Nora Duggan* and Ingela Holmström

Deaf migrants in Sweden: exploring linguistic and bureaucratic challenges through the lens of Crip Theory and Crip Linguistics

https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2023-0203
Received December 21, 2023; accepted July 10, 2024; published online August 15, 2024

Abstract: Disabled people encounter numerous barriers to accessibility and face discrimination and inequalities in their daily lives. The situation is even more complex for migrants with a disability, who have to learn how to navigate a new bureaucratic system. This study focuses on deaf adult migrants and the linguistic and bureaucratic challenges they face in Swedish society. The data consists of interviews with 43 deaf migrants participating in language learning courses in four folk high schools catering to deaf people in Sweden. Crip Theory and Crip Linguistics are used as lenses to explore the impact of able-bodiedness and linguistic norms on this particular group. The findings show that deaf migrants experience infantilisation, that sign language interpreters are often seen as a one-size-fits-all solution without much consideration for other factors influencing communication, and that normative able-bodiedness underlies many of the bureaucratic issues deaf migrants face.

Keywords: sign language; deaf migrants; Crip Theory; Crip Linguistics; disability; deaf interpreters

Abstrakt: Människor med funktionshinder erfar många hinder när det kommer till tillgänglighet och de utsätts ofta för diskriminering och ojämlik behandling i vardagslivet. Situationen är ännu mer komplex för migranter med funktionsnedsättning som måste navigera i ett nytt byråkratiskt system. Denna studie fokuserar på döva vuxna migranter och de språkliga och byråkratiska utmaningar de möter när de ska navigera genom det svenska samhället. Data kommer från intervjuer med 43 döva migranter som deltar i kurser utformade för döva migranter inom folkhögskolan med huvudsyftet att lära sig svenskt teckenspråk och svenska. Crip Theory och Crip Linguistics används som en lins för att utforska hur uppfattningar om

***Corresponding author: Nora Duggan**, Department of Linguistics, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden, E-mail: nora.duggan@ling.su.se. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5695-2145
Ingela Holmström, Department of Linguistics, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden, E-mail: ingela.holmstrom@ling.su.se. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8762-7118

“funktionsfullkomlighet” och språkliga normer påverkar denna specifika grupp. Resultaten visar att döva migranter upplever infantilisering, att teckenspråkstolkar ofta ses som en universallösning utan större hänsyn till andra faktorer som påverkar kommunikationen, och att de byråkratiska svårigheter som döva migranter möter härstammar från uppfattningar om “funktionsfullkomlighet”.

Nyckelord: Teckenspråk; döva migranter; cripteori; Crip Linguistics; funktionsnedsättning; döva tolkar

1 Introduction

Approximately 16 % (1.3 billion people) of the global population live with some form of disability, including physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental health disabilities (WHO 2024). Even though disabled people constitute a highly diverse group within the global population, they often face significant barriers including limited access to education, employment, healthcare, and social services. Many also face extreme marginalisation, experiencing oppression on personal, cultural, and institutional levels (Gahman 2017). In the context of migration, disabled people face increased vulnerabilities due to both their disability and their migrant status. For example, disabled refugees or asylum seekers can experience limited access to essential healthcare services, assistive devices, and rehabilitation services. Additionally, immigration policies in several countries often do not adequately address the needs of disabled migrants. Another perspective to consider is that many countries, particularly in Europe, use employment, education, and social inclusion as measures to gauge how well a migrant integrates into the new society (Eurostats 2011; Fejes 2010). These metrics can create significant challenges for disabled migrants, who already face numerous barriers to accessibility and participation, as well as discrimination and inequalities in their daily lives in their home countries (WHO 2011).

This study focuses on a particular group of disabled migrants: deaf adult migrants, and the complex issues they face when they migrate to Sweden. As highlighted by Holmström and Sivunen (2022), deaf migrants are heterogeneous in terms of their backgrounds. Many of them may have had limited access to language(s) growing up. They may also have received little to no education (Duggan and Holmström 2022; Holmström and Sivunen 2022). It is also possible to know a sign language and yet not have literacy skills. This is crucial to consider when deaf migrants arrive in a Global North country like Sweden, where literacy skills and educational qualifications are of great value. Additionally, the majority of deaf people in Sweden use Swedish Sign Language (STS) and written Swedish, and most sign language

interpreters in the country can only interpret between STS and spoken Swedish. Because of this, upon arrival, deaf migrants have to learn both STS and Swedish to be able to communicate with authorities and to receive vital information from public services through STS interpreters and/or written Swedish.

This article explores some of the challenges deaf migrants face when they migrate to Sweden, with a particular focus on the impact of able-bodiedness and linguistic norms of Swedish governmental services on this particular group.

2 The Swedish system

Sweden is considered a social democratic welfare state which, according to Esping-Andersen (1989), means that there is an emphasis on the importance of universal access to welfare benefits and services, both of which are considered as social rights. The author argues that:

> [p]erhaps the most salient characteristic of the social democratic regime is its fusion of welfare and work. It is at once genuinely committed to a full-employment guarantee, and entirely dependent on its attainment. On the one side, the right to work has equal status to the right of income protection. On the other side, the enormous costs of maintaining a solidaristic, universalistic, and de-commodifying welfare system means that it must minimize social problems and maximize revenue income. (Esping-Andersen 1989, p. 51)

Sweden's extensive welfare system, which includes universal public services such as healthcare, education, and social insurance, aims to promote social justice, equality, and prosperity for all citizens. To finance the extensive welfare state and public services, the country has a relatively high level of taxation in comparison to international standards, with a significant share of GDP financed through taxes.

To manage the extensive welfare system, Sweden has established a decentralised system of governance with three main levels: the state (central government), regions (county councils), and municipalities. Each of these has its own responsibilities, e.g., the Swedish central government is responsible for national policies, laws, and regulations that apply to the entire country including defense, foreign affairs, justice, and finance; the regions (a total of 21) are responsible for healthcare, public transportation, and regional development and have the authority to levy taxes and allocate resources for healthcare services, including hospitals, primary care, and specialist care; and the municipalities (a total of 290) are responsible for local government functions such as education, social services, urban planning, and public utilities and have the authority to levy taxes and fees to finance local services and infrastructure.

Under the state, several governmental agencies (a total of 342) play a crucial role in implementing laws and policies, delivering public services, and providing expert advice to the government. These agencies operate within specific sectors or policy areas and often have administrative, regulatory, or supervisory functions. The agencies of specific interest for our study are:

- *Swedish Migration Agency* (responsible for handling migration-related matters in Sweden. It plays a central role in managing immigration, asylum, and citizenship processes, as well as providing support to migrants and refugees who are seeking protection or residency in Sweden)
- *Swedish Social Insurance Agency* (administers social insurance programs, including sickness benefits, parental benefits, and disability benefits)
- *Swedish Public Employment Service* (responsible for labour market policies, employment services, and workforce development. It assists job seekers in finding employment)
- *National Board of Health and Welfare* (responsible for overseeing and regulating various aspects of healthcare, social services, and public health in Sweden)
- *Swedish National Agency for Education* (responsible for national education policies, curriculum development, and quality assurance, and provides guidance, support, and resources to schools, municipalities, and other stakeholders in the education sector. The agency oversees preschools, compulsory schools, upper secondary schools, adult education, and special needs education).

