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Linguistic Diversity and Comparability in Educational Assessment

Helena Reierstam and Meeri Hellstén

Abstract

This chapter reports on recent mixed method research investigating the comparability between assessment in relation to linguistic and cultural diversity. It takes as its premise that assessment is an integral part of instruction that becomes a main component for attaining of equal opportunities. Therefore, assessment plays a key role in terms of the wider consequences at both individual and societal levels. One of the central functions of assessment is its measure of quality assurance and comparability for grading to such an extent that it is readily employed to indicate evidence of student achievement of standards and quality. This may sometimes present issues in terms of learner diversity. We focus on the challenges facing teaching in linguistically diverse learning settings in which a foreign language may be used as an alternative to instruction. Here we draw on a recent study from two separate multilingual learning contexts in Sweden. We shed light on the generic questions arising from such disjuncture in these linguistically diverse educational sites as evidence on a call for much needed scholarly attention on the quality aspect in assessment.

Keywords: comparability in assessment, target language, intended learning outcomes (ILOs), CLIL, language learners, diversity, quality education

1. Introduction

This chapter takes up on the issue of comparability of academic assessment in contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity. In schooling, assessment is an integral part of instruction and in a meritocratic society assessment of educational achievement becomes key to the attainment of equal opportunities [1] and its consequences for individuals as well as for society at large cannot be overlooked. The central function of assessment is a measure of quality assurance and comparability in educational grading and is used as evidence of student attainment in relation to standards [2]. A fair claim might be that assessment is probably one of the most critical aspects of the teaching and learning process, since the assessments made by teachers will influence both future prospects and further opportunities in students' lives and careers, but importantly may also impact on student motivation and well-being. Respect for learning is therefore accomplished when teachers have insight into their authority as assessors to provide fair and equitable assessment practices for all [3, 4]. Bal and Trainor [5] note that assessment which disregards issues of diversity and equity contributes to inequalities in outcomes. However, assessment

that is fair to all can also serve as a bridge to educational equity [6]. All of this amounts to assessment having implications at both individual and societal levels.

Language as a meaning making device is needed in order for students to validate their knowledge and make the cognitive thought processes inter-subjectively accessible to an assessing teacher. Language plays a vital role in accessing and communicating subject content and it is thus of paramount importance that all students are granted opportunities to use and learn how to use the language needed for learning and for the assessment purposes [7–11]. In a globalized society perhaps more students than ever are instructed in a second language rather than in their first language [12] due to reasons of migration but also incentives to meet the demands of an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse global market. In order to meet the growing demands of diversity in our classrooms, The European Commission (2003) has advocated the use of novel teaching approaches, involving the use of foreign language as the medium of instruction within the subject curriculum with the added effect of promoting the spread of learning more languages. Knowledge of multiple languages is key to enhancing life and work of individuals, according to a recent report [13]. Subsequently, most universities have developed international curriculum options [14], leading to that many teachers find themselves engaged with students made up of different nationalities who sometimes fall short of native-speaker competences. It also means that English is often used as a lingua franca, with teachers as well as students, using a second or foreign language as the medium of instruction.

In relation to what has been outlined above, the challenges involved in teachers' assessment of students' subject matter knowledge in linguistically diverse classrooms where a foreign or second language is used as the medium of instruction need to be addressed. This chapter draws on a recent study [15] conducted in two different multilingual contexts in Sweden, which pinpoints generic questions in relation to assessment in linguistically diverse education in need for more scholarly attention. One justification for this derives from observed inconsistencies in ontology, policy and pedagogy, which will be discussed in the following. The inconsistencies relate to an interesting juxtaposition of two rather disparate concepts, *comparability* and *diversity*. Whereas comparability assumes a certain level of standardization in order to compare two similar or equivalent entities, diversity is defined as being composed of differing elements and variety. Hence, the pressing question arises if it is even feasible to find comparability in learning outcomes in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. How can learning standards, designed with the purpose to describe students' progress and make achievements comparable be applied in heterogeneous student groups? This is especially the case where cultural and linguistic diversity of students may be overlooked in generic language policies and practices for schooling. The quality of assessment is closely related to fairness in the judgment of learning outcomes as well as in learning opportunities, which means that linguistically heterogeneous student groups require new ways of integrating language skills assistance within the curriculum. At the end of this chapter some suggestions are discussed in relation to curriculum design, teacher assessment literacy, responsibility for academic literacy and the educational organization around these.

