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Article

Migrants' Inclusion in Civil Societies: The Case of Language Cafés in Sweden

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Abstract

This article investigates the role of language cafés as venues where newly arrived migrants to Sweden can socialize and practice the target language. More specifically, we aim to explore how café organizers and volunteers orient to social inclusion as they are interviewed about the goals of the local café and engage in talk-in-interaction with the visitors during video-recorded café sessions. At the methodological level, we rely on ethnomethodologically informed ethnography and conversation analysis, through which we adopt an emic approach to data analysis by taking into account the members' interpretation of their social world and the actions they accomplish in it. Our analysis uncovers the organizers' and volunteers' conceptualization of social inclusion, which they articulate in terms of fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment; they also perceive the mutual benefits derived from the encounters with the migrants at the local café. Overall, the migrants' views dovetail with the concept of "everyday citizenship," which highlights the dimensions of belonging, rights, and access to resources for social participation as constitutive of social inclusion. These findings highlight the perceived role of language cafés as a way to act on the existing social reality to transform the local community into an inclusive, equal, and integrated society.

Keywords

civic activities; civil societies; emic perspective; language café; migration; social inclusion; Sweden

Issue

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1. Introduction

This study investigates the conceptualization of "social inclusion" that emerges in the views of organizers and volunteers in language cafés organized for migrants in Sweden and relates it to the framework of "everyday citizenship" proposed by Nedlund et al. (2019). The concept of social inclusion faces definitional inconsistency, which makes it difficult to survey and assess (Filia et al., 2018). Approaches to social inclusion have often centered partly on policy and politics, and partly on social practices. In this article, we align with the latter as we study how volunteers and café organizers orient to social inclusion

in interviews and during café sessions, where the participants' views are topicalized in talk-in-interaction with the migrants.

Our analysis draws on ethnography, with a particular interest in ethnomethods (Eisenmann & Mitchell, 2022; for an ethnography of reasoning "in the wild" see also Livingston, 2017), and ethnomethodological conversation analysis (Sacks, 1995). In our methodology, we adopt an emic (Pike, 1954) approach to data analysis; that is, the data are interpreted from a members' perspective (Garfinkel, 1967). This perspective explores how members of a social system understand their social world in practice and specifically focuses on how they

make sense of their social activities. Here we investigate how organizers and volunteers make sense of their engagement in language café activities and analyze how they understand social inclusion in the everyday practices of the language cafés they organize and attend. In this article, we maintain that the participants' views concerning the language cafés, as expressed in interviews and emerging in café sessions, illustrate their approach to the procedural work they (should) follow to make their communities, and society in general, more inclusive.

The emic focus on social inclusion adopted in the present study dovetails with the concept of everyday citizenship (Nedlund et al., 2019), which highlights how members of a community may understand and influence their position in the community. In this framework, citizenship is understood as a set of practices that are achieved by individuals in social situations (Nedlund et al., 2019); through those practices, the individual members of a community may display their awareness of their own position in the community and may attempt to influence it. Inclusion, in particular, is therefore reflected in those social practices that are co-constructed in and through social activities and social interactions.

The concept of everyday citizenship has been applied to the study of vulnerable populations—including people with special needs, minority groups, migrants, and asylum seekers—in various disciplines, such as social psychology (see, e.g., Hopkins, 2022) and policy in practice (e.g., Nedlund & Nordh, 2015). The core dimensions of the everyday citizenship framework are belonging and participation, as well as rights and access to resources for social participation. Depending on how these dimensions are realized in everyday life, individuals, as actors in their communities, find more or less opportunities to display their agency (Nedlund et al., 2019; see also the discussion on linguistic citizenship in Stroud, 2001; Williams et al., 2022). These dimensions—belonging, participation, rights, and access—could be investigated from policy and organizational perspectives or subjective and interpersonal/intersubjective perspectives. In this study, we embrace the latter in approaching the concept of social inclusion (and of social inclusion as everyday citizenship) as emically oriented to by the members of the receiving community as they talk about their involvement in local language cafés and topicalize their views in their interaction with the migrants. The definitions of social inclusion and the dimensions of everyday citizenship are therefore reflexively recognized and highlighted in the analysis of excerpts from the interviews and from talk-in-interaction in the language cafés.