The deaf migrants in our study have come in contact with these agencies in particular, but may also have contact with others in different contexts. In addition, the regions and municipalities have responsibility for them in different aspects (e.g. health care, allowance for living expenses, decisions about educational opportunities, etc.).

Because of the decentralised system of governance and the social democratic welfare tradition, Sweden can be considered an extremely bureaucratic country, making it difficult not only for migrants but also for those growing up in Sweden to navigate. For example, when a deaf person participates in a workplace meeting, interpreters should be booked through the interpreting agency in the region the deaf person lives in and the region also covers the cost of interpreters. However, if the deaf person is leading the work (e.g. managerial work), the employer must cover the costs. The employer can then apply for a subsidy from the Public Employment Service to cover part of the costs (cf. Holmström and Bagga-Gupta 2021). This is one of several instances of the complications of booking interpreters. The complexity of the Swedish bureaucratic system makes it challenging for deaf migrants to navigate, particularly considering their different linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds as well as how different the governance system may be in their home country.

In this article, we use the term "the Swedish system" (or "bureaucratic system") to refer to a combination of the welfare system, the labour market regulation, tax policy, and political governance that shapes the country's social structure and political landscape.

3 Swedish integration policy

Sweden places great trust in its laws and regulations and has a strong belief in the pivotal role of education in all aspects of life, including migrant integration. To improve the prospect of newly arrived migrants in the workforce and society, specific actions are implemented in areas such as language, employment and education. There are various regulations that apply depending on the migrant's reason for coming to Sweden, such as education, employment or to seek for asylum, and these regulations can be challenging to navigate. For instance, the right to work and the right to education are subject to Sweden's policy on migration. Migrants from outside the EU/EEA must apply for either a temporary or a permanent residence permit at the Migration Agency, providing proof of employment and sufficient income. The time it takes to process the applications for permits and the time allocation granted can also vary depending on the reason for migration. For instance, refugees in accordance with the UN refugee convention with protection needs are normally granted temporary residence permits for three years, while asylum seekers in need of subsidiary protection, such as being in risk of torture or inhumane treatment, are normally granted a residence permit for 13 months (Migrationsverket 2023).

Considering that this study focuses particularly on deaf migrants, it is important to examine the types of rights disabled migrants have in Sweden. Sweden has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which includes 25 articles ensuring disabled persons' rights to autonomy, community living, accessible information, education, and employment. For example, the State Parties "recognize the importance for persons with disabilities of their individual autonomy and independence, including the freedom to make their own choices" (Preamble, point m). In addition, they "recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others" (Article 19) by, for example, ensuring that "[p]ersons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement." (Article 19, point 1). The convention further mentions, among other things, that persons with disabilities shall have access to information in accessible formats (Article 21), equal education (Article 24), and equal work opportunities (Article 27). While the UNCRPD is ratified, it is not explicit in the Swedish integration policy what kind of rights disabled migrants can

receive. The only area that is explicit is that disabled asylum seekers in Sweden should inform the Migration Agency of their needs for communication assistance.

3.1 Language education programmes for adult migrants

The Swedish government has long considered language education as the most important tool for migrants to be able to 'fully integrate' into Swedish society (Fejes 2019). Because of this, there is a range of state-subsidised courses available as an option for newly arrived migrants/asylum seekers to choose from. The aim is to ensure that the migrant/asylum seeker incorporates themselves into society easily once they receive a residence permit. An instance of a state-subsidised program is "Early interventions during the asylum period" [Tidiga insatser för asylsökande, TIA] provided by the Migration Agency for asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their application for a residence permit. The TIA is a program that aims to facilitate a quicker and more efficient integration into society and working life for asylum seekers once they receive a residence permit following the asylum process. "Swedish from day one" [*Svenska från dag ett*] is a part of the TIA program and this language education course aims to provide asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants the opportunity to learn Swedish as well as gain a basic understanding of Swedish society. However, not all municipalities offer this initiative. This means that the opportunity for asylum seekers to learn Swedish is entirely dependent on the municipality they are residing in, which is in contradiction to the government's migration policy that places language learning as essential for integration into society.

In addition to education programmes for asylum seekers awaiting decision, there are also education provisions for migrants with either a temporary or a permanent residence permit to integrate into Swedish society upon receiving the permit. One example is the "Establishment Programme" offered by the Swedish Public Employment Service for migrants aged 20 to 66. In this programme, migrants participate in various activities designed to assist them in securing employment. For instance, they can gain work experience or receive guidance in starting their own business. The programme also includes "Swedish for immigrants" [*Svenska för invandrare, SFI*]. SFI is a longer and broader language education programme compared to the "Swedish from day one" course. Other activities in the Establishment Programme include social orientation, vocational training courses, and courses aimed at developing the migrants' existing skills. Migrants that have a disability or health issues can receive additional support in the programme. The establishment programme is considered a full-time activity and can last for up to 24 months.

Migrants can apply for social benefits from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency to sustain living costs for the duration of the programme.

Language education programmes in general are designed based on the assumption that the migrant is proficient in at least one language so they can develop a functional second language (Rydell 2018). Considering that the majority of deaf people around the world have had limited access to language growing up, this can lead to great difficulty in learning new languages and developing literacy skills later in life (Holmström and Schönström 2023). To critically question the assumptions and norms intertwined in the "Swedish system" that create difficulties for deaf migrants in terms of integration, we employ the Crip Theory and Crip Linguistics frameworks.

4 Crip Theory and Crip Linguistics as theoretical frameworks

Since Crip Theory is part of the current field of disability studies and since this theory is applied to our research, which includes deaf people, we need to first look at how deaf studies and disability studies align. The field of disability studies encompasses various models, including medical, social, identity, and cultural models (see, e.g., Retief and Letšosa 2018). The medical model views disability as an individual problem needing treatment, while the social model sees disability as a consequence of societal barriers. The identity model aligns with the social model but views disability positively as a minority identity. The cultural model focuses on how different cultures perceive and treat disability. Deaf studies, in its beginning, took the point of view that deafness is not a disability but rather a distinct cultural and linguistic identity. The efforts in separating disability and linguistic identities may have been a result of a societal view that deaf people have a deficiency that needs to be treated or cured. However, this viewpoint has shifted in recent years and deaf studies scholars have now begun to take an interdisciplinary approach. Both disciplines, that is, deaf studies and disability studies, are interconnected through their shared goals of advocacy, challenging societal norms, and promoting the rights and recognition of marginalised groups (see also De Meulder and Murray 2017, for a description of deaf peoples' dual-category status as both a linguistic minority and a disability group). This study takes on an interdisciplinary approach by using two theoretical frameworks: Crip Theory, which stems from disabilities studies; and Crip Linguistics, which stems from both disability studies and deaf studies.

