Author(s): Holm, Lars; Pöyhönen, Sari

Title: Localising Supranational Concepts of Literacy in Adult Second Language Teaching

Year: 2012

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Holm, L., & Pöyhönen, S. (2012). Localising Supranational Concepts of Literacy in
Adult Second Language Teaching. In A. Pitkänen-Huhta, & L. Holm (Eds.), Literacy
practices in transition: Perspectives from the Nordic countries (pp. 189-208).
Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847698414-011

Chapter 8

Localising supranational concepts of literacy in adult second language teaching

Lars Holm and Sari Pöyhönen

Introduction

Societal super-diversity (Vertovec, 2006; Blommaert, 2010) has generated new and different perceptions and constructions of participation, identity and societal membership. One special marker of super-diversity, according to Blommaert and Rampton (2011), is the presence of complex and stratified distribution patterns that ratifies and recognizes what counts as language and literacy in particular contexts. It is part of this development that literacy is used more and more often as a political reference, e.g. in defining qualifications for permanent stay in the host country, for citizenship or for access to education (Extra *et al.*, 2009).

In this chapter we are analyzing how literacy is conceptualized within education – more specifically within adult second language education in Denmark and Finland. Language and literacy are generally described as highly important for societal growth, coherence and democracy in statements from governments and international agencies. However, in our research literacy appears as a more complex and contradictory resource that is increasingly used as a demarcation line for inclusion and exclusion in the ever more globalised national states.

Researching localization of literacy concepts

According to Blommaert (2003) specific conceptualization of literacy within education might be seen as a variety of language that should be "read locally as well as translocally". Such a perspective makes it possible to investigate how conceptualizations of literacy are being both globalized and localized by whom, for whom, when and how (Blommaert, 2003) – and with what impact on social selection processes. Conceptualizations of literacy in education have often been researched as an interactional construction of literacy in a classroom (see e.g. Holm, 2004; Pitkänen-Huhta, 2003). Brandt and Clinton (2002) criticize this research approach for under-theorizing the material dimension of literacy and its capacity to travel. This critique appears highly relevant for literacy research in a European context where supranational agencies such as the OECD, EU and the Council of Europe seem to, in complex ways, increasingly influence education systems and educational conceptualizations. This influence is sometimes through a rather direct regulation as the application of the ECTS system in higher education in Europe demonstrates, but more often it is through discursive forces – through the production of numerous reports, evaluations and documents, and through the creation of various committees, funding streams and programs that support specific conceptualizations within education and function as shapers of emerging discourses in educational policy (Holm & Laursen, 2011; Moos, 2006; Saarinen, 2007). Dynamic processes between national and supranational forces are thus shaping literacy in education.

One specific conceptualization of literacy put forward by a supranational agency, the Council of Europe, in a specific document, the CEFR (2001), has become constitutive for the conceptualization of literacy within adult second language teaching in Denmark and Finland as in many other EU countries. For this reason, we would like to give a "thing-status" to the document in which this conceptualization is formulated and treat it as an artifact, and regard the Council of Europe as an important "sponsor of literacy" (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). This artifact with its conceptualization of literacy is re-contextualized, re-interpreted and negotiated by local actors in educational arenas within education. Thus the CEFR (2001)[i] appears as a shared authority in a supranational network that has created within literacy in education a new "space of flows" as Castells (2010) coins it, and has become a travelling concept that is localized in different educational settings. This complex dynamic between national and supranational forces and the multiple localizing processes of the conceptualization of literacy in the CEFR invites to a research approach that is "multi-sited", as suggested by Marcus (1995). Multi-sited research in concepts (e.g. Gustafsson, 2003; Martin, 1994) follows the negotiation and construction of a specific concept in different social arenas. These arenas might be within the borders of the same national state (e.g. Gustafsson, 2010). However, in order to research literacy locally as well as translocally, we would like to argue for a research approach that follows the concept of literacy through the arena of a supranational agency and different national and local arenas, and thus combines the approach to literacy put forward by Brandt and Clinton (2002) with a multi-sited perspective. The CEFR appears as an artifact in its materiality, but when it enters a local arena it also becomes an actor. Seen in this perspective the CEFR conceptualization of literacy might be researched as a local interaction around a concept that has its origin somewhere else and thus represents a relationship between the local and the global. We hope this might reveal and demonstrate central aspects in the complex way in which literacy is in transition.

In the first part of this chapter, we will trace and analyze the values and norms in the conceptualization of literacy in the CEFR. Central documents produced by the European Council and a range of research articles about the development of this supranational agency comprise the data for this part. In the second part we will focus on how the CEFR concept of literacy is localized in adult second language teaching in two Nordic countries. Our analysis is based on two cases in two different types of arenas within education; an ethnographic classroom research in Denmark, and a development project in a national political arena on setting goals for integration education for migrants in Finland. The classroom research in Denmark was a six-month fieldwork-based project directed towards the construction of literacy. The data for the research consisted basically of classroom observations, national curricula, and language tests (Holm, 2004). The Finnish development project was implemented by a provisional law included in the Act on the Promotion of Integration of Immigrants in 2010 and launched in order to "holistically promote the integration of migrants into Finnish society" (Pöyhönen *et al.*, 2010). The data for this part of the chapter are national curricula, interviews with policy-makers, administrators and teachers, classroom observations, and language tests and citizenship acts. In the last part of the chapter we will discuss the implications of the way in which literacy is conceptualized for adult second language education, for social cohesion, and for literacy research.

