include *Metacognitive Strategies*, *Affective Strategies* and *Social strategies* (See also Dmitrenko 2017, p. 8). A third reason for the choice of Oxford's taxonomy is that it is modelled in accordance with the needs of teachers and learners and thus has a practical orientation, directed towards learner support. O'Malley and Chamot's framework also has teachers and learners in focus. However, the division of their taxonomy into cognitive, metacognitive and social/affective strategies is made in accordance with their information-processing model (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; see also Ellis, 1994, p. 536), which makes it less relevant in this case, since our focus is on teacher-learner co-construction of LLS.

What LLS are effective depends on, among other things, the learner, the context and the task (Oxford, 2017). In analysing the LLS of a second language learner, the focus needs to be not only on the mental processes of the individual but also on power structures of the social context. Hajar (2017) turns to Norton's (2013) concept of *investment* in analysing connections between the language learner and the social context and also the relationship between language learning and identity. Thus, Norton (2015, p. 379) focuses on power structures treating learners as active agents, able to "question, challenge and reposition themselves" in their choice of language learning strategies (see also Hajar, 2017; 2018, p 3).

According to Lantolf and Poehner (2008), the use of learning strategies in sociocultural settings to a certain degree helps EFL learners in overcoming difficulties, something that is relevant also in the Swedish context. This can also

be seen in sociocultural theory based on Vygotsky (1978) who states that more advanced types of human mental processes are mediated by what he calls culturally auxiliary mental tools (1978, p. 28). In accordance with this view, LLS, as higher mental functions, can be constructed from the interaction between teacher and student.

The amount of earlier research in the field of LLS is a manifestation of the potential of LLS in contributing to the development of effective language teaching and learning (e.g. Cohen & Griffiths, 2015; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Griffiths, 2015; Hajar, 2018; Oxford, 2017; Oxford et al., 2014; Rubin, 2015). Earlier research is, however, mainly based on a context of EFL and SLA teaching and learning. The application of this research in the context of SFI, teaching and learning Swedish as a second language in adult education with mainly functional aims, adds new perspectives to the use of LLS in language education.

3 Methods

The data analysed is part of a study comprising two municipal adult education schools in two different Swedish municipalities. Four teachers and classes took part in the study, two in study route 1, beginners' level (courses A and B) and two in study route 2, intermediate level (course C). In this article, data from one class, 1 B, is used. The study was designed as an action research project where teachers and researchers cooperated in researching, reflecting on and developing educational practices (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996). The purpose was to create learning situations that gave the students opportunities to engage in authentic interaction with students at the other school participating in the action research project as well as with students in their own class. This was arranged through activities where the students prepared for and were recorded when they carried out individual presentations. The presentations were audio- or video-recorded by the teachers and shared between the schools through an internet access point.

Data was created through ethnographic methods, with classroom observation as the principal method for data construction, while informal conversations and interviews with teachers had a complementary role. Classroom observations were documented by audio- or video-recordings, field notes and photographs of texts read or written by students and/or teachers. In total, 32 hours of classroom observations were carried out and 7.5 hours of these were audio-recorded, while five hours were video-recorded.

The case chosen for a more detailed analysis in this article was part of this. The data comes from a 90-minute long focus lesson in class 1 B at one of the schools, with a male student, here called Ammar, and a female teacher, Monica. During the last 30 minutes, a second male student, Karim, also took part in the focus lesson. However, it is the interplay of LLS initiated and used by Monica and by Ammar that is the primary focus of the analysis. The focus lesson was documented by audio-recording, field notes and photographs of the written text used in the interaction.

Choosing a lesson where, for the most part, only one student and one teacher interact gives us the possibility of analysing how the teacher and student co-construct LLS. We chose this particular lesson as we perceived a tension between the strategies used by the teacher and those used by the student. Concerning the relation between mental and observable strategies, Oxford (2017, p. 17) states that

"it is the mental strategies that tend to guide the observable strategies and (…) the observable ones are manifestations of the mental ones". This means that, through classroom observation we may detect the observable strategies used in the focus lesson and let them guide us to an understanding of what mental strategies the student prefers and what strategies the teacher encourages and discourages. The observations also have the potential to give us some access to LLS that are less consciously chosen (cf. Ellis, 1994, p. 550).

For the analysis, we have transcribed the audio recording of the interaction between the teacher and the student (including in some parts also the researcher who conducted the observation, and Karim, the fellow student). The parts of the interaction in Arabic were translated by an interpreter. In the following, we analysed the transcribed interaction, starting out from Oxford's (1990) categorization of LLS, by repeatedly listening to the audio recording, and reading and rereading the transcript in order to identify and categorize the strategies encouraged by the teacher and used by the student.