2. Language Cafés and Civic Activities

The positive role of civic initiatives for the members of various communities, particularly migrants, has been highlighted in many studies (for a review see Kunitz, 2022). Some studies have shown that civil societies pro-

vide practical aid to migrants such as shelter, food, and medical care (e.g., Linde & Idestrom, 2019). Other types of support have been observed in how civil societies arrange activities for migrants to help them socialize with other members of the community (Kunitz & Jansson, 2021) and advance in their educational and career development (see, e.g., Vandevordt, 2019). In many of these studies (e.g., Alenius, 2016; Schmidtke, 2018), it has been emphasized that civil societies provide opportunities for informal learning by sharing information that is necessary for the migrants to access the resources and networks they need (see also Kunitz, 2022).

In this article, we focus on one civic initiative: language cafés for migrants. Before we continue, a terminological note is in order: Here we use “migrants” to refer to “anyone who is on the move” (Jansson, 2021b, p. 2), who is considered to belong to a minority in the receiving community, and who is often characterized by the feature of vulnerability. Language cafés in Sweden are social arenas organized by public libraries, churches, and the Red Cross. They are intended as (more or less transient) meeting places where migrants (or visitors) can establish social connections with members of the receiving community (L1 speakers of Swedish or L2 speakers of Swedish who have lived in Sweden for some time) while practicing the Swedish language and learning about the local culture (Kunitz & Majlesi, 2022). The language cafés that we have studied are hybrid environments that are neither fully institutionalized nor fully informal. That is, the café organizers may have a pedagogical agenda (such as the goal of providing information about societal issues and/or of improving the visitors' language skills); however, such agenda is not anchored in any documented curriculum. This means that language cafés are not framed as educational settings, although an orientation to learning/education and many education-relevant practices and exchanges have been observed there (Jansson, 2021a, 2021b; Kunitz, 2022; Kunitz & Majlesi, 2022; Majlesi, 2022; Polo-Pérez, 2022).

Previous studies on language cafés have focused on aspects of language training (Kunitz & Majlesi, 2022; Majlesi, 2022) and, specifically, on the participants' contingent orientation to local epistemic ecologies of knowledge distribution. It has also been observed how social interactional practices in language cafés, such as story-telling in small group sessions, may support positive aspects of the migrants' identity as valuable individuals that can legitimately be part of and contribute to Swedish society with their skills (Kunitz & Jansson, 2021). In a similar vein, Jansson (2021b), in a study of church professionals' engagement with migrants, uses the concept of “belonging” to describe the interactional work that is done in language cafés in order to “negotiate spaces in which one can experience social well-being and feel embraced by the community and empowered as an enabled citizen, as well as spaces in which one can form social relationships” (p. 4). In this article, we intend to add to the existing literature on language cafés

by focusing on the issue of social inclusion from the perspective of everyday citizenship.

3. Data and Methods

Our study is part of a larger project that involved extensive fieldwork and data collection. Overall, during our fieldwork, we visited eight church-based cafés, three library-based cafés, and three cafés organized by the Red Cross. We conducted approximately 160 visits in 14 cafés and collected video recordings of 81 café sessions in 12 cafés, for a total of ca. 130 hours of video data. Moreover, we conducted 62 interviews with language café organizers and volunteers, comprising ca. 30 hours of audio recordings. During the interviews, the participants were asked to comment on their perceived goals of the local café and to discuss their view of their own commitment to the café.

In terms of ethical procedures, the project started after being vetted by the Ethics Review Authority in Sweden. Once we received approval, we contacted and met with organizers and volunteers to present our project and explain what our fieldwork would entail. Then, once the organizers and volunteers had introduced us to the visitors, we started to attend various café sessions. In our fieldwork, we took great care in not influencing the agenda of the activities taking place in the cafés. During the café sessions, in some cases, we directly engaged in the café activities through participant observations, while in other cases we acted as co-present observers, without taking an active role.

When we deemed that the café visitors were familiar with our presence, we started to recruit participants for video recording. At this stage, we provided the visitors with more detailed information about the project, both orally and in writing, and addressed any questions they had before video recording the sessions. The project description and the consent form were available in Arabic, Persian/Dari, English, Spanish, and Swedish. On a few occasions, we also used volunteers who simultaneously interpreted our oral explanations in Spanish, Tigrinya, Somali, and Japanese. Video recording of the café sessions started only after the prospective participants (café organizers, volunteers, and migrants) had signed the informed consent forms; similarly, the interviews with organizers and volunteers were conducted only after receiving their written consent for participation in the study. The participants were informed on various occasions about the voluntary nature of their participation and about the possibility of withdrawing at any time without needing to provide any reason. The research team was very cautious about the integrity of the participants at every step of the fieldwork, for example by stopping the recording if the participants manifested any sign of discomfort.