We are thus both analyzing supranational and national sites, and our aim of tracing the CEFR in different arenas and bringing the analysis into the same analytic frame is inspired by the theoretically and methodologically standpoints of multi-sited ethnography. However, this does not mean that the two research projects brought together in this paper reflect exactly similar kinds of research with similar aims. As Marcus (1995: 102) points out "in multi-sited ethnography, comparison emerges from putting questions to an emergent object of study whose contours, sites, and relationships are not known beforehand, but are themselves a

contribution of making an account that has different, complexly connected real-world sites of investigation". In our approach, we are also inspired by policy ethnography (see e.g. Gustafsson, 2010) which focuses on multi-layered analysis of policy processes, and the relationship between policy documents (e.g. laws, curricula) and classroom practice. We are aware that a multi-sited approach promotes on the one hand a high degree of methodological freedom but on the other raises hard questions about how to define research boundaries (Candea, 2007). We believe that this fluidity in relation to sites and boundaries is a basic condition for literacy research in a multimodal and globalised world and therefore needs to be empirically researched.

CEFR – From development projects to consensus based supranational standardization

The development of the conceptualization of literacy in the CEFR has a long history that seems valuable to know. Not only because it reveals that literacy is historically situated, but also because it reveals different logics and ways of conceptualizing literacy in language education, which might contribute to a more specific understanding of the transitional processes around literacy in education.

From the 1970´s to the 1990´s – the development period

The history of CEFR is closely related to the political aim of creating an inner market in Western Europe. One part of this process is a standardization of commodities, commercial regulations and currencies among the states. Another part [of the process] is to provide necessary conditions for the free movement of labor force (Long, 2005; Spolsky, 1995). Given the linguistic diversity in Europe, the ambition of the inner market was a substantial linguistic challenge, and a number of European countries met this challenge by an increased cooperation in language teaching. This cooperation was organized within the Council of Europe and had as it first aim to define a so-called threshold level – a common European linguistic minimum level for adult labor force (Holm, 2006) and to develop "a European unit/credit system for language teaching" (Trim *et al.*, 1973).

Central to the development of the threshold level was Wilkins' (1976) proposal for "a notional-functional syllabus". His ideas about a syllabus based on semantic and pragmatic categories were theoretically related to the concept of communicative competence introduced by Hymes and were a unique contribution to the discussion of syllabus design at the time. For Wilkins, language was a universal and not a language specific system. Accordingly, he saw language as a prototypical realization of communicative functions that could be organized "in terms of the purposes for which people are learning language and the kinds of language performance that are necessary to meet those purposes" (Wilkins, 1976: 13). Drawing on these theoretical assumptions Wilkins developed three main categories: a) semantico-grammatical categories, b) categories of modal meaning, and c) categories of communicative function (Wilkins, 1976: 25-54). Wilkins termed his approach "analytical" and contrasted it with a "synthetic" approach in which "parts of the language are taught separately and step by step so that acquisition is a process of global accumulation of parts until the whole structure of language has been built up" (Wilkins, 1976: 2), while in the analytic approach "the learner is exposed to stretches of language and has the job of analyzing the chunks to develop an understanding of how discrete items operate" (Johnson, 2006: 416).

Wilkins (1976: 81) saw his notional syllabus as a "more complete view of the nature of language" and as a taxonomy that might be used for foreign language curriculum development. This "new" view of language was in many ways an open-ended contribution to language education that posed a wide range of challenges rather

than offering specific solutions. Wilkins introduced a view of language, defined categories, and elaborated an index of notional categories, but he did not elaborate a full syllabus nor produce a large number of concrete language examples to illustrate his ideas. In the last paragraph of his book Wilkins reflects on testing and his conclusion is that "we do not know how to establish the communicative proficiency of the learner" (Wilkins, 1976: 82). Clearly, much was left for educationalists to do.

It is a noteworthy feature of the founding documents that the description and identification of "the necessary language performance" and "communicate functions" were *intuitively* and not *empirically* based (Long, 2005). The point of departure for the functional-notional approach and the threshold level development was thus a "need-analysis" based on speculations and presumptions about language learners´ linguistic needs.

From a literacy point of view it is relevant to notice that the threshold level reflects an understanding of language and language use first of all as oral interaction in speech communities. Neither in Wilkins' seminal work nor in the many national threshold level descriptions in, for instance, English, German, Italian, Danish or Swedish are literacy needs defined or specified (Holm, 2006; Jessen, 1983). Wilkins explicitly gives priority to what he terms "the language of doing" over the "language of reporting" (Johnson, 2006), and this cannot but place literacy in a somewhat subordinate position. This priority to oral language is also indicated in Wilkins' brief considerations about the implications of a functional-notional syllabus for language teaching, in which he points to role play as a major teaching technique (Johnson, 2006).