When analysing the data, we were aware that the different categories in Oxford's taxonomy are not mutually exclusive with definite boundaries, but that one and the same strategy can sometimes be understood as belonging to more than one category. In addition, more than one LLS can be applied simultaneously. Furthermore, it is not always possible to decide which strategy is being used, since it is impossible to establish which purpose is behind a participant's actions. A participant might also change the purpose of their action from one moment to the next.

In the transcripts, words in English are written in italics and words in Arabic in bold.

4 Findings

The findings will be presented in three steps. The first step consists of an ethnographic description of the interaction between teacher and student, focusing on observed and interpreted use and preference of LLS. In the second step we apply Oxford's (1990) taxonomy in an exploration and comparison of the learning strategies initiated and used by the student and learning strategies promoted by the teacher. The third step consists of analysing the co-construction of strategies in which student and teacher participate. We also intend to interpret how the use of learning strategies can affect the student's second language learning. We start with a short contextualization of the lesson.

4.1 The setting

Ammar, who was in his fifties, had immigrated to Sweden from Syria three years before the focus lesson took place. He lived with his adult son Fadhil. Arabic was his first language and he had limited competence in English. In Syria he had spent six years in school and then worked in a factory producing clothes. In the SFI-school he had finished course A and started course B six months before the focus lesson took place. The teacher, Monica, was also in her fifties. She held a teacher certification as a primary school teacher and had worked as a teacher for 23 years. When the focus lesson took place, she had recently started teaching at SFI. The

reason why a less experienced teacher is chosen is because many teachers in SFI have short experience.

During the focus lesson, Monica and Ammar worked on their own while a teacher assistant was responsible for teaching the rest of the class in another classroom. The focus lesson took place in a small classroom where a long table was placed in the middle of the room. The teacher and the student sat facing each other, on each side of one of the corners of the table, and the researcher sat beside the student.

A couple of months before the focus lesson, the students and teacher had worked on the presentations described above. Some of the students in Monica's class had suggested that they make a second individual presentation, but this time talking about their after-school activities. Monica intended to video-record these presentations. Ammar had on his own initiative recorded a video in his spare time, where he had shown how he cooked a dish called *kubbe*[1] and described the procedures in Arabic. Kubbe are balls consisting of bulgur and meat. Ammar's son Fadhil had sent the film to the teacher and the class had watched it in a previous lesson. Before the focus lesson, the teacher had also written down the cooking procedures in Swedish, following Ammar's description. Ammar brought this written text to the focus lesson. It was written in a rather small font size and consisted of eight short sentences:
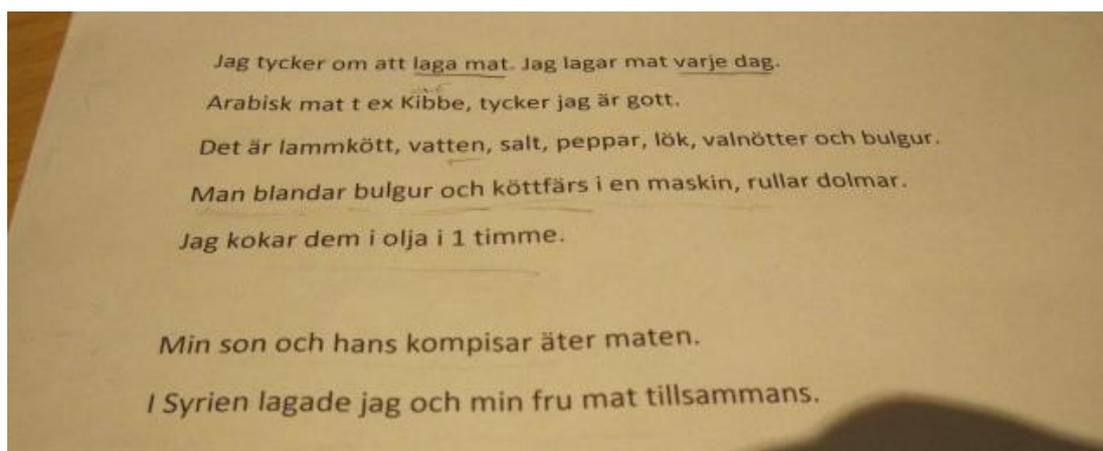

(I like cooking. I cook every day. Arabic food, e.g. Kibbe, is nice I think. It is lamb, water, salt, pepper, onion, walnuts and bulgur. You mix bulgur and minced meat in a machine, roll dolma. I cook them in oil for 1 hour. My son and his friends eat the food. In Syria my wife and I cooked together.)

Before the focus lesson, the teacher had told the researcher that, in this lesson, she planned to video-record two students' presentations. However, she only had time for one.

