HELDA
HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

https://helda.helsinki.fi

Expectations and future prospects : the language of the cosmopolitan child

Rajander, Silja

2011-03

Rajander , S & Lappalainen , S 2011 , ' Expectations and future prospects : the language of the cosmopolitan child ' , Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration , vol. 5 , no. 3 , pp. 9-16 .

http://hdl.handle.net/10138/232931

publishedVersion

Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.

This is an electronic reprint of the original article.

This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Please cite the original version.

Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration

Vol. 5, No. 3 / 2010
www.etmu.fi

Silja Rajander & Sirpa Lappalainen

Expectations and Future Prospects: The Language of the Cosmopolitan Child

Abstract

In this article, we explore the ways in which English language learning participates in constructing expectations of success and failure. Drawing on our ethnographic studies, one of a preschool and one of a primary school in Finland, we analyse how constructions of nationed, ethnicised differences intersect with the idealisation of particular children as able and confident in English language learning contexts. In particular, we pay attention to how children, teachers and parents resist and appropriate categorisations. Our analysis is informed by feminist post-structural theorizing that aims to deconstruct the discursive practices that shape society and the processes of subjectification.

Introduction

"Teaching needs to be based on a communitarian conception of language: belonging to a community and participation in knowledge are born out of learning to use a language in the ways of the community. . . Teaching needs to take into consideration that a pupil's mother tongue is the foundation of learning: language is both an object of learning and an instrument." (extract from the objectives of Finnish as a Mother Tongue, National Core Curriculum for Basic Education NBE 2004:23)[1]

Compared to many OECD countries, Finnish education policy has traditionally emphasised equal opportunities in education (Sahlberg 2007:166). Children of all socioeconomic backgrounds have had access to more or less similar comprehensive schooling (Whitty 2010:37). However, over the past two decades, education policies related to language learning in Finland have promulgated the neoliberal view of pupils as independent, self-responsible choice-makers, while at the same time seeking to come to terms with internationalisation and linguistic diversity. As exemplified by the extract above from the Finnish National Core Curriculum, central arguments in language learning have included the importance of language to cultural belonging and to participation in society, and the importance of fluency in the Finnish language[2], and the definition of language learning as pivotal to all learning, as "the foundation of learning" (NBE 2004:23). At the same time, foreign language learning has become positioned as a central subject, and has been identified as a central means for responding to competing demands in education. These include expansion of educational choice[3], promotion of tolerance and intercultural communication skills, and production of active citizens capable of representing Finland in the international, rapidly changing competitive fields of economy, politics and culture. (cf. Harinen 2000:85, Nuolijärvi 2000, Rinne, Kivirauma, Hirvenoja & Simola 2000:38-40) These demands have favoured English language learning, producing fluency in English as an indispensable skill and form of educational capital (cf. Phillipson 1992, see also Aro 2009, Lappalainen & Rajander 2005).

During the past two decades, educational discourse in Finland has shifted from promoting equality and social justice to increasingly endorsing individual opportunity and market-

based thinking in education (cf. Gordon, Lahelma & Beach 2003, Rinne et al. 2000, Rinne, Kivirauma & Simola 2002, Seppänen 2006). While the official discourse of language learning in Finland is premised on linguistic rights, individual choice and increasing intercultural understanding (Rajander 2010), in this paper we look at how under the current neoliberal order, educational practices in preschool and primary school unfold in ways that designate membership in minoritised ethnic groups as unfavourable to school success and to successful participation in foreign language learning. We do this by providing an analysis of the production of groups differentiated by national, class and 'racial' categories in the context of language learning in preschool and primary school, focusing on the transitional stage when children enter primary school.

The case studies

Our analysis draws on our separate ethnographic studies: one situated in a primary school with bilingual (Finnish and English) classes, and the other in a Finnish preschool with children representing many different nationalities. Our research contexts are different as regards, for example, how children came to participate in these educational environments. Every six-year-old in Finland has the right to attend preschool[4], such as the Birch Park Kindergarten[5] where one of the case studies was located. Children participating in the bilingual classes of the Sunny Lane School – the other research setting – were selected through entrance tests. Being a 'multicultural' preschool class and a school with bilingual classes, both cases adhered to a multicultural agenda that often manifested itself in questioning the discourses of Finnishness (cf. Lappalainen 2003).[6]

The Birch Park Kindergarten was located in a district characterised by a large proportion of families with children, and a relatively large number of immigrant families. Approximately one in four children in the preschool class came from an immigrant background. Income and educational levels were lower than the city average. However, parents' educational and professional backgrounds varied: some parents were professionals, others had completed compulsory schooling and some were more or less permanently unemployed. The kindergarten had introduced an English language club for Finnish-speaking children. The initiative for establishing this club had come from the parents, and it was run by one of the teachers who had received some special training related to foreign language learning.