From the 1990´s to the 2010´s – the standardization period

After the widespread implementation of the functional-notional ideas into a range of national threshold descriptions, curricula and textbooks from the 1970´s to the 1990´s (Alderson, 2005; Johnson, 2006), the threshold level thinking went through an expanding process from the 1990´s onwards. According to Alderson (2005), the central stakeholders around the CEFR felt a need for a more differentiated definition of language learning objectives that included more than the original general threshold level for adult labor force. This "need" clearly relates to political processes such as the EU Maastricht Treaty in 1992 that made education a common European interest instead of perceiving it as a national and cultural matter, and generated a wide range of increased harmonizing efforts within education in the EU (Holm, 2006). The need for "more differentiated definitions" was thus basically a political ambition rooted in issues about standardization and general educational policy and not in theoretical reflections about language or language acquisition.

The rather pragmatic and non-theoretical approach to the development of the CEFR is evident in the statements about the constitutive categories in the framework. The CEFR is based on "the classic division into basic, intermediate and advanced" (CEFR, 2001: 23), and the reason given for a further division into six sublevels is that "it seems that an outline framework of six broad levels gives an adequate coverage of the learning space relevant to European language learners" (CEFR, 2001: 23). The words "classic" and "adequate" clearly assume and relate to a consensus about the meaning of these words and appear to have no foundation in theories about learning, education or language.

The overall conceptualization of language education embedded in the CEFR is presented in Figure 8.1.

A		B		C	
Basic User		Independent User		Proficient User	
A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
	A2.1 A2.2	B1.1 B1.2	B2.1 B2.2	C1.1 C1.2	

Figure 8.1 The levels in the Framework (CEFR, 2001: 23)

Within the Council of Europe the CEFR is seen as an elaboration of Wilkins ideas (CEFR, 2001). However, seen from a theoretical linguistic perspective it would be more precise to talk about a quite radical conceptual reorientation. The differentiation of language levels is one important part of this process of change. The second is the replacement of Wilkins basic categories with the "traditional" language teaching sub-skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Figueras *et al.*, 2005) which meant that literacy gained an important and visible position. The third important change, compared to Wilkins, is that the framework now is operating with a clear progression – or learning path - through different categories of subskills as demonstrated in Figure 8.2 - the scale for "Overall written production".

	OVERALL WRITTEN PRODUCTION
C2	Can write clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.
C1	Can write clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length and with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
B2	Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources.
B1	Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.
A2	Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like "and", "but" and "because".
A1	Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.

Figure 8.2 General scale for written production. (CEFR, 2001: 61)

What is a fundamental feature in the CEFR is that the scales, the description, and the progression in the six levels are neither a theoretical construction nor an empirical construction based on evidence taken from L2 learner data. The empirical base of the CEFR consists of judgements of language teachers and other experts with respect to the scaling and descriptors (Hulstijn, 2007).   Thus the CEFR basically reflects what could be agreed on among the many different national interests and stakeholders in the Council of Europe and thus appears as an expression of consensus (Risager, 2004; Holm, 2004, 2007).

Tracing Wilkins ideas and the development of CEFR reveals different approaches to how literacy might be conceptualized in language and literacy education and opens a window into the logic of these processes. The CEFR made literacy visible through a consensus process in which literacy was conceptualized as a scaled skill (Figueras *et al.*, 2005).

On the following pages, we will analyse how the conceptualization in the CEFR is localised in adult education planning and discourse in Denmark and Finland, how the CEFR conceptualization of literacy is localised in classroom practices, and how the scales of the CEFR is used in the regulation of access to citizenship.

Localising the CEFR

Generally speaking, adult migrants´ second language teaching has gone through rather similar processes of change in the Nordic countries, even though these processes have been characterized by a certain asynchrony and national differences in the way legislation is implemented and administration organized within education. In all Nordic countries, the CEFR has been adopted as the constitutive conceptualization of language and literacy within adult migrants´ second language teaching, and the aim of this adoption has been – among other things – to provide shared nation-wide objectives for adult migrants' second language teaching and to unify the educational system and pedagogical practices in the country. Other reasons provided by the policy arena for adopting the CEFR have been related to arguments about improving and making education more effective (Bron 2003; Holm, 2004; Pöyhönen *et al.*, 2010; Uddannelsesstyrelsen, 1999: 3).

Uses and interpretations of the CEFR in and around the curricula

The organizational framework for the education of adult migrants in Denmark has been closely and explicitly related to the CEFR since 1999 (1998 and 2001) (Uddannelsesstyrelsen, 1999). In Finland the CEFR was adopted some years later in 2007.