## 4.2 The interaction between the teacher and the student

We start by giving an ethnographic description of the teacher-student interaction during the lesson, focusing on observed and interpreted use and preference of LLS. The intention is for this description to give the reader an insight into the course of events during the lesson that will be of help in following the subsequent analysis.

The lesson has just started. Ammar, Monica and the researcher sit at the table in the classroom. Monica starts by asking Ammar if he wants to prepare himself before the video-recording. Ammar agrees and begins reading the text about cooking kubbe *aloud. He practices reading each word and sentence on the paper many times and has difficulties decoding, pronouncing and remembering the Swedish words. Before reading a word out loud, he first reads it in a silent, whispering voice. Now and then, Monica says the word out aloud before he has decoded it, or repeats the word, when Ammar's pronunciation does not satisfy her, giving him both positive and negative feedback. On a number of occasions Monica uses a pencil to write key words in large letters on the paper where the sentences are written. After a while these words make two columns of keywords, one word written below the other. Afterwards Ammar adds a transliteration of the words in Arabic letters.*
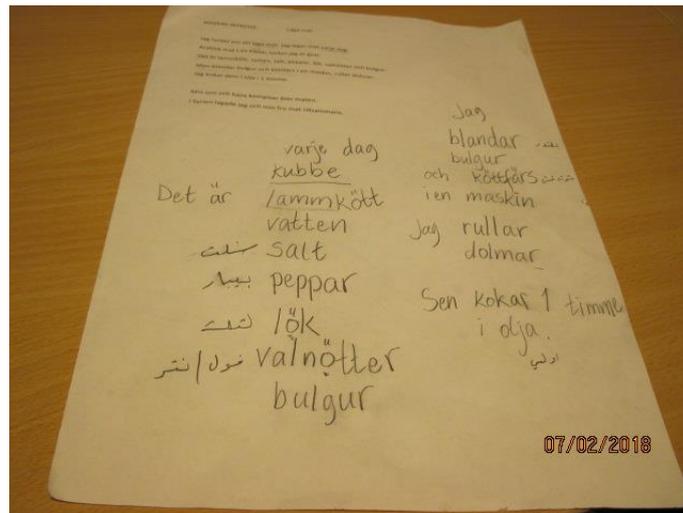
Monica explains what she wants Ammar to say, but when he reads the keywords without adding the missing words from the sentences, she comments on this. She explains that she wants him to talk without looking at the text. They practice the first four sentences on the paper for a quarter of an hour. After they have continued for a few more minutes, Ammar asks the teacher if his son can come to the classroom. Monica answers that his son does not need to come and they start arguing about this. While Ammar apparently wants to use his son as an aid to carry out the task, Monica argues that he will manage to do this on his own. Still Ammar calls his son on his mobile phone and when Monica sees this she laughs. As the son does not answer, Ammar puts his mobile phone away and continues to practice the sentences.

After another quarter of an hour, Monica starts video-recording when Ammar reads the first three sentences on the paper and then praises him, but Ammar does not seem to agree that his reading is good. The practicing continues and Monica gives him support in various ways, such as when reading the sentence "Min son och hans kompisar äter maten" (My son and his friends eat the food) Monica writes the sentence on the back of the paper, but instead of writing "hans kompisar" (his friends), she makes a simple sketch of two persons.
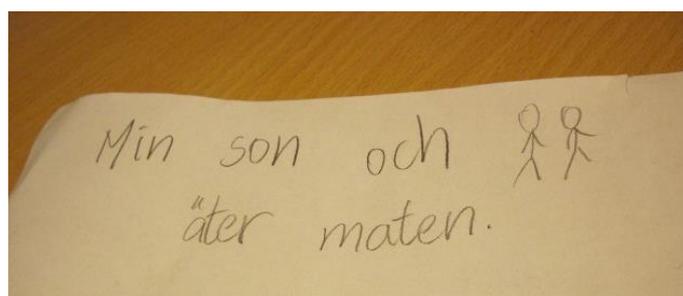
She points at the sketch and asks Ammar "Vilka är det här" (Who are these?). When Ammar hesitates, she gives him the intended answer: "Kompisar" (Friends). Ammar repeats the word several times and then continues "Min son" (My son).

They continue in similar ways through the whole lesson. Ammar works hard at reading the sentences, trying to remember the words and pronounce them correctly. Monica sometimes praises him and sometimes corrects him, sentence by sentence and then video-records him, a few sentences at a time. After more than half the lesson has passed, she finally video records him reading the last sentences on the paper and then they together watch the video recordings on Monica's mobile phone. Afterwards, Ammar thanks Monica and says that he is going to practice at home. Monica suggests that Ammar should tell his classmates about his cooking to see if they understand him.