The Sunny Lane School, by comparison, was located in an affluent district where most parents owned their homes and had high educational levels. The student body consisted mostly of ethnic majority pupils, and in the bilingual classes, internationalism was connected primarily to English-speaking families and ethnic majority pupils who had lived abroad. Most ethnic minority pupils in the school lived outside the school district. The introduction of bilingual classes had not originally been viewed very positively by the local parents, some teachers explained, especially as the classes were open to pupils across the municipality. Pupils were selected for these classes through entrance tests. With the exception of two bilingual teachers – minority language and religion teachers in the Sunny Lane School – the staff in both the Birch Park Kindergarten and the Sunny Lane School represented the ethnic majority.

We spent one school year in our ethnographic fields, collecting a range of data on the official, informal and physical dimensions of everyday life in preschool and primary school (cf. Gordon, Holland & Lahelma 2000). We conducted interviews and collected written materials such as official documents, brochures and children's drawings. We took field notes of lessons, assemblies and sport activities, and of the celebrations, excursions, parents' evenings and staff meetings we attended. We spent time hanging around the corridors and playgrounds, joining in informal activities and discussions when invited to do so.

After the fieldwork and the process of transcribing the data, we went through all our material by reading, coding and analysing different lines of action, similar processes, assumptions and themes identified in the data. Our perspective was cross-cultural in the sense that we focused on analogical incidents in two different educational contexts with the aim of increasing our theoretical understanding through the analysis of cultural variation (cf. Lahelma & Gordon 2010:114). At first our focus was on identifying, developing and modifying themes, linkages and connections related to processes of inclusion and exclusion, but gradually we moved towards a more focused analysis on the complex ways in which a range of social factors such as gender, social class, ethnicity and 'race' influenced the subject positions made available to and assumed by research participants.

Our interpretation and analysis are informed by feminist post-structural theorising that aims to deconstruct the discursive practices that shape society and processes of subjectification (cf. Davies 1989, 1993, Adams St. Pierre 2000). In comparison to a humanist account of individuality, post-structural theorising suggests that individuals are not self-constitutive, they do not "invent themselves", but are constituted through shared discourses and social acts (Davies 2006:426-427). Thus in this article we analyse how different identities are interpreted and practiced in preschool and primary school.

The connections of cosmopolitanism to nationality

Thomas Popkewitz (2001, 2003) has introduced the concept of the "cosmopolitan child" to analyse how principles of universal progress construct particular kinds of children as being agents and empowered, at the same time construing 'others' as abject, as not embodying the characteristics required to belong. The concept of the cosmopolitan child refers to the demands that expect children to grow toward

global citizenship, and is a scenario of the kind of subjectivity that is thought appropriate in a situation where the nation-state's agency is subordinated to the global economy (ibid., Lindblad & Popkewitz 2003:12-13). Children, Lindblad and Popkewitz write, are categorised on the basis of "personal traits, dispositions and social and cognitive competencies that are thought of as necessary for the future" (ibid.:30). This categorisation functions as a system of reason that, through the "overlapping networks of people and texts", fabricates particular kinds of children as falling within and outside the 'normal' and the 'ideal' (ibid.:15). Related to this, despite its supposedly global references, the cosmopolitan child is discursively produced within a national imaginary, and the administration and construction of the cosmopolitan child is harnessed to the educational project of raising citizens who are cosmopolitan in orientation but embody distinctions and differentiations that are decidedly national (Popkewitz 2001, 2003). One such distinction is that of language (Popkewitz 2003:52) that serves to differentiate between people on the basis of their perceived resemblance to idealised notions of the abilities, skills and linguistic preferences of members of the ethnic majority (cf. Heller 2002).

As we have argued elsewhere (Lappalainen & Rajander 2005, Rajander 2010), foreign language learning in preschool and primary school in Finland favours pupils who are signified as Finnish. We argue that this is connected to several discourses. One is that of Finnishness, which is manifest in the articulation of the primacy of Finnish culture to education in Finland (Lappalainen 2003, Lappalainen & Rajander 2005). Language and formal language education, which include mother tongue- and foreign language learning, are thus positioned as instruments for administering and defining future citizens in the interests of the nation. Another discourse is that of education as an investment, which is connected to the shift to neoliberal and market orientated education policy discourse (cf. Beach, Gordon & Lahelma 2003, Rinne, Kivirauma & Simola 2002) and is reflected in the construction of certain languages as particularly good to invest in, and in the notion that some pupils are better equipped than others to participate in specialised forms of education. As Beach, Gordon and Lahelma (2003) argue, such emphasis on the individual reflects neocapitalist concerns for competition and educational standards that include a focus in educational governance on the evaluation of achievement.