As mentioned above, to explore how social inclusion is oriented to and conceptualized by organizers and volunteers in language cafés, we analyze the views

they expressed in interviews and topicalized during café sessions. As a methodological principle, we adopt an emic (Pike, 1954) or member's perspective (Garfinkel, 1967) that minimizes the researcher's subjective experience and etic interpretative lens and instead provides a detailed description and interpretation of the data from within the dataset. This approach ensures that the descriptions produced in the analysis are recognizable as documenting the participants' understanding of the actions they (aim to) accomplish.

More specifically, our analytical procedure is informed by ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) and conversation analysis (Sacks, 1995). An important element in this type of research is the "unique adequacy requirement" (Garfinkel, 1996; for a more recent discussion see Hofstetter, 2022), which involves acquiring membership knowledge from within the organization and the activity under investigation. Another element involves the discovery of various types of phenomena, specifically the identification of the emergence of particular actions and practices, through both direct observations (fieldwork) and indirect observations (in recorded materials). The themes in our study emerge from the participants' interviews and conversations. They are either directly and explicitly talked about—that is, literally uttered as such by the participants (e.g., belonging and rights)—or can commonsensically be inferred from the description that the participants provide in their talk (e.g., participation and access). Our direct observations, interviews, and recordings support our understanding of the talks and validate our interpretations.

By adopting an emic and data-driven empirical approach, our study does not promote any received version of social reality, and neither does it rely on any formal social theories to interpret that social reality. However, we discuss the themes emerging from the data with reference to the concept of everyday citizenship (Nedlund et al., 2019). Our analysis is based on a reflexive description of the empirical data, where we investigate how various dimensions of everyday citizenship become manifest in its everyday use and practical intelligibility as reported by the participants in our study.

The data presented here consist of excerpts from five interviews with the café organizers and volunteers that were active in three churches (anonymized as A, B, and C) and one library, and extracts from two sessions of the same library café. The interview excerpts exemplify the three main themes that were inductively and empirically identified in all interviews; that is, belonging (Jansson, 2021b, p. 8), empowerment, and mutual benefits. These excerpts were selected because they provide diverse, rich, and detailed information for a comprehensive understanding of the research topic, while at the same time being short enough to be included in this publication format.

In addition, we decided to complement the interview data (which represent self-report data) with excerpts from the café sessions to illustrate how the focal themes

did not only emerge in conversation with a researcher but also during the interaction with the migrants. For this part of our study, we focused on the library café mentioned above, as themes related to social inclusion and integration were frequently topicalized during the sessions of this café. In the examples presented here, the names of all participants are pseudonymized.

4. Examples From the Interviews: Spaces of Belonging, Empowerment, and Mutual Benefits

In this section, we focus on the volunteers' attitudes toward language cafés as venues for social inclusion. Due to space limits, we present only word-by-word translations of the interviews, which were conducted in Swedish; in double parentheses, we have made clarifying additions (for the transcription convention, see the Supplementary File).

In the interviews, the organizers describe the language café as an open meeting place for socializing, a welcoming environment where newly arrived migrants can experience a sense of connection and community. This illustrates an orientation to "belonging"; that is, to one of the core dimensions of social inclusion within the framework of everyday citizenship (Nedlund et al., 2019). This view is exemplified in Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1 (Maria, Church A):

We want that everybody who come here shall feel embraced, an' that they may just be here and hang around if they wish. Some of us prefer to sit and teach e::: an' like feel that "now I teach you Swedish," an' yeah. So it's very different. But of course, of course, we want everybody to feel at home: that's the kind of main goal.

Here, Maria describes the church café that she organizes as an environment where everybody "shall feel embraced" and can "feel at home." Therefore, despite the use of *we* versus *they*, which establishes a contrast between the long-standing members of the local community and the migrants, Maria maintains an affiliative attitude towards the latter. Maria's reasoning here is in line with the idea that civil societies and civic activities are meant to build social networks for the migrants; this goal is part of the process of creating equal access and opportunities so that the migrants can participate in the social and economic life of the receiving community (see also Hanhörster & Wessendorf, 2020). However, the café goal is not exclusively connected to social inclusion in terms of belonging. Specifically, Maria also mentions that some volunteers and organizers prefer to "sit and teach," thereby highlighting the significance of balancing comfort with educational benefits for the visitors. Similar associations between language cafés and the development of knowledge, skills, and language have been reported elsewhere (Polo-Pérez, 2022).