Ammar agrees and Monica leaves to go to the other classroom to fetch Karim, one of the students in Ammar's class who is also from Syria and speaks Arabic. As soon as Monica has left the classroom, Ammar takes up his mobile phone, calls his son Fadhil and talks to him in Arabic. He explains to Fadhil that a couple of teachers want to teach him words and things that are to be pronounced, and asks Fadhil if he can come and help him. He finishes the conversation and puts the mobile phone down. A few minutes later Monica and Karim arrive in the classroom and sit down at the table. Monica first explains to Karim that he is going to listen when Ammar tells him about something that he has been practicing a lot, that they are going to see whether Karim will understand and that she will video-record the two of them. Karim asks Ammar in Arabic if this is about his film about his dish and Ammar confirms this. As Monica does not understand Arabic, she does not understand this. She takes up her mobile phone and starts recording. Ammar says the first two sentences, but when he comes to the third, he hesitates and stumbles so Monica stops recording. At this point Fadhil is standing outside the classroom and as there are two locked doors to get through, Ammar and Monica get up to let him in.

When they return to the classroom, Monica tells Fadhil that his father does not need help, but adds that he may listen if he wants. In Arabic, Karim discusses the reason for Fadhil being there with Ammar and Fadhil, and then explains to Monica what they have said. Monica repeats that Ammar does not need any help and turns to Ammar and adds "Du kan själv." (You can do this on your own). She praises Ammar's work, but then adds that he just needs to practice the pronunciation of a few words. She continues the practicing of the words by reading from the list of keywords and Ammar repeats the words after her. The practice of the pronunciation of the words in the list goes on. Then Monica turns to Fadhil and says that he should go back to his class. Karim also engages in this conversation and agrees that Fadhil should leave, which he does.

Then Monica wants to start recording the whole text again, but Ammar argues that he first wants to practice the text again, and starts reading it from the beginning. Then Karim takes on a more active role that can be described as acting as a teacher. He explains the meaning of words to Ammar, comments on Ammar's reading, sometimes with praise "Bra! Ja!" (Good! Yes!) and sometimes giving him an Arabic translation. Monica too comments on Ammar's pronunciation and corrects him. Then she starts video-recording again as Ammar reads the first five sentences and when he is finished both she and Karim clap their hands. They continue and Karim sounds very engaged and sometimes argues with Ammar, for example when Ammar says that oil is "onna" in Arabic. According to Karim this is a brand while "zeid" is oil. Ammar goes on repeating the sentences, laughing, giving the impression that he finds this activity very hard. While Monica argues that he should talk using the keywords, Ammar wants to read the sentences as they are written. After one more recording Ammar seems exhausted and in the last minutes of the lesson the students and the teacher talk about Ammar's experiences during the war in Syria and his new life in Sweden.

This description of the interaction makes visible a wide variety of LLS used by the student and encouraged by the teacher, strategies that will be the focus in the next step.

4.3 The student's use of LLS compared to the LLS discouraged/encouraged by the teacher

We will now use Oxford's (1990) taxonomy to explore and compare learning strategies used by the student in relation to strategies stimulated and promoted by the teacher. In using the taxonomy, it becomes clear that the categories overlap and that more than one category can be used at the same time. We begin with what Oxford calls *Direct strategies*, in the form of Memory strategies, Cognitive strategies and Compensatory strategies.

4.3.1 Direct strategies

We will start with *Memory strategies,* which can be used for learning as well as practicing retrieval of target language information (Oxford 1990, p. 68). The first memory strategy we will explore involves applying sounds for learning the pronunciation of new expressions (cf. Oxford 1990, p. 63). During the lesson the teacher paid particular attention to the student's production of the Swedish vowels, especially the rounded vowel <ö> /ø/. When she found that the student did not pronounce the vowel <ö> according to norms, for example in the word "lök" (onion) she gave him examples of other Swedish words including <ö>. Thus, her strategy seemed to be linking to words that she thought that he already knew how to pronounce. Here is one example of how she promoted this LLS in order to help him pronounce <lök> ([løk]).

L: Ser du, då är vokalen [ø]	T: Do you see, then the vowel is [ø]
E: Ja	S: Yes
L: som i Örstad	T: like in Örstad
E: Årstad	S: Årstad
L: [løk]	T: onion
E: [lœk]	S: onion

We note some problems with this strategy, for example when the word that the teacher referred to included an allophone of the vowel <ö> such as "Örstad" [œrstad] as an example of <ö> in [løk]. Another problem was that the student sometimes did not only apply the pronunciation of the vowel in the example words but also transferred other parts between the words. When Örstad was used by the teacher as an example word for the pronunciation of the vowel in the word "lök" (onion), he said [løstad] and [løs], thus pronouncing the vowel /ø/ correctly but incorrectly adding other phonemes from the example word.