2. Background

As greater numbers of second language students appear at various levels in education, including college and university programs, there is a pressing need to create linguistically accessible instruction and learning. The term 'second language

students' (or L2 students) here refers to any student whose primary language is not the majority language of the country in question, or to students whose first language (L1) is not the language of instruction. This is the case in learning spaces where a foreign language is used as the medium of instruction to promote the learning of other languages [16, 17] or where a language, often English, is targeted and used as an incentive for increased internalization (e.g. [18]). Content and language integrated learning, CLIL or English medium instruction, EMI [19–21] are sometimes used to label such teaching approaches. Whereas the teaching of curriculum content is said to be the primary focus in EMI and language learning is seen as incidental, CLIL is often described to have more purposely dual focus, language and content [22]. However, this is not necessarily always the case. Studies show that CLIL approaches fail to identify specific language learning outcomes in content courses or adopt appropriate teaching and assessment designs which accommodate the student's language learner backgrounds [18, 23]. Therefore, in order to achieve positive outcomes in both language and subject content in CLIL contexts it is desirable that "CLIL teachers should be experts in the content area and also have deep understanding of the cognitive, socio-cultural and psychological elements of foreign language learning" ([24], p. 88).

Courses are ordinarily designed around subject content being broken down into learning objectives or goals, with explicit criteria and levels of performance which are used to assess the quality of students' learning. The criteria specifically targets subject specific learning outcomes. However, generic graduate attributes and academic skills are explicitly or implicitly embedded as expected outcomes within the subjects. The generic skills can be labeled as *transversal skills, academic literacy, language across the curriculum* or *content compatible language*, in contrast to *content-obligatory/subject specific language* (Fortune & Tedick, n.d.; [25]). Whereas the latter, content-obligatory language, represents more or less distinct subject specific concepts or disciplinary genre that are characteristic for a subject discipline (e.g metamorphosis, post-war period) the others include generic elements of academic language, often characterized by a high level of linguistic density and abstraction [9, 26]. Schleppegrell [9] notes that the academic language features are especially challenging for students and need to be addressed in order to help students construct and organize knowledge in the subject disciplines. It is a matter of empowering students through an appropriate pedagogy.

Based on the linguistic diversity in general education several voices have been raised claiming that all teachers need to be 'language teachers' in some sense (e.g. [6, 9, 10, 27, 28]). "Over the years we have found that teaching content in a language in which the students have limited proficiency differs significantly from teaching that same content in a students' first language. Teachers need a repertoire of strategies to ensure that students develop both content and language skills" ([27], p. 36). If teaching and modeling language is not part of the curriculum, an alternative approach may be to make modifications in the intended learning outcomes, what Barker [29] refers to as "an ill-advised lowering of standards or a necessary and pragmatic response".

Universal design for learning, UDL, evolved as a set of principles to make general education accessible for students with disabilities. The goal is to value diversity while promoting equality and inclusiveness by providing flexibility to adjust and cater for students' different strengths and needs [30, 31]. The name may be misleading since the term *universal* refers to the use of a variety of teaching methods, rather than one way, in order to remove barriers to learning and give all students equal opportunities to succeed. Edyburn [32] notes that when designing instruction for the academic success of diverse students, it is important to identify *when, where, why* and *how* learners will get stuck. UDL has been described as especially helpful for second

language learners where evidently language deficiency may be an important reason they are denied equal access to learning. Edyburn [32] notes that when supports are embedded already in the design of the curriculum, it reduces the likelihood of student failure and frustration as well as alleviating the stress for teachers to reactively create accommodations and modifications. When the UDL principles – to provide multiple means of representation, multiple means of action and expression and multiple means of engagement – are applied among language learners, the teachers will help the students to have an opportunity to build background knowledge, interact with information visually as well as auditorily. They will also provide rich scaffolding and support to help highlight the patterns of language and allow the students to have numerous opportunities to express their knowledge in meaningful ways (Novak, n.d.). The option to build in numerous, or different ways of communicating knowledge already at the initial planning of a course aligns with assessment validity theory which is further outlined below. UDL pedagogy has been identified as a way to provide fairer tests by using multiple ways of action and test items which take the students' diverse backgrounds into account, not relying on cultural information outside of what has been taught or presented in the test content [33, 34]. Fovet [34] notes that accommodations and inclusive pedagogy are often considered unnecessary for graduate students since they supposedly have already adopted academic strategies. However, as argued by Fovet [34], traditional forms of accommodations are ineffective with regards to the great diversity that can be found among students today. Haigh [35] further notes that teaching learners with different cultures, worldviews and aptitudes is an abiding problem in Higher Education which calls for a design for pluralism, especially in assessment, to reach educational inclusivity.