In Denmark the students are sorted into three categories based on two criteria. The first is whether or not the student is able to read and write the Latin alphabet and has attended school. If this is not the case the student is classified as illiterate and placed in "Danskuddannelse 1"(Danish Education 1) where the educational aim is to reach the A1 and A2 level. If the student has a short formal schooling, s/he is placed in "Danskuddannelse 2" (Danish Education 2) where the educational aim is B1+, and if the student has attended school for 12 years or more, s/he is placed in "Danskuddanelses 3" (Danish Education 3) where the educational aim is B2 or C1. When the student is placed in one of the three courses (Danish Education 1, 2 or 3) s/he is expected to stay in the track and not to move to another course. The impact of this is that adult migrants who arrive in Denmark without any formal education, with a short educational background or as illiterates as regards the Latin alphabet are in a curriculum track with rather low educational ambitions and aims that do not e.g. give access to general to citizenship. The argument for this categorization is an expected difference in students´ language acquisition related to their experience with formal schooling. Students are expected to progress slowly if they have not attended school or if they are Latin illiterates, quicker if they have attended some formal schooling, and fast if they have attended formal schooling for a longer period (Holm, 2004). Thus, in the Danish case, literacy has become a central tool for social selection in a way that basically is reproducing global inequalities in education (Holm, 2004).

In Finland, the objective in the national core curriculum for integration training for adult migrants is to "achieve functional basic proficiency in the Finnish or Swedish language", which in Finnish application of the CEFR means the target level B1.1 (FNBE, 2012a). The overall aim of the integration training is to promote and support "students' opportunities to participate in Finnish society as active members". There are also national core curricula for literacy training, where the objective is "to learn elementary Finnish or Swedish language skills and the basics of reading and writing skills" (FNBE, 2012b). In the Finnish provisional law project, learners have been identified according to three paths: adult immigrants seeking employment, adult immigrants who need special support (including illiterates), and children and adolescents. This type of sorting has been made in order to better support individual learning paths and aims (Pöyhönen *et al.*, 2010). In the public debate, the three paths model has been mostly welcomed by teachers, but also criticized – quite accurately – for being a political

tool in order to create new categories for social selection (e.g. Saarinen & Jäppinen, 2011). In this case the CEFR is used to discriminating functionally between different perceived language needs related to different future jobs or education. To sum up, both in Denmark and in Finland the use of the CEFR has created new categories of individual through new distinctions and classifications of people.

The conceptualization and scales in the CEFR has thus clearly become *the* structural grid for adult second language educational planning in both Denmark and Finland. The detailed conceptualizations and descriptions of skills and levels in the CEFR is however, also embedded in a specific rhetoric with specific signposts or mobilizing metaphors that relate to Wilkins ideas. The most predominant of these concepts is the concept of "functional language proficiency".

Finnish curricula on all educational levels emphasize functional language proficiency which is defined as the ability to use a language in a meaningful way in a communicative situation (Tarnanen & Huhta, 2008). The functional view of language proficiency is also strongly present among the Finnish teachers: what is regarded as good teaching is characterized by an emphasis on language proficiency rather than on language knowledge. There are, however, varying views on language in the pedagogic communities, and those teachers who are drawing on the language view prominent in the CEFR criticize the professional competence of those with the language knowledge view in designing local curricula. Although the language teacher in the example below does not explicitly say so, her criticism is focused on the fact that her interpretation of the view of language advocated in the CEFR has not been sufficiently well applied.

> I myself am really disappointed that all the teachers with us don't understand what language proficiency is and what is language knowledge, that language proficiency means that I can speak, answer questions, understand when the bus driver says something and language knowledge is that the partitive case ends in a or ä [---] the goals (of the local curriculum) set by some people concentrate excessively on language knowledge though they should concern language proficiency. (Finnish second language teacher)

The same language teacher described later in the same interview the difference between a CEFR-based and a not-CEFR based approach to language teaching in the following way:

> "...they [the other teachers] always look at me in a funny way when we go somewhere like the chemist's to run errands – "what are you going there for?" or anything else except sitting and studying with a paper under your nose. There is this awful psychological threshold to do anything (laughs) but it's really that you don't get any support from anybody for that" (Finnish second language teacher).

Thus, the adoption of the CEFR in Finland has in this case created, in a way, new antagonisms. The proponents of the CEFR are clearly using their own interpretation of the CEFR in an authoritative manner to define what is good or bad, right or wrong, in language teaching.

Not only the central keywords but also the scales of the CEFR seem to have a great impact on the discourses about adult second language teaching. The scales and levels also produce the categories and logic that are used in the discourse about language proficiency levels and employment, as the following two examples show:

> "Well it [B1] is the absolute minimum, but even if you pass the test you can ask if this level of language proficiency is useful, but on the other hand I've been raised (laughs) to accept this minimum" (Finnish as a second language teacher)

"Well for those who have no real chance of getting a job in the labour market this level [B1] is enough, you cope with this kind of language proficiency in banks and shops and wherever you have to get along, but we have only a few jobs where you can manage with this proficiency, well there's still some industry and construction work left" (Finnish official in a ministry)

What is interesting about these two examples from interviews conducted in relation to the revision of the development of the Finnish integration training for adult migrants, is that the CEFR levels frames the discussion as naturalized and taken-for-given categories that are not questioned.