Turning to Ammar, he also attended to sound, using the phonetic similarity between a word in Arabic and in Swedish saying a word first in Swedish and then in Arabic. When the teacher said "lammkött" (lamb meat) Ammar repeated "lahm", which is "meat" in Arabic. Here Ammar seemed to link the phonetic similarity between the first part of the Swedish word "lammkött" and the Arabic word "lahm" (kött) and therefore creating a mental link for himself between the two words. In Arabic "lamb meat" is لحم خَروف (lahm xaruf), i. e. "meat" precedes

"lamb" in the Arabic compound. Thus, Ammar may here be linking the Swedish word "lamm" (lamb) to the first part of the Arabic compound "lahm xaruf".

The teacher also referred to similarities between Swedish and Arabic referring to "dolma" that is practically identical in the two languages. In this case, the focus was rather on the meaning of the word. The teacher did not speak Arabic, but by knowing that this word is similar in the two languages she could help the student to create an associative link between his Arabic and Swedish vocabulary.

She used a similar strategy asking him what the word "lök" (onion) was in Arabic. The teacher did not know that the word for "onion" is "basal" بَصَل in Arabic, but by asking the student she encouraged him to activate his Arabic vocabulary as a strategy for learning and remembering the Swedish word "lök".

Another memory strategy that the teacher initiated, the use of keywords, may refer to what Oxford (1990, p. 68) calls *strategies of employing action*, more specifically using a mechanical technique, when she engaged him in practicing the retrieval of the words using keywords, something that he, as we saw earlier, resisted. Ammar also used guessing strategies which sometimes led him astray, as when trying to read the word "köttfärs" (minced meat) he once read "köttmaskin" (meat machine). So, the strategy of using key words as support may have been too demanding for him either because he did not understand the strategy in itself or because the load on his working memory became too heavy.

Multimodal memory strategies involving non-verbal sounds and gestures were frequently used by both the teacher and the student. The teacher made gestures with her hands in order to help the student store and retrieve new linguistic information, such as when explaining "rullar" (rolls) moving her hands in a rolling movement in order to illustrate how he rolled the dolmas. Another example was that she made a gesture of pointing backwards, over her shoulder, when she wanted the student to produce a word in the past tense.

Ammar also employed physical response or sensation as a memory strategy. On a few occasions he tapped the table with his fist or clapped his hands as he read a word, which we interpret as employing action as a memory aid. By tapping the table or clapping his hands he facilitated his own retrieval of the number of syllables of the word that he was trying to remember: for example, clapping his hands once for "salt" (salt) and tapping the table twice with his hand, representing each syllable, as he pronounced the word "peppar" (pepper). On these occasions also, the teacher participated, tapping her hand to the table together with the student.

Another memory strategy that involved action was the use of non-verbal sounds, with Oxford *applying images and sounds* by representing sounds in memory (1990, p. 63). This is something that Oxford claims helps memory through auditory rather than visual representations of sounds. However, while Oxford mentions "words or sounds from any language" (1990, p. 63), the teacher here used non-verbal sounds such as when she bleated like a lamb in order to help the student retrieve the word "lammkött" (lamb), employing sounds that may not easily be referred to in any language. This strategy was partly successful in that the student responded to it by saying "lumba" which may be an attempt to say "lamm" (lamb).

The teacher also applied an image to promote a storage and retrieval strategy, when substituting the words "hans kompisar" (his friends) with drawing a simple sketch of two persons (see picture, page 11 above). This may be a result of her realization of the difficulties that the student had in decoding the written words.

Turning to *Cognitive strategies*, we start with how the teacher, when she considered the student's pronunciation of a word incorrect, gave him feedback by *analysing and reasoning* (cf. Oxford, 1990, p. 69), explaining that, if he pronounced the word in the way he did, the word acquired a different meaning than he intended. She promoted this strategy for example when Ammar instead of pronouncing *lök* (onion) as [lø:k] first said [le:k] as in the Swedish *lek* (play) and then as [løk], which in Swedish would be spelled **löck*. One cognitive strategy initiated and used by the student consisted of his previously mentioned transliteration of Swedish words with Arabic letters. In accordance with Oxford (1990, p. 71–72 this is an example of *formally practicing with a writing system*. In this case, we understand that Ammar used Arabic script in order to learn the pronunciation of the Swedish words. However, there were some problems with this strategy since the transliteration into Arabic did not help him to pronounce those Swedish phonemes that are not included in Arabic phonology, or to stress the words in accordance with Swedish prosodic patterns. When his transliteration was commented on by the researcher, it became clear that the teacher was not aware that this was what he was doing as she was not herself familiar with Arabic script, which limited her possibility of offering him support with this.