UDL explicitly forwards a framework for the design of lesson plans and assessments based on three main principles: to provide multiple means of representation, multiple means of action and expression, and multiple means of engagement. This can also be identified in other models used for the instruction of language learners. Two decades ago, Gibbons [36] for instance, spoke of scaffolding learning by using a genre-based curriculum cycle, starting by building knowledge together of the field, modeling text types, working through joint construction of subject specific genre before reaching students' independent writing. While the underlying UDL methodology is already employed by many, whether identified specifically as universal design or not, this is challenging for teachers for many reasons, one being time constraints, or as mentioned here, unfamiliarity with language teaching strategies. It is not only a challenge, but a threat to fairness and comparability in education if this becomes a matter of individual choice and experience, rather than a shared responsibility. As mentioned here in the introduction inconsistencies in the alignment of policy and pedagogy involving difficulties in matching intended learning outcomes and standards with student cohorts which lack expected academic skills at the outset need to be regarded as a shared concern in quality education. In the next section the theoretical framework and underpinnings adopted in this chapter are presented.

3. Theoretical framework

A fairness argument in assessment suggests there needs to be comparability of interpretations and decision outcomes across groups. While the theoretical framework used for this chapter leans on a validity and fairness perspective in educational assessment, the empirical data are based on teachers' assessment beliefs and practices in multilingual education. Never the less, teachers' conceptions are situated in context which is determined by policy documents, teachers' disciplinary

background and their experience of teaching language learners. Multilingual is here used as a generic term, including the use of two or more languages [37]. Policy is defined as a set of guidelines or organizational principles and operational practices that are informed by values [38]. The principles are expressed as educational standards and core objectives in various subject curricula at university level and the national curriculum in compulsory education. Therefore, three interdependent levels or perspectives need to be considered when looking at assessment, i.e. policy, teacher and pedagogy, where the latter represents how teaching is put into practice in the planning and sequencing of curricular content, in activities and assessment tasks. These three components, policy, teacher and pedagogy, are in turn influenced by the prevailing ontological and epistemological paradigm in society, which arguably are not always consistent. For the case of this chapter and study the ontological and epistemological perspectives of language are of particular interest. Ortega [39] defines two possible ontological perspectives on language: essentialist or non-essentialist. Whereas the essentialist perspective implies a monolingual worldview, based on traditional ontologies rooted in structuralism and named languages, using fixed developmental language dimensions to describe developmental stages, the non-essentialist perspective relates to what has been defined by Li Wei in 2019 as the post-multilingual era [40]. The multilingual turn means a shift away from named languages and represents an empowering ideology as can be found in the discourse surrounding translanguaging practices [41–44]. Whereas the essentialist view holds that there are named languages and traditional language categories cannot be ignored, the non-essentialist stance implies that language is rather seen as a process than a product and there is a reluctance to speak of deficient language.

The figure below attempts to illustrate how the interdependent components must be considered in combination and interpreted in relation to a surrounding ontological and epistemological paradigm which is discussed below. The figure was first inspired by a model used by Nikula et al. [12] and was developed by Reierstam [15]. The current figure was further developed for the case of this chapter by Reierstam and Hellstén, by including the reference to the ontological and epistemological stance (**Figure 1**).