The adoption of the CEFR in Denmark and Finland had a profound influence on the development of curricula by defining specific categories and levels for language teaching and by setting the conceptual scene for discourses about adult second language education. In addition to this, the adoption of the CEFR had another and quite often overlooked impact. It moved the power over the general conceptualization of language and literacy from a national (or local) level to a consensus-based supranational level. Although the rhetoric of the CEFR implies that the framework is a reference and not a prescription, the basic conceptualizations and scales of language and literacy are stated as givens and are not open to redefinition or reconceptualization, but basically only to application and adoption. Both the Danish and the Finnish case clearly reveal that the CEFR is regarded as an authoritative and constitutive instrument for organizing language teaching with concepts and scales that are beyond discussion.

In Finland and Denmark the CEFR has become a norm with a very strong influence on the political discourse on adult second language learning. It involves various kinds of people who are in gate-keeping positions in everyday language assessment: for example, administrators in employment services (who try to place people on right courses), tenderers (who provide training), and language teachers (who report on the learning progress). In general, there seems to be a firm, shared believe that the CEFR is based on solid research evidence even though this is not the case. (Holm, 2007; Hulstijn, 2007). Moreover, the adoption of the CEFR has strongly contributed to establishing a perspective on the adult migrant where his or her progression through the predefined levels of the CEFR is the only way to demonstrate the ability and willingness to be a "good" migrant. Actual "integration" in or contributions to different local contexts outside school are overlooked or at least not valued (Baynham & Simpson, 2010; Pöyhönen & Saario, 2009).

CEFR in the classroom

After having shown how the CEFR has impacted educational planning and discourses we now turn to classroom practices and examine how the conceptualization of literacy in the CEFR has been localized in the literacy practices in adult second language teaching. Based on ethnographic classroom data, Holm (2004) points out that the texts produced in the adult second language classroom represents a narrow range of genres that reflects those genres defined by ALTE, a supranational language testing agency working within the CEFR conceptualization of language and literacy. Consequently, a considerable "washback-intensity" from the CEFR (Cheng *et al.*, 2004) is evident in the classroom.

The texts produced within the given genres in the classroom are in general based on the reading of different types of texts related to issues in contemporary Danish society. The texts are read as authoritative and as revealing objective knowledge. Seen in a classroom perspective, this practice gives the teacher the role of an

authority, not only because of their superior command of the language or because of the structural authority built in the role of a teacher, but because being Danish by itself (the teachers are usually Danes with very few exceptions) gives authoritative power as regards the interpretation of Danish issues. The production of mostly individually produced and handwritten texts in the classroom is closely monitored by the teacher and students are given both oral and written feedback. The aim of the interaction is to eliminate linguistic mistakes and to make sure that the texts come up to the norms of the testing system concerning writing tasks, including the required number of words, rhetoric structure, headings, and appropriateness.

This condensed description of the construction of literacy in second language teaching clearly reveals how the understanding of predefined "needs" in relation to literacy creates a specific relation between teacher and students. Teachers are placed in an expert role and as providers of the "needed" language, and students are placed as receivers of some "needs" predefined for them. Furthermore, it is quite evident that the adoption of the CEFR has led to an understanding of second language literacy as a predefined step-by-step progression – or as a "lock-step-march" to literacy – to quote Graff (1994). Such an approach tends not to be sensitive to an individual's former experience, current needs, and future aims. It also appears infantilizing because it implies that adults have to, once again, learn many aspects of language and literacy right from the start and in a given order.

The following example from a language test was used (together with many other similar examples) in the classroom to prepare students with 12 or more years of schooling for the test in Danish Education 3. It demonstrates the localization of the CEFR conceptualization of literacy in a Danish context.

Letter to a friend

Situation: You have received this letter from your girlfriend Marie. In the letter she talks about some problems she has with her daughter at 13 years.

Dear ...

Thank you for last. It was very cozy.

I actually write to you because I want to hear your opinion about a problem I have. This is Louise. She has of late become so preoccupied with how she looks and what clothes she walks in. She talks constantly about buying some specific clothes that cost a fortune. As you know, we have not so much money at the moment, so even if I wanted, I cannot buy something for her, and not the expensive clothes she wants. She will or cannot understand that we are not able to afford it, so either she's mad at me or she cries. What should I do? Can you give me some advice, likely as soon as possible.
I look forward to hearing from you. Greet everyone for me.

Love
Marie

Task
Write a letter to Marie.
You must:
• thank her for the letter

- comment on Marie's problem
- propose something she can do

You must initiate and complete the letter in an appropriate manner.

This example reveals how literacy in adult second language teaching is conceptualized as production of a predefined and given genre with specific content demands and requirements for writing according to the norms for appropriateness. Furthermore, the conceptualization of literacy in this case requires the students to put on a writer's identity as a Dane with interest in and experience of bringing up a child, and leaves no door open neither for critical comments to the letter and the whole issue nor for introducing other issues which the writer might find relevant.