An additional type of cognitive strategy that the student and teacher engaged in throughout the lesson was practicing the target language, in Oxford *repeating* (1990, p. 70). This was carried out in cooperation between the teacher and the student, and was initiated by both, although their goals may have differed. When the teacher fetched another student into the classroom to "see if they understand", this may be understood as creating a situation for Ammar to perform the strategy of practicing naturalistically (cf. Oxford, 1990, p. 74). In this case, however, it did not turn out as a naturalistic situation, as Karim took on the role of teacher rather than as curious listener. One reason may be that he was already familiar with the content. It seems that, while the teacher treated Karim as a fellow student, he may rather have perceived himself as more skilled and then more as a co-teacher on this occasion.

Although the variation of cognitive strategies that we have observed is not big, the student and teacher engaged in cognitive strategies throughout the lesson with *repeating* to a large degree characterizing their interaction. The numerous repetitions seemed to be partly helpful to the student's learning, although he soon forgot pronunciation and words that they had practiced.

A third type of strategies that the student used is with Oxford (1990, p. 91) understood as *Compensation strategies,* such as when *using mime and gesture* (Oxford, 1990, p. 95) to compensate for a lack of vocabulary. One example was when the student made a sniffing sound as if he were crying, in order to communicate that he understood the word "lök" (onion), with the sniffing referring to how chopping an onion makes the eyes fill with tears. Even though not mentioned by Oxford, employing a sound is, in our interpretation, here used to overcome limitations in speaking, and thus we find that the strategy belongs to this category.

As described earlier, Ammar used a strategy of, in Oxford's (1990, p. 94) words, *switching to the mother tongu*e in order to overcome his limitations in the target language, Swedish. Following more recent views on language as fluid and varied (see for example Paulsrud, Rosén, Straszer, & Wedin, 2017), we would rather call this using his full linguistic repertoire. He did not only use Arabic but also a few English words, for example when he tried to explain to the teacher that he wanted his son to come to the classroom to help him: "Ja eh lärare eh *give me* son eh

arabiska svenska det här eh *give me* telefon son.". (*Yes* eh teacher eh *give me* son eh Arabic Swedish this eh *give me* telephone son.) This may be understood as a compensation strategy to overcome the limitation in his Swedish vocabulary, but also as a social strategy, interacting with the teacher. However, the question is whether the student thought that the teacher would understand him when he used Arabic words or whether his use of these words was spontaneous, performed without planning, and thus not a language learning strategy in accordance with the definition used in this article.

4.3.2 Indirect strategies

When it comes to indirect language learning strategies, we begin with what Oxford (1990, p. 154) calls *Metacognitive strategies*. We only find these in one form during the focus lesson, when on three occasions the teacher asks the student to listen when she pronounces a word before producing it himself.

E: Valnötter valenter		S: Walnuts walents	
L: Lyssna		T: Listen	
E: Val		S: Wal	
L: Lyssna		T: Listen	
E: Val		S: Wal	
L: Valnötter		T: Walnuts	
E: Valnötter valnötter		S: Walnuts walnuts	

Turning to what Oxford (1990, p. 163) calls *Affective strategies*, there were many examples during the lesson of the teacher using what Oxford calls *lowering your anxiety*, such as when she gave the student positive feed-back, expressing this verbally as well as through body language; by smiling and laughing, praising him; "Ja! Bra. Där hade du det" (Yes! Good. That's it). Using laughter is according to Oxford (1990, p. 164–165) one way of lowering anxiety in language learners. Also, the student uses laughter at the end of the lesson in a way that may be perceived as lowering anxiety by laughing at perceived weakness in his performance. The teacher's and Karim's hand clapping may also be understood as an affective strategy, encouraging Ammar, as well as the arguments made by both the teacher and Karim that Ammar could manage without his son's help. The teacher also used English when encouraging Ammar: "Härligt! *Give me five*!" (Wonderful! *Give me five*!) followed by holding her palm up towards him for him to clap his palm against.

   Oxford (1990, p. 165) stresses the importance of encouraging students' self-confidence by making positive statements, especially before they are to perform a potentially difficult language activity, as Monica does through the whole lesson. Ammar does not, however, always trust the teacher's statements, sounding doubtful and objecting: "Bra lärare inte bra" (Good teacher not good).

   The student's frequent laughter through the lesson is ambiguous, as it may be understood both as a means to lower his anxiety, and as a reaction to a difficult situation, with laughing as a way of dealing with frustration or embarrassment.