Assessment often comes at 'the end' of a module or of a course. In constructive alignment theory (cf [45]), a backwards design is advocated which means that the intended learning outcomes are taken as point of departure, "starting with the end", when planning instruction [46]. It starts with defining what the students must demonstrate they know and how well they must be able to do it according to the standards, and this decides what teaching, assessment and feedback methods to use during the course. If the language elements of a course are not specified in advance they cannot be taught nor assessed, for the assessment to be considered valid and fair. Messick [47] identified a threat to making valid interpretations of assessment outcomes which he labeled *construct-irrelevant variance*. It means that adequate and appropriate inferences cannot be made about a student's subject matter knowledge if an assessment contains for example, language elements that the student has not been given an opportunity to learn before being assessed. Therefore, the equitable and fair assessment requires that students be assessed in ways that are consistent with how they were taught. Kane [3] makes a distinction between procedural fairness and substantive fairness where the first stipulates that all students taking a test should be treated in essentially the same way, that is, by doing the same or equivalent assessments under the same conditions. This also requires that accomplishment ought to be evaluated by using the same rules and procedures. Substantive fairness on the other hand, implies that score interpretations and use of assessment are appropriate across groups, which albeit may require different types of assessments and accommodations to better suit different needs of individual students.
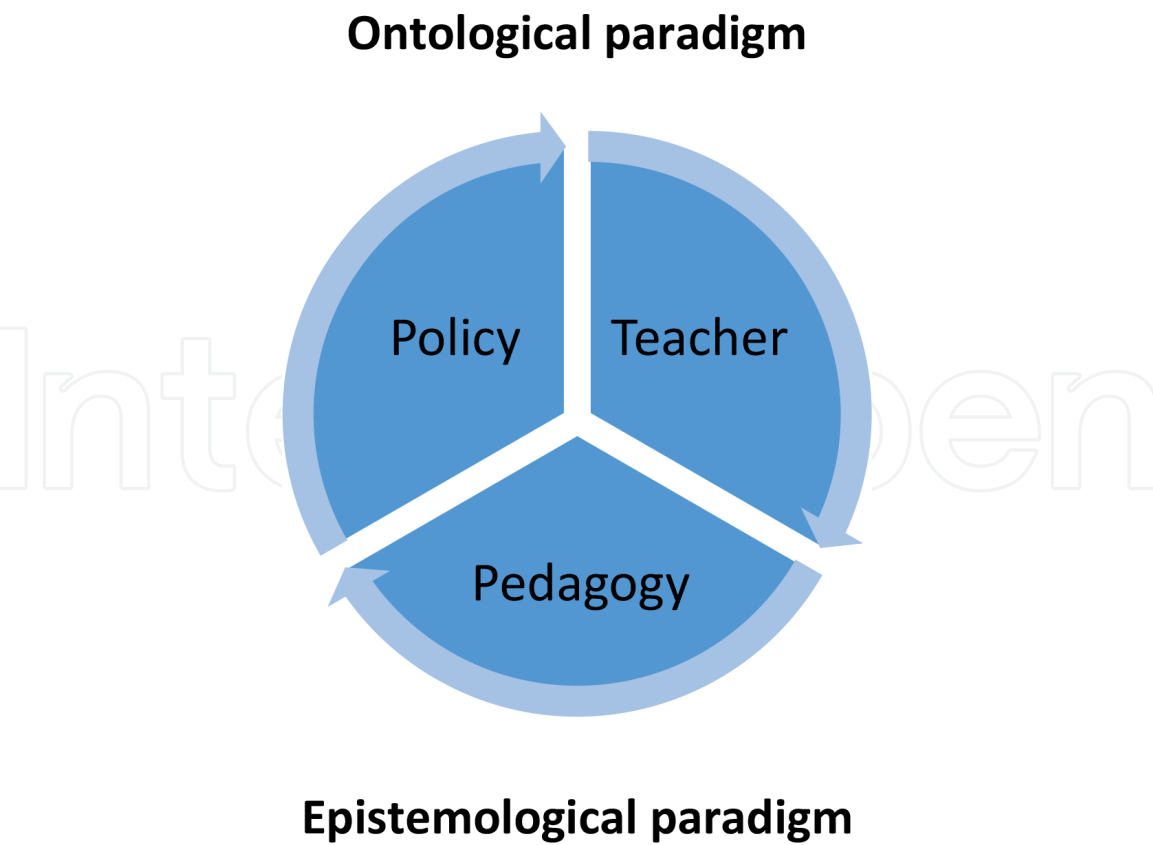
Ontological paradigm

Epistemological paradigm

Figure 1.
Three interdependent components in curriculum design and teaching, situated in a current ontological and epistemological paradigm [15].

Effective teaching, learning and assessment practices are dependent on both the knowledge and the value systems adopted by educators ([4], p. 54). In linguistically diverse settings intercultural inclusive schools are more sensitive towards providing differentiated instruction and support to students in order to accommodate for the different needs and attributes of individual learners [4]. Teacher beliefs, particularly in relation to assessment is sometimes defined as "teachers' assessment literacy". To reflect on this, Abell and Siegel [48] developed a model to describe science teachers' assessment literacy in secondary education among language learners, a model which was used and modified by Reierstam in a recent study in Sweden [15]. The model which is presented below (**Figure 2**) includes four so called, knowledge elements: knowledge of the assessment purposes (Why?) knowledge of what to assess (What?), knowledge of assessment strategies (How?) and knowledge of assessment interpretation and action-taking (And?).