CEFR and citizenship

In their analysis of testing regimes in Europe, Hogan-Brun *et al.*, (2009) point out that in the past decade linguistic proficiency has emerged as one of the key conditions for granting a residence permit and for naturalization in an increasing number of European countries. They also claim that institutional systems for "immigration and citizenship can only be developed at state level since there is no EU-wide frameworks for citizenship legislation that could bind states to a code of practice in determining regulations and procedures for granting residence rights and citizenship" (Hogan-Brun *et al.*, 2009: 4). From a formal legislative perspective they are right, but if the EU is seen as a network state with travelling concepts (such as the CEFR) that are localized in different ways the situation appears to be quite different (Extra *et al.*, 2009). The CEFR is clearly an EU-wide framework with a great impact on the way linguistic proficiency in a particular language is used as a criterion for granting residency rights or citizenship. Extra *et al.* (2009) argue that even though the CEFR is not a prescriptive model and its main aim is to offer a frame of reference, many European countries use it in language courses and tests for migrants. The CEFR has thus become a safe basis, an unchallenged and unquestioned norm, for choosing a particular level of language proficiency in setting a language policy for citizenship, for example. Extra *et al.* (2009: 18) conclude that the CEFR which – according to Extra *et al.* (2009) – was primarily meant for promoting plurilingualism "is used by some policy makers as a scientific justification to promote monolingualism in official state languages and to focus more on what newcomers lack than on what they might be able to contribute."

In both Finland and Denmark it is a precondition for citizenship to prove one's language proficiency. This means, as Simons and Masschelein (2008: 391) argues that "citizenship is not just perceived as a legal matter that is related to rights and obligations, but as a performance based upon particular competencies". The language competences needed for citizenship in Finland and Denmark as in many other European countries are based on the language proficiency levels developed in the CEFR.

The CEFR is thus used as a normative standpoint not only for adult migrants' second language teaching but also in granting or denying citizenship. The CEFR thus forms a basis for the attempts to prevent social segregation or for promoting social inclusion of migrants. Yet, at the same time, the CEFR and the accompanying discourse on literacy and language proficiency is a powerful device in doing the opposite: to widen the gap between social groups through mechanisms that Blackledge (2006) refers to as "the double language of political discourse". The increasing demands on language and literacy skills for acquiring citizenship in many EU countries

based on the CEFR (2001) might function as a considerable threat to social cohesion, because more and more adult migrants seem to be denied the possibility of becoming EU citizens. This clearly contradicts the aim of the CERF as being a contribution to "the democratization of language teaching" that is presented as a central impetus for its groundwork.[ii]

Discussion

The development from the comparatively open-ended functional-notional suggestions by Wilkins for curriculum development to the detailed framework found in the CEFR represents a shift from a presentation of a linguistic *idea* for curriculum development and language teaching to a general supranational and predefined conceptualization of skills, levels and scales in language teaching. This change in educational planning from *development* of curricula to the *application* of supranational conceptualization and standards to language teaching has to a large extend established the CEFR as something authoritative and objective beyond critical scrutiny. This naturalization of a specific view of language, literacy and learning might lead to a situation in which many conceptual and pedagogical discussions about literacy in adult second language teaching might seem to be irrelevant.

The localization of the CEFR in Denmark and Finland did not take place at the same time and the conceptual framework was not used for the same purposes and in the same way. However, our analysis show how consensus-based concepts developed by supranational agencies function as a discursive force that frames what count as legitimate conceptualizations of language and literacy, and how the conceptualizations and levels of the CEFR have been firmly established in education as a general instrument for educational planning and practice and for regulation of access to citizenship. As a result, the CEFR has become a political tool, which has consequences for adult migrants' second language teaching. It can also lead to high stakes decisions for migrants themselves and to a situation in which different actors (migrants, teachers and policy makers) change their behaviors according to the demands of the tests (Shohamy, 2001).

Literacy in the EU is in transition and quite strongly related to supranational concepts and supranational agencies and networks. Understanding the CEFR as an artifact and analyzing the localization of this conceptualization of literacy through a multi-sited ethnographic approach has made it possible to read literacy locally as well as translocally. The different interpretations and uses of the CEFR in Denmark and Finland are thus a perfect example of the fluidity that appears when a shared authority is naturalized in a supranational network.

To sum up, a basic criticism of the CEFR is that it contains very detailed descriptions of literacy. Literacy is seen as something already given and not as a multiple and negotiable phenomenon – as *literacies* that are created, developed and shaped under changing social conditions (Levine, 1994). Moreover, the CEFR represents a very narrow understanding of language and literacy with a predefined understanding of the progression of language and literacy learning. This does not give much room for challenging genres or for constructing new ones. It also gives little room for autonomy, subjectivity and negotiation in relation to content, form and genre. As a consequence, the CEFR does not seem to be a suitable point of departure for educational planning if priority is given to an approach that is sensitive to an individual student's experiences, wishes and needs, and to the development of creativity and aesthetics. If the CEFR understanding of language and literacy progression is the starting point in language teaching programmes it might create a situation in which all students, no matter what their educational background and their already existing experiences with language and literacy are, are placed in a position where they have to learn a new language from scratch (Blackledge, 2000; Holm 2004).