In Excerpts 2–4, it is evident how organizers not only highlight the issue of belonging but also the agency of the newly arrived migrants whose voice, they believe, could be given more space in the community. They define their suggestions in terms of empowering the newly arrived migrants through the provision of knowledge and information.

Excerpt 2 (Stina, Church B):

To help people in different ways in the language café is not just ((about)) language, because we answer questions from people ((about social life)) and help them to get things right and we also do this by having a project right now that we call the asylum project and they aim, as they say in the project statement, to empower the newly arrived.

Stina, the organizer of another church café, expresses her intention to provide visitors with more than just language support. She aims to create a space where visitors can receive help to settle and "get things right." She emphasizes the importance of empowering the newly arrived migrants with information and knowledge about social life in Sweden.

A similar goal is illustrated more explicitly in Excerpt 3, taken from an interview with Arif, the organizer of a library café.

Excerpt 3 (Arif, Library A):

I want to lift the library based on their ((the migrants')) needs; I want them to know what country they have ended up in, what their rights and obligations are.

Here, the concept of knowledge as power is expressed more clearly, together with a view of the migrants as social actors that need access to information about rights and obligations in order to become agentive citizens in their new community (for the importance of exercising one's civic rights see Bech et al., 2017). It should also be noted that Arif is a migrant himself, though he has lived in Sweden for a long time and considers himself a full-fledged member of Swedish society. In another part of the interview, he emphasizes how "feeling sorry" for the migrants is not a helpful attitude: What they need is not pity; rather, they should be empowered with the information they need in order to take an active role in the receiving community.

The examples above highlight an important aspect of social inclusion from an Everyday Citizenship approach; that is, the agency connected to the possibility of being heard and seen. Participation in social life includes a democratic dimension of group membership, which implies that members of a community strive for opportunities to be heard and seen as equal. This is emphasized in Excerpt 4, drawn from the interview with the organizer of another church café.

Excerpt 4 (Elin, Church C):

You know that you should give people the power or the feeling that they can live more freely in this country in some way, and it's very much about the language, that you can move around here, that you can understand and not be kind of made fun of, but you have a way forward....It's true that the language is the cultural understanding and it's integration; all of that is very much related. But context, you come to a context, you meet others; something that is here like an institution, in a way, an organization where you meet these people...and they also meet the society and one gets more and more like integrated and understands and so on. So it is clearly one of the purposes as well, absolutely. At the same time, we have thought as a congregation here that we don't believe in assimilation, (([in those who])) want to say: "Come and do as we do; you are welcome but come and do as we do." ((We)) have thought on the contrary: "Come and challenge us." Like: "We'd like to see how you do, let's see" in a way, right? That you can be met and that ((you can be)) different is so exciting, and completely natural, right? And that we want to challenge both us and those who come as new and then we ((together)) can see how we are and how we do, and then one makes that encounter and they think: "Yes, it is integration."

In this part of the interview, Elin explicitly talks about the goal of language cafés in terms of giving power to the newly arrived. This idea is concretely exemplified in terms of helping people to feel "that they can live more freely in this country in some way" and it is related to language, which allows them to "move around," "understand" and "have a way forward" without being "made fun of." All these elements reveal Elin's interpretation of what empowerment entails; it is the interrelatedness of these aspects that constitutes the integration path. Elin then illustrates her view of the language café's mission: Besides empowerment, which is "clearly one of the purposes," she and the other organizers aim for integration rather than assimilation. In the interview, Elin actually presents assimilation policies as contradictory: "You are welcome but come and do as we do" (note the use of *but* here). That is, assimilation is depicted as a one-way process that involves the migrants' adaptation to and adoption of the habits and values of the receiving community. In contrast to this, Elin emphasizes the significance of following a two-way path in the intercultural encounter between locals and migrants. This involves not only providing the tools that allow the migrants to "understand," but also accepting the fact that the locals might be challenged by the newly arrived. This orientation can be understood through the lens of everyday citizenship (Nedlund et al., 2019), which emphasizes not solely offering access to resources and opportunities for participation in the society but also treating the visitors

as equals who may challenge the views of the local community. Ultimately, as Elin suggests, integration entails the shared challenge of being together and together seeing "how we are and how we do." This attitude clearly promotes participation and agency. It is through empowerment and integration that a new sense of belonging, of being part of an inclusive *we*, can develop.