The assessment literacy framework above relies on teacher beliefs and an integrated view on teaching, learning and assessment. At the center lies the teacher's views of learning and assessment of the learner as these are believed to interact with the teachers' assessment practices. Biggs and Tang [49] note that "desirable student learning depends both on student-based factors – ability, appropriate prior knowledge, clearly accessible new knowledge – and on the teaching context, which includes teacher responsibility, informed decision making and good management." Teachers' previous experiences, knowledge and beliefs are shown to shape their views of how students learn and thus influence the teachers' priorities in practice. Entwistle et al. [50] describe beliefs as reflecting strongly felt ideas and implicit or tacit knowledge derived from experience and driven by emotions rather than from any predefined conceptual framework. Nespor [51] similarly states that beliefs can be argued to reflect personal truth and evaluative components that are guided by feelings rather than logic. Teacher beliefs are said to be associated with years of
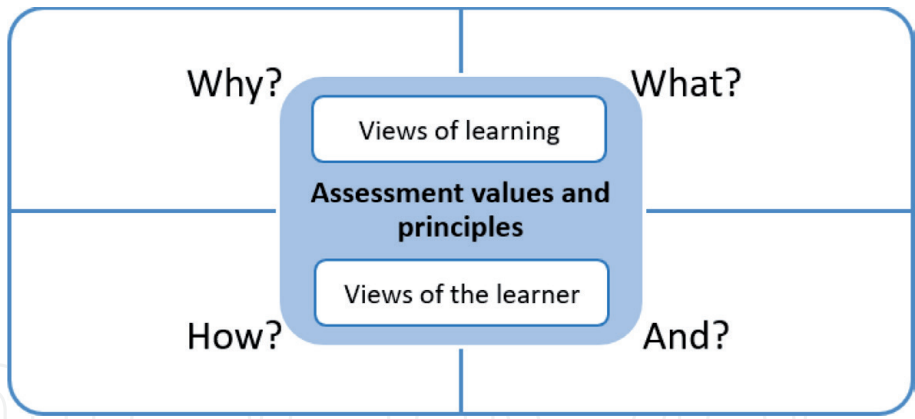
Figure 2.
The assessment literacy model. Used in [15], adapted after Abell and Siegel [48].

experience and professional education [52, 53]. However, Pajares [54] point out that there may be inconsistencies in teacher beliefs, which often depend on the role of contextual factors and the interconnectedness between the individual and the surrounding world. The possible inconsistencies in teacher beliefs and policy as described above, together with the argument that equitable and fair assessment hinges on equal access to knowledge, gives reason to believe that there is a lot to gain from finding empirically based descriptions of good assessment practices. The assessment literacy model as outlined above provides a structured way of describing some of the most critical key elements for more transparent assessment practices. There is no contradiction, as argued in this chapter, in identifying what the assessment requirements of the students are in order for providing essential and relevant learning opportunities and feedback along the way. At the same time it advocates for universal design for learning, positing flexibility in teaching and taking the individual students' backgrounds into account, as will be illustrated in a case in point from the Swedish context below. In the following, the assessment literacy model in **Figure 2** is used as a frame while presenting data from a study in Swedish multilingual contexts.

4. Case in point from the Swedish context

This part of the chapter presents data from a study in two parts investigating teachers' assessment beliefs and assessment practices in two multilingual contexts in Sweden. The first was conducted in content and language integrated, CLIL, schools where English is used as a medium of instruction in the content courses at upper secondary level, students aged 16–19. The second study covered teachers in contexts with newly arrived migrant students aged 13 to 19 [15]. Both studies included teachers in the social and the natural sciences. Between 2015 and 2017 there was an increase of older age migrant students with only a few years before they graduate, although Sweden has a fairly long history of welcoming immigrants. However, discouraging reports showing that among those who arrived in grades 6 to 9 only 28% qualified for upper secondary education. Questions of inclusion and how to help them succeed academically has become an urgent concern. At the time of the study every fourth student in Swedish compulsory schools had a foreign background and in the upper secondary the figure was 30% according to statistics [55].

The extent and scope of CLIL has been more difficult to define, since there is considerable variation in how the English medium instruction is implemented, but according to a recent survey around 4% of the upper secondary schools have

some kind of CLIL provision [56]. Although the CLIL programs attract motivated students with high language proficiency levels, teachers note that it is hard to know if lower achievements are due to the fact that the productive language skills are not there, or if it depends on limited content knowledge [15, 23]. In both contexts there are thus concerns with regard to fairness and accuracy in assessment since teachers acknowledge that the students risk being at a disadvantage, when using a non-native language as the medium of instruction. The main focus in the two studies were therefore how teachers perceive of language in relation to subject content, how it is dealt with before, after and in the actual assessment situation. The teachers' views of the students and their needs, the reported assessment principles and stated local policy were found to vary depending on school and the individual character-istics of the teachers, such as education and subject discipline. Whereas document analyses of assessment samples and teacher interviews were used in both studies (N = 12 in Study I, N = 13 in Study II), a survey (N = 196) was conducted in Study II. For the analyses of the survey data both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to describe and compare teachers' beliefs. Qualitative content analyses were used for the interviews and assessment samples. For more see Reierstam [15].