Modern society is often characterized as a learning society in which literacy skills are in a vital position. Membership in society such as being employed and keeping one's job requires from an individual the ability and desire to learn and keep up and develop his/her competence. Consequently, social problems such as unemployment might be perceived as problems in learning that are to be solved through education. (Simons & Masschelein, 2008.) An example of this type of thinking is the debate on the sufficiency of migrants' language skills for their integration and employment for which the central solution from society's point of view appears to be offering them more language education. This type of social selection for education is quite often hidden, but it can be traced by examining normative assumptions about the roles and interplay of migrants' language skills, education and employment (Forsander, 2004; Tarnanen & Pöyhönen, 2011).

If the development within the EU is seen as a process towards a learning society this has considerable implications for pedagogies. A learning society seems to imply a growing need for literacies and uses of texts. Technological development offers new possibilities for combining text, picture and sound in the creation of meaning, and globalisation processes mean that the construction of meaning takes increasingly place between persons who communicate in a second or foreign language or in combinations of languages. This might lead to a more frequent need for negotiations of meaning, for code-switching and for a creative use of multimodality. All this indicates that new types of multimodal and multilingual literacies – not reflected in the CEFR – might play an important role in the learning society of the future (Holm, 2004, 2007; Taalas *et al.*, 2008).

In our view, literacy is a complex, changing and dynamic social practice of great importance in identity construction and for the understanding of knowledge, and therefore it is difficult for us to see the need for European standardisation. On the contrary – it becomes important to direct attention to the multiple ways literacy is used and to relate knowledge about this to the ongoing development of literacy education. Literacy in language education has a potential for contributing to personal and societal development. There are three preconditions for this. First, literacy is understood as a multiple, multilingual, multimodal and negotiable phenomenon. Secondly, the writer – or actually the *author* – is seen as a subject and a co-producer of literacy. Thirdly, the curricula are sensitive towards the learner's experiences, aims and wishes.

References

Alderson, J.C. (2005) *Diagnosing Foreign Language Proficiency: The Interface between Learning and Assessment.* London: Continuum.

Baynham, M. and Simpson, J. (2010) Onwards and Upwards: Space, Placement, and Liminality in Adult ESOL Classes. *TESOL Quarterly* 44 (3), 420-440.

Blackledge, A. (2000) Power relations and the social construction of 'literacy' and 'illiteracy'. The experience of Bangladeshi women in Birmingham. In M. Martin-Jones and K. Jones (eds) *Multilingual Literacies. Reading and Writing Different Worlds* (pp. 55-69). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Blackledge, A. (2006) "The men say 'They don't need it.'" Gender and the extension of language testing for British citizenship. *Studies in Language & Capitalism* 1, 143-161.

Blommaert, J. (2003) Commentary: A sociolinguistics of globalization. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7 (4), 607-623.

Blommaert, J. (2010) *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blommaert, J. and Rampton, B. (2011) Language and Superdiversity. *Diversities* 13 (2), 1-21.

Brandt, D. and Clinton, K. (2002) Limits of the local: expanding perspectives on literacy as a social practice. *Journal of Literacy Research* 34 (3), 337-356.

Bron, A. (2003) From an immigrant to a citizen: language as a hindrance or a key to citizenship. *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 22 (6), 606-619.

Candea, M. (2007) Arbitrary locations: in defense of the bounded field-site. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13, 167-184.

Castells, M. (2010) Grassrooting the space of flows. *Urban Geography* 20 (4), 294-302.

CEFR (1998) *Modern Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. A Common European Framework of Reference.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

CEFR (2001) *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cheng, L., Watanabe, Y. and Curtis, A. (eds) (2004) *Washback in Language Testing. Research Contexts and Methods.* Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Extra, G., Spotti, M. and Van Avermaet, P. (2009) Testing regimes for newcomers. In G. Extra, M. Spotti and P. Van Avermaet (eds) *Language Testing, Migration and Citizenship* (pp. 3-33). London: Continuum.

Figueras, N., North, B., Takala, S., Verhelst, N. and Van Avermaet, P. (2005) Relating examinations to Common European Framework: a manual. *Language Testing* 22, 261-279.

FNBE. Finnish National Board of Education (2012a) *National Core Curriculum for Integration Training for Adult Migrants 2012.* Helsinki: Finnish National Board of Education. Publications 2012:6.

FNBE. Finnish National Board of Education (2012b) *National Core Curriculum for Literacy Training for Adult Migrants 2012.* Helsinki: Finnish National Board of Education. Publications 2012:7.

Forsander, A. (2004) Social capital in the context of immigration and diversity: Economic participation in the Nordic welfare states. *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 5 (2), 207-227.

Graff, H.J. (1994) Literacy, myths and legacies: lessons from the history of literacy. In L. Verhoeven (ed.) *Functional Literacy* (pp. 37-60). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Gustafsson, J. (2003) *Integration som Text, Diskursiv och Social Praktik* [Integration as a text, discursive and social practice]. Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.

Gustafsson, J. (2010) Pedagogical integration and regionalization. *Nordisk Barnehageforskning* 3 (3), 105-114.

Hogan-Brun, G., Mar-Molinero, C. and Stevenson, P. (2009) Testing regimes. Introducing cross-national perspectives on language, integration and citizenship. In G. Hogan-Brun, C. Mar-Molinero and P. Stevenson (eds) *Discourses on Language and Integration: Critical Perspectives on Language Testing Regimes in Europe* (pp. 1-12). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Holm, L. (2004) Hvilken vej ind i hvilken skriftlighed? Et studie af undervisning i skriftlighed i dansk som andetsprog for voksne [Which way into which kind of literacy? A study of adult second language literacy teaching]. København: Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitet.