By highlighting the two-way aspect of the integration process (see also Kunitz, 2022), Excerpt 4 also touches on the third theme that recurs in the interviews; that is, the idea that participation in the language cafés brings mutual benefits to both the long-standing members of the receiving community and the newly arrived. This theme is more explicitly illustrated in Excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5 (Karola, Church C):

Karola: We will never be done with this; the purpose is to kind of standing by ((the people)), meeting people in what ((context)) they find themselves, and if possible helping and supporting each other, getting a network. That's the whole purpose. It's very simple. We function as a community in everything, you could say; we share and we help each other; it's not that "now I'm going to help you down there who need it"; we try to have them, ((we)) try to meet (([them])) at eye level.

Interviewer: As equals?

Karola: Yes, but just to share. That's how we work....We get a lot back when we meet people with whom maybe we can share something that we as a community can do as individuals. So that's the whole thing; it's very simple really; it's very much needs-driven.

Here Karola emphasizes that the language café is not just a temporary initiative ("we will never be done with this"), but rather a long-term effort to support the migrants. She also reiterates that the purpose of language cafés is to stand by the newly arrived, regardless of their condition. Additionally, she highlights how language cafés can become a space where people support each other and build social networks to receive help. The organizer also mentions that the local volunteers strive for symmetry—on an equal footing—by not looking down on the visitors ("it is not that I am helping you down there"). She further clarifies this idea with the Swedish idiomatic expression of "meeting (([them])) at eye level," which the interviewer interprets as treating the migrants "as equals." Karola confirms this understanding and specifies that the purpose of this perceived equality is that of sharing; in other words, participating in the language café means sharing as equals. She then proceeds to state that the language café works as a two-way street in which the locals "get a lot back." She, therefore, presents the language café as a joint project that is beneficial to all the parties involved.

The examples have so far shown the reported attitudes of the organizers toward language cafés, which they conceptualize as a welcoming venue for the migrants who are also provided with opportunities to practice the local language and with knowledge about their rights and opportunities for participation in the local community as agentive actors. This kind of informal support aims to promote the migrants' sense of belonging and to empower them to find and use their voice in the receiving community. In this way, the organizers treat the language café as a space for mutual socialization and understanding.

5. Examples From the Café Sessions: Participation and Access

In what follows, we exemplify views on social inclusion that emerge from café sessions held in the library where Arif (see Excerpt 3) works. Arif is a librarian and the organization of the local language café is part of his job.

Excerpt 6 (divided into Excerpts 6a, 6b, and 6c) is extracted from a session where the participants talk about culture, cultural differences, and cultural adap-

tation. The latter topic, in particular, was brought up by Pablo, a newly arrived migrant who believes that “we must adapt ourselves to the Swedish culture” (our translation). A volunteer agrees with Pablo, though he maintains that the migrants should not forget their own culture. Similarly, Arif suggests that they cannot simply accept the culture of the receiving community; instead, they should keep a critical perspective. During the session, they also discuss gender roles in different cultures, with particular emphasis on gender equality in Sweden, where men and women are supposed to have the same rights and obligations.

We join the conversation toward the end of the session when Arif starts summarizing the main topics of the day (Excerpt 6a). He states that “culture is not constant” (line 1), as it keeps changing (line 3); he also brings up the example of a participant from Eritrea who had previously declared that, if her husband were to join her in Sweden, she would expect him to help her with house chores (lines 4–5). This example clearly shows that expectations concerning family roles and household rules may change if one is exposed to different cultural habits (lines 7–8).

Excerpt 6a:

- 1 ARIF: kultur ä:r inte konstant.
culture i:s not constant.
(1.0)
- 2 ARIF: kultur föräldrar sig.=
culture changes.=
- 3 =den här damen (0.3) säger om hennes man kommer hi:t,
=this lady (0.3) says if her husband comes he:re,
4 <MÄSTE HENNES MA:N JOBBA OCKSÅ.>
<HER HUSBA:ND MUST ALSO WORK.>
- 5 (0.4)
- 6 ARIF: hon hade inte den kulturen för- (0.6)
she did not have this culture be- (0.6)
- 7 innan hon kom till sverige.
before she came to sweden.
8 (0.7)
- 9 PART? ja:.
yea:h.
10 (2.7)
- 11

After the delivery of this example, a pause ensues (line 11), until Pablo summons Arif and takes the floor (see Excerpt 6b, line 12). Here Pablo reformulates his idea about adaptation in terms of awareness (lines 12–13): awareness of the necessary “change” (line 15) to the “new thing(s)” (line 19) to which one is exposed. Although Pablo does not express himself articulately and accurately, his position is quite clear: Adjusting to the new culture and being aware of the necessary

changes are indispensable parts of integration. At the same time, Pablo suggests the significance of striving for a “good life” (line 21), a “good society” (line 22). As he delivers this turn, Pablo draws a circle with his hand pointing to his coparticipants (line 22; see Figure 1). This gesture illustrates Pablo’s understanding of society as an inclusive concept and his idea that a “good society” can be built through a collaborative effort.