4.1 Assessment values and principles

Without going into detail about the education system in Sweden, both of the above studies confirmed that there exists an accountability culture in Swedish schools [57]. Even though many teachers, especially among the migrant students, express a concern for the learners, the concern about reliability and legal justice in assessment was more pronounced. National guidelines from the National Agency for Education as well as recent research and literature advocate the use of the students' strongest language in the initial phase. *Translanguaging* practices, allowing for students to use all of their language resources are recommended. Although it is stipulated by law that newly arrived students should be provided study counselors who speak their language, many schools fail to do so. When asked who they collabo-rate with, teachers in the present study confirmed that there was little support from study counselors. Very few of the teachers reported to implement translanguaging pedagogy, most teachers agreed that the students need to learn Swedish. A couple of the interviewed teachers were a bit uncertain if the students are allowed to use any language to show proof of content knowledge, if so, they must they argued, but also agreed that this would be difficult for practical reasons. In the CLIL context some teachers were very determined to only use English, whereas others said that they allowed students to use either English or Swedish but they tried to stick with English. All of this relates to what was mentioned in the introduction about inconsistencies in language policy and vacillation between alternative ontological paradigms. On the one hand Swedish is considered the norm, or English for the CLIL incentive, on the other the communicative aspects with a focus on process rather than product, could be distinguished in some cases, as advocated in advice for the newly arrived migrants. Here it becomes a matter of the teachers' own interpretation about how language, and what type of language, is representative of the intended learning outcomes and how it is to be assessed.

When using oral follow-up for letting students elaborate on their individual answers as a didactic method of allowing for accommodation for their deficient language, the teachers expressed concern about their contributing to invalidating the student's performance: *"How do I know what the student's actual level is?"* This aligns well with the claims that in language testing, oral assessment is a field of its own, raising questions in terms of the validity and reliability of the dialogic co-construction between the student and the teacher [58, 59]. In the migrant student

context, teachers stated that they preferred for students to do the assessment in Swedish, as opposed to their native language, or with a translator since this would be out of their reach and control. In the CLIL context, the teachers were more flexible in letting students mix Swedish and English, since the teachers understand both languages and owing to the fact that there is no explicit language policy at upper secondary level which limits the use of English. (The English language has a unique position in Swedish society and it is stipulated in the Swedish School Ordinance that up to 50% of the instruction in compulsory schooling can be provided in English [60]. A pedagogy-driven, or learner-centered assessment approach was more common among those teachers teaching younger newly arrived students. Teachers with a double teaching profile, that is, a language (typically Swedish, Swedish as a second language or English as a foreign language) and a content subject, also showed statistically significant higher tendency towards this trend, as did the data showing a providing of language learning opportunities in the classrooms for such students. Teachers in both contexts expressed that they were not specifically interested in collaborating with language teacher colleagues or mother tongue instructors, if they were to collaborate with a colleague they preferred someone from the same subject discipline. Collaboration with colleagues in the same discipline has been noted to build assessment literacy in teachers [61]. A general comment noted from the teachers in the study, was that time constraints prevented them from having exchange with colleagues.

4.2 Why assess

The main purpose of assessment was seen in collecting evidence of attainment of knowledge and to have a basis on which to ascertain grading. Teachers also mentioned the formative assessment aspect and especially among the newly arrived migrant students, to communicate to students what is missing and how they are progressing. Teacher also showed an awareness of their responsibility to equip students for the next level of learning, required for gaining competence for writing in higher education levels. Several teachers noted that their students are quite satisfied with presenting their knowledge in the oral format, after getting used to not having to write, but the teachers stressed that they must learn how to write to qualify into upper secondary school levels. However, a majority of the teachers interviewed said that they prefer the written assessment formats (see below) since this shows more reliable results. There is a consensus among the teachers that students may prefer written examinations due to being used to this form of assessment in previous schooling. As noted above, the purpose of accountability seemed the strongest motive in assessment and teachers referred to the need to be able to meet the stated knowledge requirements in the subject curricula.