4.1 Crip Theory

Crip Theory is utilised in this study to critically explore the complex issues relating to integration for deaf migrants. This theory allows for an analysis of compulsory able-bodiedness and infantilisation. Crip Theory critically analyses how traditions, systems, and behaviours often considered 'natural' are constructed and embedded in complex economic, social, and cultural relations. It also explores how these traditions, systems, and behaviours can be challenged in order to create necessary changes that improve the quality of life of disabled people (McRuer 2006). McRuer's Crip Theory questions how society designs spaces based on the ideal norm, where disabled people's requests for adjustments often lead them to be seen as difficult and costly. Able-bodiedness is regarded as the established norm, creating an 'accepted' view of disabled people as the problem, resulting in an epistemic invalidation of the disabled population (Goodley 2011). Rydström (2012) points out an important distinction of the word 'crip'; a person "does" crip rather than be "crip". Doing crip is to choose to either take on a crip understanding or to be a part of the collective resistance against the abled/disabled dichotomy (Rydström 2012).

The word 'crip' has historically been used as a slur, stemming from the word 'cripple' used to describe physically disabled people. McRuer, taking inspiration from Judith Butler's use of 'queer' as a political tool as well as an epistemological tool, employs the word 'crip' instead as an analytical tool to understand the world and as a political tool to redefine the word (Rydström 2012). Crip Theory also facilitates an exploration of power relations, such as the hegemony of ableism and the creation of otherness (Gahman 2017).

A key concept in Crip Theory is "compulsory able-bodiedness". McRuer (2006) describes it as a non-identity, a base, a natural order of things, and as preferable, while those deviating from this 'ideal' able-bodiedness are labelled as disabled and non-desirable. The author argues that disability is defined by able-bodied people so that they can establish boundaries of the normal body, and those seen as being outside of these boundaries are considered as disabled. Because the idea of able-bodiedness as the natural order of things is deeply embedded in society, it can be difficult to question the idea of ability and normality (Karlsson and Rydström 2023). Crip Theory questions the binary between able-bodiedness and norm-breaking bodies and challenges the notion that anything other than being able-bodied is seen as *less than* (Karlsson and Rydström 2023).

Another concept used for this study is "infantilisation", which is defined as "a form of abuse in which a competent adult or young adult is treated like a child" (Epstein et al. 2022, p. 137). This treatment perpetuates ableist norms and reinforces the marginalisation of disabled people. Infantilisation involves denying disabled

individuals the autonomy and respect granted to their non-disabled peers. Instances of infantilisation include making decisions for disabled people, speaking on their behalf, or assuming they cannot understand or contribute to adult conversations. However, as Epstein et al. (2022) point out, people who infantilise often have good intentions and do not mean to be malicious, but their actions are not always wanted. Refugees and asylum seekers are also subjected to infantilisation by society who often views them as distressed, helpless, and dependent. Harbisch (2023, p. 11) points out that refugees were often seen by employers as "in need of attention" and "not potentially useful adults", regardless of the skills and experiences they may offer. Infantilisation is caused by a "deeply embedded belief that someone is incapable and incompetent" and their "potential and ability are suppressed" (Epstein et al. 2022). By examining and critiquing infantilisation through the lens of Crip Theory, we can better understand and challenge the ways society diminishes the agency and humanity of disabled migrants, striving towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

4.2 Crip Linguistics

In addition to Crip Theory, this study adopts a Crip Linguistic framework to examine the idea of proficiency, as well as to question the use of language competency as a measure of successful integration into Swedish society. Crip Linguistics, a framework developed by Henner and Robinson (2021), attempts to disrupt the linguistic research field by critically questioning deep-set beliefs held by many linguists, and aims to broaden this field to include languaging that sits outside traditional linguistics boundaries. The framework explores different types of disabled languaging and examines how deficit words like "disorder" and "atypical" affect the portrayal of disabled people in the wider society. As pointed out by Rydström (2012), there have been many terms used to describe disabled people, and, most often, they were words that either brutally describe the physical deformity of a person or to point out the 'helplessness' of a person. These terms often reduce the personhood of disabled people. As language significantly influences how disabled people are perceived, it is important to scrutinise how language is used to exclude certain groups, both directly and indirectly. Henner and Robinson (2023) emphasise that to "crip" linguistics is to highlight practices and attitudes surrounding languages that reveal ableist assumptions that exclude or disempower the disabled person.

Language competence is often used as a measure for integration, and for many migrants, a way to show that they 'deserve' to be here. The Swedish government's emphasis on language learning as crucial for integration prompts a need for an examination of how the idea of 'language competence' itself poses issues since competency can vary among individuals. As Canagarajah (2022) points out, disability

has often been overlooked in research about language use and language competence. Canagarajah argues that "[t]he dominant logocentrism in European epistemologies motivates the argument that those without the capacity to speak can neither think nor convey their aspirations to claim their rights" (2022, p. 3). It can be argued that language competency is based on the able-bodiedness norm and languaging that deviates from the norm is not considered as 'language'. Henner and Robinson argue that the term 'fluency' embodies "racist, classist and ableist notion[s] of what makes good language" (2023, p. 2). The idea of depending mainly or even solely on linguistic capital to access a community of language users may poses issue, especially for deaf migrants who have experienced limited access to language(s) in their family and at school, if attended (cf. De Meulder et al. 2019). In addition, negative attitudes toward sign languages are common in many countries, which affect deaf people's language acquisition at an early age. Not accumulating linguistic capital early in life can pose great challenges for deaf migrants in terms of language learning later in life (Duggan 2023). Defining and assessing language competency often do not take deaf migrants' backgrounds into consideration.

5 Methodology

This study is part of *The Multilingual Situation of Deaf Refugees in Sweden* research project that collaborates with folk high schools [*folkhögskolor*] catering to deaf and hard of hearing adults. The aim of this project is to better understand deaf migrants' language learning situation in Sweden (Holmström et al. 2021). Ethical approval for this research was granted by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (Dnr 2020-02865) The main data used for this study is interviews with deaf migrants, teachers, and representatives from two governmental agencies.

5.1 Folk high schools catering to deaf migrants

The research project collaborates with four folk high schools in three different locations in Sweden. While there are a number of different educational providers that have language classes designed for deaf migrants, the folk high schools involved in the project have relatively large numbers of deaf migrants attending and STS is the main language of instruction in these schools.

The primary objective of folk high schools is to provide general civic education directed to the participants' individual needs, prior knowledge, and life experiences. These institutions are administered by either an organisation, the county council, or the regional government (the education is free for the participants, but

they may pay for accommodation, food, and materials). A special feature of folk high schools is the ability to independently develop course content and direction. Participants in these programmes do not receive formal academic credits or grades; instead, they obtain study certificates with assessments of their progress (for more on folk high schools, see further (Maliszewski 2003; Duggan 2024). The Swedish National Agency for Education does not directly govern folk high schools, but it may provide guidance, support, and resources to folk high school associations on matters related to educational policy, quality assurance, and curriculum development.

Of the four folk high schools involved in our project, School A holds a contract with the Swedish Migration Agency to deliver initial instruction in STS for asylum seekers as well as basic community orientation. They also provide support to deaf asylum seekers during the asylum application process with the Migration Agency, as well as contact with other governmental agencies. At School A, instruction also includes preparation for integration into the Swedish labour market. School B provides SFI classes for deaf migrants for a maximum of 15 h a week, and funding comes from either municipalities or the Swedish Public Employment Service. School C and D regularly applies for and receives funds from the Swedish National Council of Adult Education to offer educational programs to deaf asylum seekers under the *Swedish from day one* initiative. Both schools also offer commissioned courses in collaboration with the Swedish Public Employment Service, including the Establishment programme.