Excerpt 6b:

12 PABLO: arif. ja- ja: säger också kultur (0.9) e: (1.3)
 arif. I- I: say also culture (0.9) u:h (1.3)
 13 de er (0.4) e::: vi måste ha:: medveten,
 it is u:::h we must ha::ve awareness,
 14 (0.5)
 15 PABLO: medveten e:: (0.9) att- a: byta. att byta,
 awareness u:::h (0.9) to- u:h change. to change,
 16 att byta::: (0.8) nya::: (.) nya::: (0.7)
 to change::: (0.8) new::: (.) new::: (0.7)
 17 nya (odlar).
 new (cultivates).
 18 ARIF: a. a.
 yeah. yeah.
 19 PABLO: nya sak.
 new thing.
 20 ARIF: a. a.
 yeah. yeah.
 21 PABLO: a:: att att ha: e:n en bra liv.
 yea::h to to ha:ve a: a good life.
 22 *#(0.6) en bra:::* (0.5) sa:- samhälleç
 (0.6) a goo:::d (0.5) so:- societyç
 pablo *draws a circle with right hand*
 #Fig.01
 23 ARIF: mh.
 24 (0.6)



Figure 1. Pablo draws a circle in the air, pointing his hand toward the co-present participants.

Arif, who has been closely following Pablo’s unfolding opinion (lines 18 and 20), elaborates on what Pablo said by reminding the participants of a point he had made earlier; that is, “it is we who make the culture” (Excerpt 6c,

line 26). As he says this, he repeatedly makes a circular gesture toward the coparticipants (Figure 2), a gesture which emphasizes the inclusiveness of “we” (see also the emphasis on “we” in lines 28, 29, and 33).

Excerpt 6c:

25 ARIF: >som jag har sagt,
>as I have said,
26 *kultur,< #de e vi som fixar kulturen,*
culture,< it is we who make the culture,
arif *draws circle three times in front of his torso*
#Fig.02
27 PART? a:.
yea:h.
28 ARIF: de e vi som fixar kulturen,
it is we who make the culture,
29 de e vi som skapar kulturen,
it is we who create the culture,
30 (0.3)
31 PABLO: [°skapar kulturen°]
create the culture
32 PART? [de e vi so:m:,]
it is we who::,
33 ARIF: VI som skapar kulturen.
WE who create the culture.

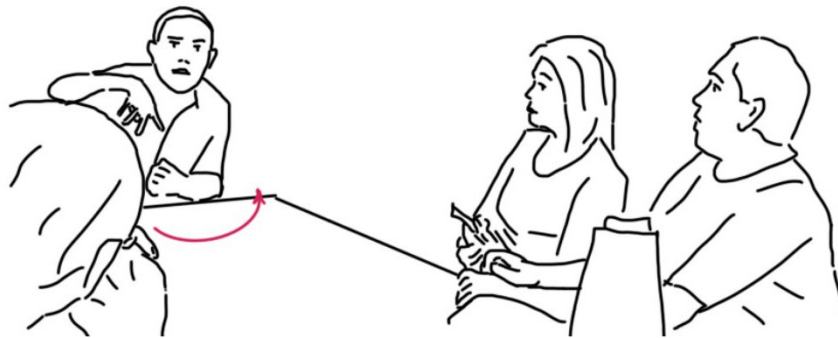


Figure 2. Arif draws circles in the air, pointing his hand toward the co-present participants.

By involving the newly arrived as part of the local community, Arif envisages a joint project in which everybody contributes to creating a shared culture within the community. From an everyday citizenship perspective, both Pablo and Arif position themselves as part of the local community. However, their views on the type of agency that is required seem to differ. Specifically, Pablo, a newly arrived migrant, mentions conscious adaptation and change as necessary elements to build a “good society”; that is, Pablo seems to highlight the effort that is required of the migrants. On the other hand, Arif, who has been in Sweden for a long time, emphasizes the agency exercised by all members belonging to the community, old and new, in the co-construction of a shared culture. This is in line with Arif’s view of culture as an entity that constantly changes as it is being cultivated by the members of the local community (see Excerpt 6a).