   Lastly, we turn to the indirect strategies that Oxford (1990, p. 169) calls *Social strategies*, such as cooperating with others, either peers or with proficient users of the new language. Social strategies are not always easy to define, and in the analysis above, the social dimension in all strategy use is obvious. Ammar's initiative to invite his son to come to the classroom to help him may be interpreted

as a social strategy. While the teacher did not respond positively to this, she was in her turn supported by Karim, and perhaps more passively by Fadhil when he agreed to go back to his class. Her invitation to Karim to listen to Ammar's reading may also be understood as a social strategy. Oxford (2017, p. 66) points out that the strategy of cooperating with others parallels with Vygotsky's ideas of face-to-face dialogues. The strategy called *save one's face* (cf. Goffman, 1955) is also social, and Ammar's invitation to his adult son may be interpreted as a strategy to avoid failure, to *save his face*, as may also his increased laughing at the end of the lesson in front of the teacher and his fellow student, the latter also being younger than himself, which in itself may be perceived as face-threatening. This was also a situation where the teacher, who otherwise took the role of someone who decides what should be done and how, finally gave way to Ammar's agency, persisting in performing the social strategy that the teacher tried to prevent.

4.4 Student/teacher co-construction of strategies

Turning to the student/teacher co-construction of strategies, brings an initial fundamental question to the fore, namely whether the teacher and the student have the same or differing goals with the focus lesson. Do they share as their overarching goal for the lesson that the student develops his Swedish proficiency through the presentation that is the task in focus? Could it be the case that a goal for the student is to save his face (cf. Goffman, 1955), or perhaps that this turns out to be his overarching goal? Nor do we know whether the teacher and the student share an understanding of how this language development is supposed to happen, such as through learning vocabulary, interaction, social activity, or repeated exercise.

As explained above, the teacher was aware of and participated in developing the overarching purpose of the action research study, i.e. the exploration and development of educational practices. However, she was not aware of the focus on LLS in this specific case study, since this was a decision that had not yet been made when the focus lesson took place. It is difficult to know if her interaction with the student during the focus lesson would have been somehow different if she would have been informed beforehand on this.

In the analysis of learning strategies above it becomes clear that, in their co-construction of strategies, the student and teacher sometimes seemed to work together, so that they sometimes together used a strategy that was initiated by either of them. However, sometimes they appeared to have opposite goals, so that a strategy initiated by the teacher turned out to be complicated for the student to use, or a strategy initiated by the student was counteracted by the teacher. These findings were largely in accordance with our expectations.

We start with strategies that seemed to be problematic because they appeared to introduce complications to the student's second language learning. Regarding direct strategies, there were three memory strategies initiated by the teacher, which seemed to be difficult for the student to use: linking the learning of new vowels to the pronunciation of words already mastered; use of keywords to remember whole sentences aloud; using a sketch to remember a word. The teacher alternated between guiding the student to practice reading and speaking. Sometimes the teacher wanted the student to read the sentences from the paper and sometimes she wanted him to talk freely with the use of the keywords or without any aid at all.

Turning to cognitive strategies, the student's initiative to transliterate Swedish words with Arabic letters was a strategy that the teacher did not take part in, since she did not realize what the student was doing. This strategy could possibly have been more fruitful for the student's language learning if the teacher had guided him in learning the connection between Arabic graphemes and Swedish phonemes. However, there is an inherent risk in this strategy, as it may cause mistakes in his pronunciation of the words.

A second cognitive strategy that we find to a certain extent problematic was the teacher's initiative to create a situation where the student could practice naturalistically by calling on a fellow student. In this case, there were circumstances outside of this particular lesson that made it impossible to create an authentic communicative situation. In the co-construction of the cognitive strategy of repeating there were a large number of initiatives taken by both the student and the teacher. This strategy seemed to be partly helpful for the student's retrieval of pronunciation, vocabulary and phrases, while the student seemed to forget words and phrases throughout the lesson. One possible reason for this may be that his literacy skills were not automatized and that, therefore, the considerable demand on his cognitive capacity for the decoding process left too little for other cognitive processes.

Focusing on indirect strategies that caused complications, affective strategies were initiated both by the teacher and the student during the lesson, and sometimes co-constructed without visible friction. However, Ammar seemed to doubt the teachers' praise, and to laugh as an expression of frustration at the difficult task, and as a way of *saving his face* (cf. Goffman, 1955). The indirect social strategies are where we find the co-construction most obviously and openly characterized by different and contrary goals and means between the teacher and student, such as when the teacher objects when Ammar wants to turn to his son for assistance.

Turning to strategies that did not seem to be characterized by complications in the student and teacher co-construction, we once again first turn to direct strategies where both the student and teacher initiated varied memory strategies. Some of these strategies involved what could be referred to as translanguaging (Paulsrud et al., 2017): the student drew on his linguistic repertoire focusing on phonetic similarity between a word in Arabic and Swedish, and the teacher reminded the student about similarities in Swedish and Arabic vocabulary and also asked the student about the Arabic equivalence of a word in Swedish. They both also used some English. Both the teacher and the student also initiated strategies where they used non-verbal sounds, gestures, physical responses or sensations in order to retrieve information. When we look at cognitive strategies, the teacher on a few occasions used the strategy of analysing and reasoning by explaining that mispronunciation of a word led to a different meaning. In these cases, we cannot tell whether Ammar understood these explanations or not.