5.2 Interview data

The main empirical data used for this study have been selected from background interviews conducted with a total of 43 migrants (17 men and 26 women) ranging in age from 18 to 60 years old. The aim of these background interviews was to learn about the migrants' linguistic and educational backgrounds. These interviews were conducted mainly in STS by either the first author or the co-investigator, and all of the interviews were video-recorded in an empty classroom that was offered by each of the schools. Because we are deaf signers ourselves, it was possible to have flexible language use in the interviews, such as the use of gesture, body language, other sign languages and/or International Sign, as well as fingerspelling and/or mouthing of English or Swedish words. With that said, there were some challenges we faced during the interviews, one being that some of the questions proved to be challenging for some participants. For instance, some were not able to state their age and the year they first arrived in the country. This may be due to not having full access to language

growing up and not receiving formal education prior to coming to Sweden. As Humphries et al. (2014) point out, not acquiring language early in childhood can result in difficulty with memory as well as understanding abstract concepts including the concept of time (e.g., year of arrival, birth date, and age) (For more on the impact of language deprivation on cognitive development, see Gulati 2019). Another ethical consideration is that these interviews were based on the interviewees' personal experiences and perceptions, Because they were sharing their either personal experiences or views, it is important to consider that descriptions of various language practices come attached with their linguistic ideologies (see e.g., Duggan and Holmström 2022). For instance, some participants first stated that they had never learnt a sign language prior to coming into Sweden yet later on in the interview, they stated that they were taught a sign language by one of their deaf peers or a hearing relative that knew sign language. This shows a linguistic ideology that the language they were using did not 'qualify' as language. This is important to consider when reading the extracts in this study. For more on ethical considerations in the interview process, see Duggan (2024).

Interviews were conducted with 14 teachers involved in the project by the second author. The purpose of these interviews was to learn about the teachers' linguistic and educational backgrounds as well as their teaching experiences and the challenges they have identified in regard to deaf migrants' language learning and integration experiences. In addition, interviews were conducted with representatives from the Swedish Migration Agency as well as from the Swedish Public Employment Service. The objective of these interviews was to gain a better understanding of the procedures for granting residence permits to deaf asylum seekers, and how support was given in terms of employment opportunities and educational programmes. Also, it was essential to examine whether the policy documents accurately mirror the practical implementation. For instance, whether there were any expectations or whether flexibility was granted, particularly regarding the extremely marginalised group of deaf migrants.

The background interviews were translated into English by the first author, and the teachers' and representatives' interviews were translated into Swedish by the second author and later into English by the first author for the purpose of this study. Pseudonyms are used in this study to ensure that the identities of the research participants are kept anonymous. The participants' home countries and national (sign) languages are also not named. The reason for this is that there is a small number of deaf migrants in Sweden and a consequence of this is that they could be identified based on the country they come from or the language(s) they use.

6 Challenges for deaf migrants in Sweden

6.1 Infantilisation

From a Crip Theory perspective, infantilisation is viewed as a manifestation of ableism, where societal norms and attitudes undermine the independence and self-determination of disabled people. Infantilisation is a common phenomenon disabled people face in everyday life, and an instance of this is when the disabled person is not given the opportunity to either express themselves and/or make their own decisions. Instead, the other person speaks and/or decides for the disabled person, sometimes without consultation with the disabled person. This study presents different cases where there are infantilising behaviours towards deaf migrants who are emergent readers.

The first instance is Omar, who was an asylum seeker upon arrival in Sweden in 2015. In his background interview, Omar described his language background prior to coming to Sweden as having no language and he had never attended school before. As Omar was an asylum seeker, he had to follow the Migration Agency's asylum procedure. In Sweden, asylum seekers are required to visit the Application Unit at one of the Migration Agency offices in order to apply for asylum. They then must provide personal information, fingerprints, and have their photograph taken, all of which are then registered in the Migration Agency's registration system. At this stage, a (spoken language) interpreter is usually present so that the asylum seeker is able to share their personal details, for example their country of origin, their family circumstances, and their health status, and their reasons for seeking asylum in the language they are most familiar with. The asylum seeker is also required to describe their journey to Sweden in detail as well as to prove their identity e.g., legal documents such as passport or driving license. For deaf asylum seekers, it is not always possible to have access to a sign language interpreter in their own language as not many countries around the world have qualified sign language interpreters. In addition, it is not possible for deaf asylum seekers to communicate through STS interpreters as it is common that they do not know STS upon arrival in the country. In an interview with the Migration Agency, the case officers point out that in special circumstances, a relative of the asylum seeker could be allowed to accompany the asylum seeker and give assistance in these interviews. They explain that while this may not be entirely optimal, sometimes it is necessary. This was the case for Omar. Below is an excerpt from an interview with Omar where he described his first experience with the Migration Agency:

> I sat with my hearing brother in the Migration Agency in [city name]. They spoke to me but I didn't know what they said. I didn't know my age, when I was born, or where I lived. He [hearing brother] spoke for me and they wrote down everything that was said.

Omar explained in his background interview that he had "no language" growing up and that he had no communication of any form with his family members. Omar's lack of access to language growing up has meant that he was not able to communicate with government officials. Since his brother knew the basic information about him, he spoke on behalf of Omar. The Migration Agency explains that:

> In some cases, a relative can assist the asylum seeker. However, we must take confidentiality into account as well as the fact that the asylum seeker may have reasons for asylum that the relative may not know and should not be aware of. It is not unusual for a family member to accompany the asylum seeker and provide support with interpreting in the application process.

In such cases where a relative accompanies the asylum seeker to help with interpreting, there is an assumption that the relative and the asylum seeker share a language. However, Omar explained that he has no way of communicating with his brother other than the use of gestures. As Omar did not share a language in common with his brother, self-autonomy as well as the credibility of information provided by his brother need to be brought into question. The Migration Agency had placed trust on his brother to represent Omar in their first asylum interview, which raises the question of autonomy, or lack thereof, in Omar's case. With that said, the agency is aware of the issue of having someone else speak on behalf of the asylum seeker:

> During the asylum process itself, however, we want the applicant to be given the opportunity to communicate their reasons for asylum.

To solve the issue of autonomy and integrity in the application process, the Migration Agency provides the deaf asylum seeker with additional time and financial support to receive STS lessons before the asylum investigation begins. The extra time allocation can vary depending on the learning pace and availability of resources. The deaf asylum seeker is referred to a folk high school that has a contract with the Migration Agency to provide this service. Once the school has decided that the deaf asylum seeker has reached a certain level in STS sufficient enough for the Migration Agency to be able to conduct an interview, the asylum investigation can begin. The investigation includes one or more interviews with the asylum seeker where they have to describe the reasons why they have fled their own country and what the potential consequences could be if they were to return to their country. In interviews with deaf asylum seekers, they are provided the option of STS interpreters. Omar, in his interview, describes his experience learning STS and how it has helped him to state his reasons for asylum protection to the Migration Agency:

> I learned sign language and how to write. It was difficult. I learned what my name was and how to spell it. It took a long time to learn the alphabet. It's good that I'm here in [school's name]. I received asylum protection in 2018. The Migration Agency in [city name] interviewed me in 2018. I remember that it was in December. I had to explain my situation, how there was a war in [home country].