Overall, the beliefs that are discussed in this café session by Arif align with the theme of belonging and participation emerged during the interviews. Furthermore, the importance he places on agency connects with his view of empowerment as knowledge of rights and obligations (see Excerpt 3), which is crucial for active participation in the local community.

Excerpt 7 (divided into Excerpts 7a and 7b) is extracted from a session where the participants discussed work-related matters. The discussion was prompted by Arif’s choice of an article concerning a vocational course for train conductors. During the reading activity, Arif emphasized the high salary associated with this profession and concluded the activity by inviting the migrants to think about this line of work, which he characterizes as a “very fine job”.

Excerpt 7a:

1 ARIF: han säger, ((clears throat)) (2.1)
he says,

2 mtch- (0.4) e:h kan du ge exempel?
mtch- (0.4) u:h can you give example?

3 (0.2)

4 ARIF: till exempel vilke:n
for example whi:ch

5 JUAN: till exempel en snickare:.
for example a carpente:r.

6 ARIF: [a.]
yeah.

7 JUAN: [do]m säger att de e en stor brist
they say that there is a big lack

8 i sverig[e. men] inte sant.
in sweden. but not true.

9 ARIF: [aha]
aha

10 (0.3)

11 JUAN: för att/ə/ du klart utbildning
because you done education

12 du e:: du sitter hemma å arbetslöst.
you u::h you sit at home and unemployed.

13 (0.2)

14 ARIF: [°mh mh°.]

15 JUAN: [de beror] på m- många saker.
it depends on m- many things.

16 ARIF: m:h.

17 JUAN: att du e:: kan=e:: gå å jobba.
that you u::h can=u::h go and work.

18 ARIF: a.
yeah.

19 (0.2)

20 ARIF: e: (0.2) NÄR de e- när de e som han säger,
u:h (0.2) WHEN it is- when it is as he says,

21 (0.5)

22 ARIF: e de ofta de e språket som blir hinder.
uh it often it is the language that becomes obstacle.

23 (0.8)

24 ARIF: °man får inte utbildning.°
°one does not receive education.°

25 (0.9)

We join the discussion as one of the visitors, Juan, challenges the idea that it is easy to find a job in those fields for which there is great demand. Prompted by Arif (Excerpt 7a, lines 2–4), Juan exemplifies his reasoning by mentioning carpenters (line 5). He then reports what “they” say: “There is a big lack” of carpenters in Sweden (lines 7–8). However, this is “not true” (line 8). Juan accounts for his assessment by saying that, when one has completed the educational route to become a carpenter (line 11), one can nevertheless “sit at home and unemployed” (line 12). He then acknowledges that finding a job (line 17) “depends on many things” (line 15). At this point, Arif, who has been listening attentively so far (see the acknowledgement tokens and continuers in

lines 6, 9, 14, and 16), aligns with Juan. Specifically, he states that finding a job is often hindered by linguistic issues (line 22), which in turn might affect the possibility of getting an education (line 24).

Arif supports his line of reasoning by citing the example of Iranians who are educated as teachers (see Excerpt 7b, lines 26–28). Despite the fact that they are “very smart” (line 32) and that they have been in Sweden for twenty years (line 30), they can write but they still “cannot speak” (line 35). This does not serve them well during job interviews (line 37), as the prospective employer immediately notices their difficulty with speaking (line 46) and “doesn’t want to have that” (line 38).

Excerpt 7b:

26 ARIF: de finns många iranier,
there are many iranians,
 27 (0.4)
 28 ARIF: som utbildar sej som lärare,
who are training as teachers,
 29 (0.6)
 30 ARIF: som kom till sverige för tjugi år sen,
who came to sweden twenty years ago,
 31 (0.7)
 32 ARIF: dom har jätteduktiga,
they are very smart,
 33 dom utantill att gå tenta å tenta å hemtenta:,
they by heart go exam and exam and take-home exam,
 34 (0.3)
 35 ARIF: men dom kan inte prata.
but they cannot speak.
 36 (1.3)
 37 ARIF: å sen när dom går till intervju,
and then when they go to interviews,
 38 arbetsgivare vill inte ha sånt.
the employer doesn't want to have that.
 39 (0.8)
 40 ARIF: dom e jätteduktiga.
they are very smart.
 41 (0.4)
 42 ARIF: men dom har inte lärt sej språket.
but they haven't learned the language.
 43 (0.5)
 44 ARIF: dom kan skriva.
they can write.
 45 (0.9)
 46 ARIF: då arbetsgivare märker på en gång.
then the employer notices immediately.