4.3 What to assess

The 'what' of assessment is closely linked to instructional goals. In Swedish education, the standards and knowledge requirements of the national curriculum together with national tests administered in many subjects, are explicitly claimed to safe-guard the equity in education regardless of the location of the schools in different parts of the country. As noted above, the importance of national curricula seems to be undisputed by teachers in Sweden. However, what is interesting from a language perspective is the relative uncertainty and the inconsistencies that prevail between what language is taken to mean in relation to subject content, and which language can or should be used by the students, as mentioned above. First of all, the *subject specific concepts* seemed to be perceived as 'subject content' by the subject

matter teachers and was reported as very important in assessment. However, in study II among migrant students, subject concepts were perceived as difficult for the students. *Subject-specific skills* (e.g. to argue, to reason and be able to draw conclusions) that are stated in the knowledge requirements were considered the most important for assessment. The *general academic language* as well as *subject-specific written or oral genre* were not reported to be as important for assessment, and yet many teachers stated that lack of language represented a problem when interpreting assessment results. Teachers also expressed challenges due to insufficient language in relation to higher-order skills which meant that attainment of the highest grades was considered difficult or even unrealistic. Most teachers in both contexts stated that they do not assess language.

The confusion as to what represents content and language becomes evident in contexts with language learners. Since standards are used which also include expected outcomes in relation to communication skills, the solution is to identify and map the language skills that are embedded in the curriculum. The solution then is to integrate language development within disciplinary teaching and learning [10, 29]. Some may claim that the solution is in finding assessment formats that avoid the use of language, and construct-irrelevant variance, but this seems unrealistic as can be seen below.

4.4 How to assess

While the intended learning outcomes and aim of the subject come first, the intended 'how' of assessment needs to be considered already at the outset. In a backwards design, where all students are to be given access and opportunities to learn the necessary skills and language, the targeted forms of presentation need to be included in the planning of a course. "[I]t is not the elements per se, but rather their organization and sequencing, expression, relative emphasis and degree of alignment that differentiate effective from ineffective subject design" ([46], p. 95). In a universal design there needs to be flexibility to cater for students' various needs, but it has also been stated that what is good for disadvantaged students is good for all. In this study several teachers said that they had noted that all students, regardless of first language, need help with their language development, even native Swedish speakers. Using an alignment and fairness perspective the how of assessment can be said to include both preparation for assessment, the actual assessment design and format, including accommodations and support used for language learners in this case as well as the grading process that follows. As noted previously the teachers in both contexts expressed a preference for written assessment formats, but especially teachers of newly arrived migrants said that they use "anything that works" to get some information about the students' content knowledge.

Teachers in both contexts mentioned oral assessment serving as an accommodation for poor written expression, which brings up concerns as to whether the oral assessment results might indeed equal written results, and whether students might have been given the opportunity to practice their oral expression during the course of study leading into the testing phase. Other accommodations that are typically suggested as reducing the negative impact of insufficient language proficiency include, for instance, allowance for the use of dictionaries, the use of simplified language or extended time (cf [62]). However, Abedi [63] raises concerns over the validity of certain accommodations, since studies show that they may affect the end results of second-language speakers and native speakers alike, thus representing a threat to the validity of test-results. Stobart [64] mentions three areas where equity should be considered in relation to fairness in assessment across groups: questions of access (differences in resources), curriculum (what is taught, why and how);

and assessment (appropriateness of form, content and mode for different groups). Regarding access and assessment, some of the teachers expressed that it is up to the students, or the language teachers, to learn/teach the necessary language, whereas others were doing their utmost to support the students. Especially teachers with a language teaching background, or who had collaborated with a language teacher colleague, reported to try to model language and used a universal design for learning. The variation between teachers raises concerns with regard to fairness and equity in assessment, which will be discussed below.

4.5 And? The consequences of assessment

It is well known, that language proficiency impacts the results of content-area assessments. Research shows that multilinguals, who hold the same ability levels with native speakers show lower probability of correctly solving test items in mathematics [65–67]. Kane's [3] distinction *substantive fairness,* which was described previously, means that different assessment procedures are required for different students in order to achieve comparable results. In a similar vein Gee [68] and Stobart [64] state that equity in assessment hinges on students' equal opportunities for learning. Wherever there are standards and intended learning outcomes, teachers need to consider what is required of the students in terms of language proficiency. It has been argued that the alignment between specific forms of learning, assessment format and how the assessment data/results are used has been disconnected [69]. In the Swedish case in point a variation in how teachers perceive of their role as language educators can be seen, how and if they prepare students with required language skills for succeeding in the assessment. There are also inconsistencies in language policy. Such can be found, both in what appears to be a confusion or unawareness about the different underlying ontological and epistemological foundations. The discrepancy exists between on the one hand, a non-essentialist disaggregated translingual view, apart from the named languages, and a traditional essentialist view which allows for predefined language standards and learning outcomes. No matter which foundations, consequences need to be considered in order to ensure equitable and comparable assessment practices, that is, to define intended learning outcomes (ILOs) in the target language (TL). This needs to be adopted both for the disciplinary language and the language of instruction, and needs to align the assessment format and procedures with the instructions (see **Figure 3** below). This amounts to a adoption of a non-essentialist ontology which allows any language to be used, as is prevalent e.g. in translingual practices. The translingual pedagogy therefore, requires other measures in order to achieve comparability of results, including analyses of its consequences for society and students' opportunities in life. These aspects present a gap in current research which need more input in order for empirically based robust practices to emerge.
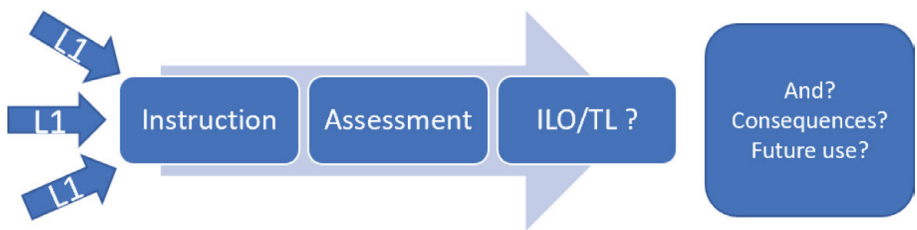