In Omar's case, being provided the opportunity to learn STS and written Swedish at a basic level has allowed him to be interviewed by the Migration Agency three years later without the need of his brother to step in and speak on his behalf. However, while deaf migrants are granted the opportunity to learn STS, their hearing family members are not afforded the same opportunity. In the background interview, Omar was asked how he communicates with his brother now that he has learnt basic STS and written Swedish:

> He talks so it's difficult. We do our own things. I focus on learning sign language, travelling to [school's name] from [hometown]. It's difficult with my brother. It's hard to communicate with him. He talks and talks and I have no idea what he says. He does things his own way. I cannot force him. He decides for himself.

In addition to hearing relatives not being afforded the same opportunity to learn STS, another aspect to consider is that it can be very difficult to change established communication routines between deaf migrants and their relatives. While language learning can grant deaf migrants the self-autonomy that some may not have previously had, it can also lead to a feeling of frustration particularly toward hearing family members who may still deploy infantilising behaviours. We can take Fatima as an instance. Fatima migrated to Sweden along with her deaf husband and hearing children as well as her hearing parents and brother. She described communication prior to coming to Sweden as mainly gesture and the use of pointings. She stated that learning STS allowed her to be seen as an adult while the use of gestures and pointings made her feel like a child. STS also allowed her to become more independent in that she could communicate with others without depending on her family members. However, Fatima mentioned that she was frustrated that her mother expressed no interest in learning STS despite her persuasions. She noted that her mother instead preferred to continue the use of gestures and pointing even though this way of communication made her feel like a child. Deeply embedded beliefs that someone is incapable and incompetent, despite their showcasing the ability to learn new languages, are difficult to change, as this case shows. As Henner and Robinson note, "[l]anguage is central to our conceptualization of personhood" (2021, p. 6). For Fatima and Omar, learning STS has granted them personhood and self-autonomy. However, their personhood is not always recognised by others, particularly family members who have continued to use gestures and pointing or to have no communication at all.

With that said, it is important to highlight how, in the extracts depicted above, the Migration Agency recognised the importance of self-autonomy and made efforts in ensuring that the deaf migrant has their own voice in the asylum process. However, this comes with its challenges which will be presented in the Section 6.2.

6.2 Role of the interpreter

In order to better understand the challenges deaf migrants face, particularly when it comes to contact with government agencies, the role of the interpreter needs to be critically examined.

The Migration Agency has a regulation that states how, during the interview process, interpreters must be neutral and should not express their own views or opinions (Migrationsverket 2023). The interpreter is also required not to add or subtract information during interpreting. This regulation can be challenging for STS interpreters to adhere to, especially when working with deaf migrants whose language backgrounds differ from theirs. In one of the teachers' interviews, they mentioned that despite great development in their participants' language learning, they estimated that approximately two out of ten participants benefit from communication mediated by hearing STS interpreters.

The majority of hearing STS interpreters learned STS as a second language (L2), often later in life. Compared to deaf STS interpreters, the majority of hearing L2 STS interpreters find it challenging to adjust their STS to meet the needs of different deaf signers, such as elderly deaf people, deaf children, and in this case, deaf migrants who are not yet proficient in either STS or Swedish. Adjusting one's STS to meet the needs of different signers requires an understanding of the challenges linked to each person's background (e.g., deaf signers with language deprivation or elderly deaf signers who attended school where the use of STS was highly discouraged). This skill requires an immense amount of time and energy spent socialising with different deaf signers, which most hearing L2 signers do not have. For deaf migrants, communicating with hearing L2 STS interpreters can be difficult. In these cases, a common solution for the Migration Agency is to bring in deaf STS interpreters alongside hearing L2 STS interpreters. However, the regulation set by the Migration Agency, which does not allow interpreters to add or subtract information, is in contradiction with the work done by deaf interpreters as their job is to reformulate, simplify, extend, and/or add information to ensure a common understanding between the deaf asylum seeker and the case officer (see, e.g., Boudreault 2005). We argue that this regulation is based on able-bodiedness as there is an expectation that the asylum seeker should understand everything that the interpreter is translating. This is based on an assumption that the asylum seeker is proficient in the language that the interpreter is using to relay what the interviewer is saying. Deaf migrants are in a unique situation in that they are being sent to school to learn a new language in order to be able to communicate with an interpreter. The burden lies heavily on the deaf migrant as they face significant pressure to learn STS in order to articulate their reasons for seeking asylum.

Communication by means of interpreters not only requires deaf migrants to have some competency in STS but also to understand the purpose of the interview and how the questioning process works. In order for the case officer to create a comprehensive timeline of the asylum seeker's journey, they ask questions that require the deaf asylum seeker to understand the concept of a timeline and to fill in the gaps in-between. The deaf asylum seeker is also required to know the names of the cities they have lived in or the countries they have passed through. Some deaf migrants in our study have not acquired language early in childhood and they have not received an education prior to coming to Sweden. As mentioned earlier, one consequence of being deprived of language in early life is the difficulty in understanding abstract concepts such as time and name (cf. Gulati 2019). This means that it becomes challenging for the case officer to obtain a comprehensive timeline from deaf asylum seekers who may have experienced language deprivation. In the interview with case officers that have worked with deaf asylum seekers at the Migration Agency, it seems that they are aware of this and understand the need for flexibility in communication. According to them, a solution is to cooperate with STS interpreters and allow them to review the minutes afterwards to ensure that there are no misunderstandings. Another cooperating technique the case officers have established with the interpreters is to receive feedback from them. An example of such feedback is whether more time is needed on questions considered complicated so as to allow the interpreter to explain in depth what the question means.

The role of the interpreter in the interview process with deaf asylum seekers needs to be critically analysed. While it is clear that the case officers understand the need for greater flexibility with deaf asylum seekers, they seem to place great responsibility and trust on the STS interpreters to ensure good communication and that correct information is mediated. Although they are flexible with the role of the interpreters (e.g., allowing them to add information, and including them in the interview process where they should be neutral), they do not grant the deaf migrant the same flexibility. The interviews with the representatives from the Migration Agency reveal no efforts to develop cooperating techniques with deaf asylum seekers, such as including them in the review of minutes taken, to ensure that their stories are accurately mediated. The deaf asylum seeker, in this case, is in an infantilised position where they are at the hand of the interpreter who has been granted greater power in that they are able to review minutes on the behalf of the asylum seeker.

It is not only in contact with the Migration Agency that there have been issues with interpreters. Elisabeth, a teacher interviewed for our study, explains that while some deaf migrants are able to communicate through STS interpreters, not all are able to do it without assistance:

> Some are able to learn how to use STS interpreters but not all of them. But it's better than how they understand Swedish. But I help them a lot. Sometimes they can receive assistance from the service centre in the form of language support in different situations and sometimes I get involved as a third person in the meeting with e.g. authorities and I could see and tell them that they don't understand. I also make calls sometimes, such as the social services and explain to them that they have a responsibility to ensure good communication and that the person understands. They think it's enough to have the interpreter present, but it's not.