Thus, here Arif explicitly connects language skills and employability: To join the work force and become part of the professional community of the receiving society, migrants need to speak the local language. Though this is an important practice that can lead to social inclusion, there are other practices besides it, as shown in our dataset.

The examples from the café sessions reproduced above (Excerpts 6 and 7) illustrate the discussions held with the migrants, from general cultural themes to the concrete need of finding a job and learning the local language. In line with the importance that Arif attributes to empowerment (see also interviews depicting similar attitudes, e.g., Excerpts 2–5), he promotes the migrants' awareness of the values nurtured in the receiving community (e.g., gender equality), while also providing them with useful information about potential career paths and encouraging them to practice the target language.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study has developed an emic account of the café organizers' and volunteers' conceptualization of social inclusion. Such conceptualization emerges in interviews,

when they state the goals of language cafés, and in video-recorded café sessions, when they topicalize aspects of social inclusion in their discussions with the visitors. In the interviews, organizers and volunteers articulate their reasoning in terms of fostering the migrants' sense of belonging and empowerment, while also acknowledging the mutual benefits that participation in the local café can bring to older and newer members of the receiving community. The participants in our study orient to the importance of belonging in terms of feeling welcome and being able to contribute to the local community. They also relate this to the dimension of having access to knowledge and information, which empowers the migrants to navigate and even bring changes to the community. In other words, they consider language cafés as arenas to provide informal support for the migrants, in order for them to experience a sense of inclusion and agency. However, through their own participation in the cafés, organizers and volunteers come to realize that they also benefit from socializing with the migrants (for instance, by invoking the sense of “togetherness” in constructing the culture *together*; see Excerpt 6).

More specifically, the organizers and volunteers that participated in our study conceptualize empowering

migrants in terms of providing them with resources to act in the existing community and shape it in the direction of a welcoming and collaborative society. This agentive process starts with the creation of the café as a welcoming space for visitors, where the comfort of a safe environment is complemented with access to information and opportunities for language practice (see also Polo-Pérez, 2022). This kind of space empowers newly arrived migrants to know “their rights and obligations” (see Excerpt 3) and to “have a way forward” (see Excerpt 4) as they increasingly get to “feel at home” (see Excerpt 1) through the new social networks they build (see Excerpt 5).

These observations warrant an emic understanding of what everyday citizenship means for the participants in this study. In particular, as it has emerged in the extracts from the library café sessions, it is emphasized how all members of the local community, old and new, can contribute to the collaborative construction of a dynamic culture, subject to constant change. While an effort is required, in terms of language learning and cultural adaptation, everybody can agentively shape the local culture. Overall, it seems that organizers and volunteers understand their position in the local community as social actors who can grow through encounters with migrants and who, in turn, can exercise their agency by organizing informal initiatives like language cafés, which aim to support the migrants and make sure that they gain agency and the ability to exercise it in the receiving community. Ultimately, the final goal appears to be the co-construction of a truly integrated society (see Excerpt 4) where everybody’s voice can be heard, where everybody’s agency can have an impact, and where members can challenge one another.

Overall, our study offers a view of inclusion as a social practice of togetherness that is accomplished in the mundane space of language cafés, where organizers and volunteers foster belonging and empower the migrants through access to information and language practice, as they promote participation and strive for symmetry in relations (see Excerpt 5 with the idea of meeting the migrants “at eye level”). This echoes the dimensions of Everyday Citizenship described in the introduction (i.e., belonging, rights, and access) that promote agency and the ability of individuals in participating in social life.

As Burkitt (2004, p. 212, as cited in Nedlund et al., 2019) explains:

The production of daily reality does not occur somewhere beyond our reach in, say, the “higher” echelons of the state, and is then imposed upon us. Rather, the reality of everyday life—the sum total of all our relations—is built on the ground, in daily activities and transactions.

The daily activities and relations that develop in language cafés provide an arena for everyday citizenship

where issues of settlement, inclusion, and integration are approached in encounters between old and new members of the local community. As envisioned by organizers and volunteers in our data, language cafés produce a daily reality that aims to create concrete steps toward an inclusive, equal, and integrated society.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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