Figure 3.
Alignment of languages in education with intended learning outcomes, target language (TL) and future use. ([15], p. 224).

Based on the study in the Swedish context [15], This chapter has argued that the target language outcomes can and should be identified within curricula and they ought to be taught and modeled in order to provide equity and comparability in assessment. Below the findings from this case in point are applied to another context within similar circumstances and share a few suggestions for improved practice.

5. Applicability to other contexts

The issues discussed in this chapter are indeed applicable at all levels of education. This is justified by the increasing multilingualism and linguistic diversity within the global teaching and learning arena and has become ever more widespread throughout levels of compulsory education to university programs.

This chapter puts forward suggestions for improving curriculum design which encompass a consultative approach involving language teachers, assessment experts and academic developers. Improving teacher assessment literacy, calls for concerted efforts in focus on professional development and training in assessment across the curriculum. Lastly, the impetus of engaging the community of teachers across levels of education from primary to tertiary levels requires a raising of awareness about the benefits of generic skills and abilities for example, in academic literacy. This is an area which may have become shadowed in the current climate of quality assurance. Organization around educational quality calls for efforts across the community of educators by way of concrete strategies, measures and their implementation across the diversity of dimensions. In this process, the issues of equity are of paramount importance for maintaining and regenerating an assessment culture that reaps its strength from socially just and diversity focused global language communities.

6. Concluding remarks

This chapter is based on an assumption that fair assessment cannot be considered in isolation of either curriculum nor students' educational opportunities [64]. This study posits that fairness and comparability in assessment hinges precisely on fairness in the access to subject content learning, including its forms of language use. This means that students must be given opportunities to learn the language skills that are required in the how and what of assessment. As Stobart [64] claims, we may never achieve fair assessment, but we may be able to make it much more fair-minded. In order to do that, this study agrees with suggestions that every teacher across the educational spectrum, needs to also be a language teacher, in a sense. Secondly this chapter suggests that there are inconsistencies in policy and practice, which need to be systematically addressed, as Lachat [70] claims educational standards might not improve student achievement unless they are accompanied by policies and practices that directly address inequities in resourcing. Here resourcing refers to the teachers' assessment literacy and language teaching strategies. Regardless of whether time constraints restrict teachers' opportunities to teach academic writing in every single course, teachers must be equipped with a readiness to model certain elements of language or academic oral or written genre and register. Therefore concurring, with the universal design for learning, UDL and fairness theory, this chapter suggests that planning for support at the point of designing of the curriculum, as opposed to waiting until needing to make reactive modifications to it, will considerably help reduce the stress among students as well

as their teachers across the board. It will also help increase the quality in education, teaching in more responsible and responsive ways, and hopefully it will have a positive effect even on assessment outcomes. Teacher education therefore, must enable equipping teachers with an awareness of the requirements placed upon equitable assessors in and for linguistically diverse classrooms. This implies measures on how to align the language requirements that are integrated in the course objectives, with multiple means of representation in order to both build upon and communicate required curricular knowledge. It is also relevant in this respect, to critically reflect on whether the common forms, or modes of assessment are appropriate for all learners. At an organizational level, different questions need to be addressed; e.g. why we teach in a particular way, who is responsible for fostering generic skills, what knowledge and competences are advocated and assessed in curricula - maybe this calls for a paradigmatic change in the curriculum guidelines? Such guidelines might harness the changes currently shaking the foundations of a globalized educational future.

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