There are service centres in a number of locations in Sweden that provide information related to public services, usually limited to the municipality level, in STS for deaf people. These types of service prove useful for deaf migrants, as mentioned in the extract above. However, for deaf migrants whose main communication consisted of homesign[1] or gestures before coming into Sweden, accessing service or information in other public services sometimes require additional assistance even if hearing STS interpreters are present. Such assistance can be in the form of deaf sign language interpreters or in some cases, teachers who are willing to help out. Some teachers have stated in their interviews that they have found it difficult to set boundaries in their role as teachers, as it is common that these deaf migrants have nowhere else to go to receive assistance they need.

With that said, it must also be noted that the deaf migrants have mentioned in their interviews about the value of sign language interpreters, and that they understand the need to learn STS in order to communicate by means of STS interpreters. For instance, Fatima explains in her interview that she had her first two children in her home country where she did not have any access to interpreters:

Author: You gave birth to three children in [home country]?
Fatima: Sweden. Two in [home country]. Difficult, confusing, difficult.
Author: How did you communicate?
Fatima: They only spoke. I did not understand. No communication. They must sign. It was difficult.

Fatima had her third child in Sweden, and she had two interpreters with her when she was giving birth:

Fatima: In Sweden, it was relaxing. I have a three year old boy now. Perfect. The sign language interpreter was there. It was perfect and calm. I was surprised. It was bad in [home country].
Author: Hearing interpreter?
Fatima: Hearing and deaf interpreters, two together.

1 Homesign is, as described by Lillo-Martin and Henner (2021, p. 407), "a communicative system generated by a deaf person without access to a signing community, for interacting with their family and community".

In Fatima's case, the presence of interpreters has made for a calming birthing experience which she has not experienced before in her home country. This is an instance of the importance of the presence of both a hearing interpreter and a deaf interpreter; the former translating from spoken Swedish to STS, and the latter adjusting the contents of what is translated in a way that is tailored to Fatima's linguistic capability (for more on the role of deaf interpreters, see Boudreault 2005).

The instances given in this section have highlighted the need for a critical analysis of the role of the interpreter using the Crip Theory lens. While it is important to recognise the value of STS interpreters in that they give deaf migrants autonomy and independence that they may not have had before, it must be questioned whether interpreters alone is a quick-fix solution to a long-term issue (cf. De Meulder and Haualand 2021). The great trust placed on the interpreter without much consideration for how the deaf migrant can be included in the process (e.g., reviewing the notes taken by the interviewer) can be seen as ableist in that there is an assumption that the migrant cannot understand or contribute to ensuring what was said was correct. Additionally, the established norm of working with interpreters in the Migration Agency is based on able-bodiedness in that the regulation places greater importance on the neutrality of the interpreter rather than ensuring good communication. It also does not take into consideration that, in order for the deaf migrant to be able to communicate via an interpreter, they would have to learn STS which takes a great amount of time and energy that not all deaf migrants may have, are granted to, or are able to. As Henner and Robinson point out, "[a]bled people expect communication to be quick, efficient, and spoken" (2023, p. 26) and this assumption dismisses the importance of crip time in languaging such as extra time allowed for interpretation, and in the deaf migrants' case, extra time to learn STS.

6.3 Lost in the system – bureaucratic issues

There are several bureaucratic issues that have been mentioned in the interviews with the deaf migrants, the teachers, and the two government agencies. One of the issues is geographical accessibility. Being placed in the right location has proved to be crucial for deaf migrants, as it affects how they access education and public services. For adult deaf migrants, there are a number of education centres that provide language learning classes using STS as the main language of instruction. However, these education centres are limited to five locations across Sweden. As mentioned in the context section, the reception of migrants in Sweden varies depending on the reason for their migration, which in turn, affects how they receive information about these schools. Deaf asylum seekers who arrived in Sweden between 2009 and 2019 were often referred to a folk high school that had a contract with the Migration

Agency to provide language education to deaf asylum seekers (Holmström 2019). By contrast, other deaf newcomers that are not asylum seekers or refugees need to actively seek information by themselves. They sometimes rely on peers, deaf associations, local employment centres, or the local public service centre. In the interview and email correspondences with representatives from the Migration Agency, they explained that there is a reception centre in one city that exclusively deals with asylum seekers, and deaf asylum seekers have the right to choose whether they want to attend language education programmes. However, in the background interviews, it was pointed out that the relatives of some deaf migrants made this decision on their behalf for various reasons without consideration whether they have access to such programmes tailored to their needs.

Despite the emphasis on the importance of language learning for integration, other factors can sometimes take precedence over access to language education. For instance, the Settlement Act of 2016 [*Bosättningslagen*] gives the Migration Agency the responsibility to allocate quota refugees (directed by the UN) to municipalities, including some deaf refugees. There were cases where the needs of deaf refugees were not considered in the decision on where to place them. An example of this is Hussein, a deaf man from West Asia, who migrated to Sweden with his wife who is also deaf, their hearing children, and his wife's hearing family as part of the Swedish Resettlement Programme. In his background interview, he explains how he had relocated eight times within five years, six of which were at the direction of the Migration Agency. He lists out the eight places he has lived in Sweden and out of these eight places, five were within an hour's distance from the nearest suitable education centre, while three can be considered isolating for newly arrived deaf refugees. Even though he was within distance to a suitable education centre in five places he lived in, he had only attended school in two different locations. He states that at first, the Migration Agency made the decision to place his family in the first few locations, and after receiving their residence permits, his wife's family, who are hearing, made decisions on where they live. There were also cases where deaf migrants were living in a different location from their spouse and children because their municipality stated that they would only cover the cost for the deaf migrant, not the whole family, to relocate to where the school was. Additionally, it is sometimes unclear among agencies who is responsible for covering the cost of their language education. Angela, a teacher interviewed, states that while the folk high school she works at offers language learning courses for deaf migrants, the decision of whether to enroll a deaf migrant is sometimes left to the discretion of the municipality. She recalls a case in which the municipality, where one deaf migrant resided, opted for the deaf migrant to attend a language learning class in a hearing school instead of choosing to fund their education in the municipality where the folk high school is located as the former option is cheaper.

Another recurring issue mentioned in the interviews is the dissemination of information by government agencies. There have been instances where deaf migrants did not receive relevant information from public services because the information provided was inaccessible. An example is Jamil, who arrived in Sweden in 2008 and, despite living in the country for ten years, met other deaf people for the first time in 2018. In the interview, he explained that he expressed his desire to learn to drive to a colleague as he was tired of getting the bus to work, especially in winter. His colleague found a folk high school that provided driving education specifically for deaf people. As he did not know STS and Swedish, he had to attend language learning classes before he could enroll in driving school. This school was where he first met other deaf people. Jamil's case illustrates how difficult it can be for deaf migrants to find access to services available for deaf people in Sweden, especially if they do not know STS and Swedish and how they have to depend on others who are able to access such information e.g. Jamil's colleague was able to find relevant information only because Jamil asked for it.