Holm, L. (2006) Sprogtests i et andetsprogsperspektiv - med særligt henblik på literacy [Language tests from a second language perspective – with specific focus on literacy]. *Nordand - Nordisk Tidsskrift for andrespråksforskning* 1 (2), 57-77.

Holm, L. (2007) Konstruktionen af en fælles europæisk skriftlighed. En kritisk diskussion [The construction of common European literacy]. In S. Matre (ed.) *Skrive for nåtid og framtid* (pp. 52-62). Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag.

Holm, L. and Laursen H. P. (2011) Migrants and Literacy Crises. *APPLE S – Journal of Applied Language Studies* 5 (2), 3-16.

Hulstijn, J.H. (2007) The shaky ground beneath the CEFR: Quantitative and qualitative dimensions of language proficiency. *The Modern Language Journal* 91, 663–667.

Jessen, J. (1983) *Et taerskelniveau for dansk* [A threshold level for Danish]. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Johnson, K. (2006) Revisiting Wilkins' *Notional Syllabuses. International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 16 (3), 414-418.

Levine, K. (1994) Functional literacy in a changing world. In L. Verhoeven (ed.) *Functional literacy. Theoretical issues and educational implications* (pp. 113-131). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Long, M.H. (2005) A rationale for needs analysis and needs analysis research. In M.H. Long (ed.) *Second Language Needs Analysis* (pp. 1-18.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marcus, G.E. (1995) Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24, 95-117.

Martin, E. (1994) *Flexible Bodies. The role of immunity in American culture from the days of Polio to the days of AIDS.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Moos, L. (2006) What kinds of democracy in education are facilitated by supra- and transnational agencies? *European Educational Research Journal* 5 (3-4), 160-168.

Pitkänen-Huhta, A. (2003) *Texts and interaction: literacy practices in the EFL classroom.* Jyväskylä Studies in Languages 55. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

Pöyhönen, S. and Saario, J. (2009) In the land of paper – Migrant pupils and adolescents learning literacies in Finland. In S. May (ed.) LED2007: *Refereed Conference Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Language, Education and Diversity*. Hamilton, New Zealand: Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research (WMIER), University of Waikato.

Pöyhönen, S., Tarnanen, M., Vehviläinen, E-M., Virtanen, A. and Pihlaja, L. (2010) *Osallisena Suomessa. Kehittämissuunnitelma maahanmuuttajien kotoutumisen edistämiseksi* [Participative integration in Finland. A development plan]. University of Jyväskylä: Centre for Applied Language Studies, Finnish Cultural Foundation.

Risager, K. (2004) A social and cultural view to language. In H.L. Hansen (ed.) *Disciplines and Interdisciplinarity in Foreign Language Studies* (pp. 21-34). University of Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

Saarinen, T. (2007) Quality on the move: discursive construction of higher education policy from the perspective of quality. Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 83. PhD thesis, University of Jyväskylä.

Saarinen, A. and Jäppinen M. (2011) Political inclusion of migrants in Finland – The five policy phases in 1990s-2010s. Paper presented at a conference *Migrant Labour: Contested Integration, Prospects for Citizenship*, September 15-16, 2011. Peace Institute & City University (London), Ljubljana.

Shohamy, E. (2001) *The Power of Tests: A Cperspective of the Uses of Language Tests.* London: Longman.

Simons, M. and Masschelein, J. (2008) The governmentalization of learning and the assemblage of a learning apparatus. *Educational Theory* 58 (4), 391-415.

Spolsky, B. (1995) *Measured Words: The Development of Objective Language Testing.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Taalas, P., Kauppinen, M., Tarnanen, M., and Pöyhönen, S. (2008) Media landscapes in school and in free time – two parallel realities? *Digital Kompetanse - Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy* 3 (4), 240-256.

Tarnanen, M. and Huhta, A. (2008) Interaction of Language Policy and Assessment in Finland. *Current Issues in Language Planning* 9 (3), 262-281.

Tarnanen, M. and Pöyhönen, S. (2011) Maahanmuuttajien suomen kielen taidon riittävyys ja työllistymisen mahdollisuudet [Adequacy of migrants' Finnish proficiency and employment opportunities]. *Puhe ja kieli* 4, 139-152.

Trim, J.L.M., Richterich, R., van Ek, J. and Wilkins, D. (1973) *Systems Development in Adult Second Learning.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Uddannelsestyrelsen (1999) *Spor 3. Undervisningsvejledning* [Track 3. Teaching guide]. København: Undervisningsministeriet.

Vertovec, S. (2006) *The emergence of super-diversity in Britain.* Centre on Migration, Policy and Society. Working Paper No 25. University of Oxford.

Wilkins, D. (1976) *Notional Syllabuses.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[i] In the rest of the chapter CEFR (2001) is referred as "the CEFR".

[ii] http://www. coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/historique