Concerning compensation strategies, the student used mime and gestures on a few occasions, and several times turned to Arabic or English in order to compensate for a lack of vocabulary in Swedish. These strategies, probably except for the use of Arabic, seemed to be successful in the sense that the teacher appeared to understand what he wanted to communicate to her. Finally, when it comes to metacognitive strategies, when the teacher invited Ammar to listen to her pronunciation of a word before he pronounced it, he often immediately

pronounced the word more correctly than before, although this did not appear to be consistent over the lesson.

It is, of course, important to remember that the power structures in the teacher/student relationship gave the teacher stronger agency regarding choice of strategies than the student. Consequently, the student's mandate was weaker regarding decisions on the construction of learning strategies. However, even if the student did not openly protest against LLS initiated by the teacher, we found that, in relation to at least one strategy, the social strategy of cooperating with peers, he insisted and persisted to initiate and use the strategy he preferred, something the teacher reluctantly agreed to. In relation to the (lack of) co-construction in this case, it is interesting to look at the distribution of power between the teacher and student. In a traditional hierarchic teacher-student relation, the teacher is seen as being responsible for the student's learning. However, in a situation where the student takes over some of the responsibility for their learning, they also take over part of the responsibilities that belong to the teacher in a more traditional teaching and learning situation (Oxford 1990, p. 10f). As indicated in earlier studies (Wedin & Norlund Shaswar, 2019), students in adult education, as in this case, may have stronger power in relation to the teacher, compared to students in primary and secondary school.

5 Discussion

The student and teacher who were co-constructing LLS in this case have linguistic repertoires that are to a great extent different. This is the situation in many linguistically asymmetrical (Bonacina-Pugh, 2013) classrooms. Nonetheless, they both initiated and engaged in several types of LLS during the focus lesson and their use of strategies was characterized by translanguaging, i.e. making use of varied linguistic resources. Their co-construction of strategies was partly corresponding, so that strategies initiated by the teacher seemed to work well for the student's learning, and the teacher sometimes participated in student-initiated strategies. However, there were also examples of strategies initiated by the teacher that seemed too difficult for the student and that did not seem to work well for his language learning.

It is possible that the student and teacher's strategy choices would have been different if the student would have had another L1 than Arabic. The focus on production of vowels might for example have been less prominent if he had spoken a language with a vowel system more similar to the Swedish system. However, as there are many other factors that affect strategy choice it is not possible to decide how the student's L1 affected strategy choices.

As is clear from our analysis of the focus lesson, in the co-construction different strategies are interrelated and intertwined. For us, social strategies are applied in all categories, but when social strategies are particularly in focus the divergence between the teacher's and student's aims as well as preferences regarding LLS become more visible. We find both the student and the teacher particularly dedicated, persistent and engaged in this case, both striving hard to accomplish what they perceive as their task, which may for the teacher be to create an optimal language learning situation, and for the student perhaps not to appear stupid and a failure. This may also have been accentuated by the presence of the observing researcher in the focus lesson.

It is important for teachers to treat L2 learners with short or no former schooling as active agents focusing on the investment (cf. Norton, 2013, 2015) that they are making and the experiences and competences that they may mobilise. This view is in accordance with Oxford (2017, p. 65), who states that the agency of the learner is part of the "soul of learning strategies." The LLS initiated and used by the student researched in this article are in our interpretation rooted in desires and commitments that are important to make use of in the adult L2 classroom. By paying attention to co-construction of LLS and their effect on language learning, teachers can contribute a teaching that is effective for the language learning of adult L2 learners.

It is crucial to further research LLS on students with short former education in order to find language learning strategies that work for learners who are in the process of learning functional literacy skills. In this case, the student's problems with Swedish vowels may have several causes: his problems with decoding written Swedish, his strategy of transliterating Arabic letters and difficulties with the richness of the Swedish vowel system lead him to non-standard pronunciation of the Swedish vowels and prosody. This highlights the importance of adapting teaching to the language and literacy competences as well as practices of the individual learner. Here, when LLS initiated by the teacher resulted in a heavy load on the researched student's working memory, this complicated the learning situation for him. It may be the case that, for students with short former education, it would have been more fruitful to replace strategies that are more text-based, such as the use of keywords, with strategies that are more orally based, such as listening and repeating after the teacher.

Endnote

[1] This Arabic word is pronounced with a short /u/ after the /k/. In the computer written memory aid text that the teacher had produced for Ammar before the lesson (See above) the teacher had spelled the word "Kibbe". In the hand written list of words that she wrote on the same paper during the lesson, she wrote "kubbe". This was after a discussion of the pronunciation of the word with the student, where the researcher present took part.

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