Dissemination of accessible information is critical, particularly for deaf asylum seekers. In normal cases, during the waiting period, asylum seekers are referred to the nearest reception unit where they receive assistance with accommodation, finances, and medical care. The reception unit also provides a range of important information such as the asylum application procedure, relevant laws, non-governmental organisations, and the types of employment and education they can receive. Deaf asylum seekers, however, are unable to receive this information if they either do not know sufficient STS to be able to communicate through STS interpreters or do not have sufficient literacy capabilities to be able to read the information provided. This shows the importance for deaf asylum seekers to meet deaf signers that are able to adjust their linguistic repertoire to fit those of the asylum seekers (see e.g., Sivunen 2019 for more on this).

Access to information is also critical when it comes to healthcare. Elisabeth explains that some participants need to be explained about the different services provided by the government, particularly healthcare services:

> Sometimes it's about understanding that there are some services that are provided by the Swedish society, such as cervical smear tests. Those types of information need to be explained, that it's to prevent cancer. A lot of explanations are needed. Last spring, for example, there was a woman that we discovered was pregnant and she was expected to give birth in three months' time – but she did not know where the baby will come out! It became a big thing for us and we tried to explain how it works. We explained about the Maternity Healthcare Centre/Children's Healthcare Centre, and how the body works, etc. Imagine the trauma she would have experienced if she got contractions and did not know how it worked!

While maternity care is provided for the deaf migrant in Sweden, it commonly does not include provision of basic information. The deaf migrant mentioned in the

extract above did not have access to language growing up, resulting in a lack of knowledge on areas that the majority of adults take for granted. As a consequence, there are no suitable services that provide basic information in STS about how the reproductive system works and what to expect during pregnancy and labour. The responsibility thus fell on the teacher. These issues emphasise the importance for deaf migrants to be able to attend language learning classes, and to have access to services that cater to deaf people's needs, such as information in STS, rather than be dependent on teachers in folk high schools.

Digitalisation is another instance of a bureaucratic issue that deaf migrants and teachers have frequently mentioned in their interviews. Several government agencies, county councils, and municipalities either plan to or have already transitioned from paperwork and drop-in services to a digital form of service. For instance, BankID is a digital ID card used to verify a person's identification or their signature online. This service, which can be used on the app or website, is required by many online services, including government agencies and banks, as a way to verify identity, reducing the need for physical drop-in service. This has created issues for deaf migrants, particularly those who are emergent readers. In our participant observations, some deaf migrants have had issues with logging into the school computer despite using it often. It was noted in the observations that some either had difficulties remembering their passwords or figuring out how to use capital letters or symbols on the keyboard. In an interview with a consultant who works with deaf people in a regional Public Employment Service, this issue was highlighted. The Public Employment Service often requires clients to use BankID to access their own system online, otherwise they are referred to a public information centre (*statlig servicecenter*) where they can receive assistance in person. The consultant also explains that, in order to receive benefits from the Swedish Social Insurance Office (*Försäkringskassan*), the deaf migrant is required to use the office's digital service. Taking these instances into consideration, digitalisation of essential services is based on the idea of compulsory able-bodiedness as there is an assumption that everyone is print literate and is proficient in at least one language from a list of languages provided on the website.

7 Cripping the idea of integration – concluding discussion

In this article, we have examined the Swedish integration policy through the lens of Crip Theory and Crip Linguistics. Societal norms and expectations based on able-bodiedness have several consequences for deaf migrants whose communicative

repertoires deviate from the norm. These assumptions may result in the infantilisation and exclusion of deaf migrants, placing them in a vulnerable position. In order to bring about change that ensure deaf migrants have the opportunity to participate in Swedish society, there are general issues that need to be addressed.

One important consideration is that upon arrival, deaf migrants have to learn two new languages, STS and (written) Swedish. This is despite several barriers to acquiring such language competence. For instance, the Migration Agency assigns which municipality the migrants shall be located in. As there are only five language education providers aimed at deaf migrants nationwide, there is a risk that if meeting municipal quotas of refugees is made more important than deaf migrants' needs, the deaf migrant is placed in a municipality located a considerable distance from an education provider for deaf migrants resulting in no access to STS courses. An issue with the *Swedish from day one* initiative for hearing migrants is that focuses primarily on Swedish, with no similar courses for deaf migrants to learn "STS from day one", despite their need to learn STS in order to be able to communicate with teachers, authorities, service providers, etc., likely with the presence of STS interpreters.

Another issue is that the authorities, such as the municipality or the Public Employment Service, decide whether the migrants will have the opportunity to attend a school catering to deaf people, and for how long. The deciding factor often revolves around the costs, as it is more expensive to send a deaf migrant to a school some distance from the municipality compared to hearing migrants. As a consequence, not all deaf migrants are provided with language education, which place them in an infantilised and powerless position. With that said, it must be pointed out that Sweden is one of few countries in Europe that provide cost-free language education, and particularly sign language education, for adult migrants.

Peled (2023) points out that learning the host country's language requires time, energy, sufficient support, and building a network in the new society, which not all migrants have access to. The simplification of the language learning process may lead to unrealistic linguistic expectations for some deaf migrants, especially asylum seekers. Requiring deaf asylum seekers to learn STS so that they are able to communicate through STS interpreters in asylum interviews without considering how their linguistic and educational backgrounds may impact their ability to learn a new language is an issue that needs to be highlighted. Through the lens of Crip Theory, this issue can be considered as ableist as there is a presumption that everyone has learnt a language during childhood and can, therefore, learn an additional language in a limited period of time. However, many deaf migrants have experienced language deprivation and have a different starting point. Additionally, as mentioned above, deaf migrants must not only learn STS, but also (written) Swedish, further complicating the language learning process, especially for those

who have not learnt to read and write previously. They also have to learn the technique of reading and writing in addition to learning Swedish (see further Holmström and Schönström 2023). Learning to read and write as an adult is challenging for emerging readers. However, for hearing migrants who are emerging readers, the focus lies in the connection between the phonology of the spoken language and the written counterpart, something that is not applicable to deaf migrants. At the moment, there is no established teaching material suitable for teaching deaf migrants. As a result, the teachers have had to create their own material. From a Crip Linguistics perspective, this case is an example of how deeply embedded the idea of able-bodiedness is in that established teaching materials for migrants who are emergent readers are based on the assumption that the migrant can hear and knows a spoken language.

Another example based on able-bodiedness is that it is only deaf migrants who are expected to learn STS, with the primary goal of being able to communicate through STS interpreters. As many migrants have communicated using gestures and homesigns with their hearing families prior to coming to Sweden, learning STS means that they are learning a standardised language for the first time. It also means that they are able to speak for themselves without depending on others. However, their hearing family members are not given the opportunity to learn STS. As a result, the communication in the family remains limited to gestures and homesigns, keeping the deaf migrant in an infantilised position.

Infantilisation is also evident in the asylum interview process where family members or STS interpreters are given the power role over the deaf asylum seeker. The family member can share information about the deaf asylum seeker without their knowledge, potentially impacting the process in receiving a residence permit. Similarly, the STS interpreter, who likely does not know the deaf asylum seeker, is responsible for interpreting between the deaf migrant and the case officer in a process where each word has a significant impact, and a misinterpretation can have serious consequences for the deaf asylum seeker. In these cases, not allowing deaf asylum seekers to check whether their stories have been correctly understood and recorded indicates that they continue to be viewed as distressed, helpless, or dependent, lacking power and the ability to speak for themselves.

Language competence is vital for migrants in order to integrate in Swedish society, and Ahlgren and Rydell (2020) note that one way for the authorities to gatekeep language competency among migrants is by requiring them to report their attendance in learning centres to receive social benefits. A key element of Crip Linguistics is the importance of highlighting the ableist idea of language competence as a measure for integration as it is rooted in able-bodiedness, excluding those whose language practices deviate from the linguistic norm.

Viewed through the lens of Crip Theory and Crip Linguistics, we can identify and question common processes, behaviours, requirements, and actions that perpetuate inequalities for deaf migrants. These unconscious biases have a great impact on deaf migrants' experiences navigating Swedish society.

Research funding: This study is part of a larger research project funded by the Swedish Research Council completed in 2023 (2019-02115).
Competing interests: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

Ahlgren, Karin & Maria Rydell. 2020. Continuity and change. Migrants' experiences of adult language education in Sweden. *European Journal for Research on the Education & Learning of Adults* 11(3). 399–414.

Boudreault, Patrick. 2005. Deaf interpreters. In Terry Janzen (ed.), *Topics in signed language interpreting: Theory and practice*, 323–355. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Canagarajah, Suresh. 2022. A decolonial Crip linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*. 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amac042.

De Meulder, Maartje & Hilde Haualand. 2021. Sign language interpreting services: A quick fix for inclusion? *Translation & Interpreting Studies* 16(1). 19–40.

De Meulder, Maartje & Joseph J. Murray. 2017. Buttering their bread on both sides? The recognition of sign languages and the aspirations of deaf communities. *Language Problems & Language Planning* 41(2). 136–158.

De Meulder, Maartje, Joseph J. Murray & Rachel L. McKee. 2019. *The legal recognition of sign languages: Advocacy and outcomes around the world*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Duggan, Nora. 2023. "Why the long nose?": A sociolinguistic analysis of deaf migrants' language learning experiences in adult education. *Linguistics & Education* 78. 101243.

Duggan, Nora. 2024. *Deaf migrants in Swedish adult education: Language ideologies, repertoires and translingual practices*. Stockholm: Stockholm University Doctoral thesis.

Duggan, Nora & Ingela Holmström. 2022. "They have no language": Exploring language ideologies in adult education for deaf migrants. *Apples – Journal of Applied Language Studies* 16(2). 147–165.

Epstein, Robert, Sara D. Bock, Megan J. Drew & Zoë Scandalis. 2022. Infantilization across the life span: A large-scale internet study suggests that emotional abuse is especially damaging. *Motivation & Emotion* 47. 137–163.

Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 1989. *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Princeton: Polity Press.

Eurostats. 2011. *Indicators of immigrant integration: A pilot study. Eurostat methodologies and working papers*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Fejes, Andreas. 2010. Discourses on employability: Constituting the responsible citizen. *Studies in Continuing Education* 32(2). 89–102.

Fejes, Andreas. 2019. Adult education and the fostering of asylum seekers as "full" citizens. *International Review of Education* 65. 233–250.

Gahman, Levi. 2017. Crip theory and country boys: Masculinity, dis/ability, and place in rural Southeast Kansas. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 107(3). 700–715.

Goodley, Dan. 2011. *Disability studies: An interdisciplinary introduction*. London: Sage.

Gulati, Sanjay. 2019. Language deprivation syndrome. In Neil S. Glickman & Wyatte Hall (eds.), *Language deprivation and deaf mental health*. New York and London: Routledge.

Harbisch, Amelie. 2023. Children or productive adults? Infantilisation and exploitation of refugees in Germany and Austria. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 50(6). 1590–1608.

Henner, Jon & Octavian Robinson. 2021. *Unsettling languages, unruly bodyminds: Imaging a Crip linguistics*. PsyArXiv. Available at: https://psyarxiv.com/7bzaw.

Henner, Jon & Octavian Robinson. 2023. Unsettling languages, unruly bodyminds: A Crip linguistics manifesto. *Journal of Critical Study of Communication & Disability* 1(1). 7–37.

Holmström, Ingela. 2019. *Döva nyanländas språkliga situation – en förstudie [Deaf newcomers' linguistic situation – A pilot study]*. Stockholm: Stockholm University.

Holmström, Ingela & Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta. 2021. Patient or citizen? Participation and accessibility for deaf and hard-of-hearing people in the context of interpretation in Sweden. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 23(1). 209–223.

Holmström, Ingela & Krister Schönström. 2023. "They forget and forget all the time": The complexity of teaching deaf adult emergent readers print literacy. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*. https://doi.org/10.1515/iral-2022-0241.

Holmström, Ingela & Nina Sivunen. 2022. Diverse challenges for deaf migrants when navigating in Nordic countries. *The Routledge handbook of sign language translation and interpreting*. London and New York: Routledge.

Holmström, Ingela, Krister Schönström & Nora Duggan. 2021. *The multilingual situation of deaf refugees in Sweden*. Stockholm: Stockholm University. https://www.su.se/english/research/research-projects/the-multilingual-situation-of-deaf-refugees-in-sweden-mulder.

Humphries, Tom L., Poorna Kushalnagar, Gaurav Mathur, Donna J. Napoli, Carol Padden & Christian Rathmann. 2014. Ensuring language acquisition for deaf childen: What linguists can do. *Language* 90(2). 31–52.

Karlsson, Mikael M. & Jens Rydström. 2023. Crip theory: A useful tool for social analysis. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist & Gender Research* 31(4). 395–410.

Lillo-Martin, Diane & Jon Henner. 2021. Acquisition of sign languages. *Annual Review of Linguistics* 7(1). 395–419.

Maliszewski, Tomasz. 2003. On the history of folk high schools in Sweden. In Marek Byczkowski, Tomasz Maliszewski & Ewa Przybylska (eds.), *Folk high school – school for life*, 108–120. Poland: Kashubian Folk High School.

McRuer, Robert. 2006. *Crip theory: Cultural signs of queerness and disability*. New York: New York University Press.

Migrationsverket. 2023. *To those seeking asylum in Sweden*. https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/About-the-website/Other-languages/Till-dig-som-soker-asyl-i-Sverige/Engelska.html (accessed 14 November 2023).

Peled, Yael. 2023. The practical ethics of linguistic integration: Three challenges. *Metaphilosophy*. 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1111/meta.12653.

Retief, Marno & Rantoa Letšosa. 2018. Models of disability: A brief overview. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74(1). https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4738.

Rydell, Maria. 2018. Being 'a competent language user' in a world of Others – Adult migrants' perceptions and constructions of communicative competence. *Linguistics & Education* 45. 101–109.

Rydström, Jens. 2012. Introduction: Crip theory in Scandinavia. *Lambda Nordica* 17(1–2). 7–20.

Sivunen, Nina. 2019. An ethnographic study of deaf refugees seeking asylum in Finland. *Societies* 9(2). 1–16.

WHO. 2011. *World report on disability*. WHO & the World Bank. Available at: https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/44575.
WHO. 2024. *Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities*. World Health Organisation. Available at: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240063600.