First encounters: competition and differentiation

The construction of what it means to be a "professional pupil", Elina Lahelma and Tuula Gordon (1997) write, begins during the first encounters between pupils and teachers in school, and takes place in different ways in practices associated with the official, informal and physical levels of school. In our data the initial stages of school appear as a phase where children put effort into positioning themselves favorably in relation to the skills and abilities associated with school. Children's positioning of themselves as able and competent entailed a process of differentiation, requiring awareness of principles concerning how the 'good pupil' is constructed in school, such as an understanding of which skills have high status in school, and of the binary logic of good–bad, teacher–pupil (cf. Davies et al. 2001, Laws & Davies 2000, Salo 2003).

In the Sunny Lane School, children were admitted into the bilingual classes on the basis of their results in entrance tests organised by the teachers. These tests incorporated tasks designed to test children's skills in Finnish and English, and most of the children applying for the bilingual first grade had attended a private English language kindergarten in the municipality. Before the tests, enrolling children for the entrance tests of the bilingual classes was, for most parents and teachers, their first encounter with each other. These initial encounters, as exemplified by the following extracts, often acted as a site for the definition and appraisal of the identity of the 'self' about to commence his/her school career:

The 13th mother to arrive told the school staff, as she walked to the front of the class where the enrolment papers were, that "our starting point is to enroll her in the bilingual class", and went on to describe how "she has participated in teaching in English" and that they might be moving abroad in the near future.

Her daughter, standing next to her mum, speaks up: "My teacher says I'm the best in our group!"

Kaisa, the teacher sitting next to me, smiles uncertainly.

The mother gives her daughter a smile and says "OK!" and then continues her conversation with the teacher, asking what papers she needs to fill in.

From their first days in school, pupils are routinely assessed by their teachers, despite teachers' claims to the contrary (cf. Davies et al. 2001, Kasanen, Räty & Snellman 2003). As suggested by our analysis and as exemplified by this extract, this process begins before school and children are well aware of the overall structure of schooling that puts teachers in positions of knowledge and power (cf. Laws & Davies 2000). Referring to her kindergarten teacher the daughter's comment firmly situates her claim within a school context that privileges teachers' assessments over pupils' assessments, and values specific types of pupils over others (cf. Kenway & Bullen 2003:137-141, Salo 2003). The daughter's comment can be seen as an appeal to the 'one who truly knows' and who is in the position to legitimise the claim 'I'm the best'.

The teacher in the extract above smiles hesitantly. Her hesitance perhaps reflects her general uncertainty towards the competitive atmosphere incited by the entrance tests, for she was a teacher who often lingered in the corridors of the school, chatting with pupils and teachers, and was described by parents as "open-hearted", "warm" and "caring", for example. There is reason to believe that the system of testing children for school made her uncomfortable. In discussing the entrance tests, she avoided using the word 'tests', preferring instead to hand the 'invitations' that were printed onto brightly

coloured paper and wishing the children 'welcome to our little school day'. Later, when addressing the parents and children on the day of the entrance tests, looking at the parents she said: "Perhaps some of you will not be accepted". These statements enact distancing or a refusal to engage with or take responsibility for the introduction of testing and competition as necessary parts of the process of being admitted into bilingual classes, as producing "what it means to be a child at school – what behaviours are required to get it right at school – what it means to be not a child but a 'pupil', and preferably a 'good pupil'" (Laws & Davies 2000:210, see also Kasanen, Räty & Snellman 2003).

As a transitory stage from preschool to school, school enrolment in the Sunny Lane School was a stage during which parents were frequently reminded and strongly advised of their responsibilities for their children. The expectation that pupils take an interest in schooling was also implicit in teachers' comments to parents, such as "they are ready to be pupils now, this is a good place to start", stated after an official 'Visit Day' by a teacher to parents of prospective first-graders. At the same time, parents were also told that their children "don't need to know how to read yet". The construction of particular abilities, behaviours and characteristics of pupils-to-be as favourable to school success were themes teachers preferred to avoid, yet which were discussed as self-evident features of schooling by children and their parents:

A mother, father and a daughter, who half-concealed herself behind her mother's long coat, came to fetch the registration papers. The mother told Maija, the teacher, that "our child started English kindergarten one month before preschool and now she speaks complete sentences! I was really surprised when I heard her talking complete sentences. Just think, what wealth! You don't learn languages like that at this age!"

Maija listened quietly, without commenting, smiling.

The initial stages of school appeared as a phase during which teachers and parents negotiated between two opposing discourses – of school as an inclusive place, and of particular dispositions and skills as being valuable in school. Like several other ethnic majority parents, this mother's praise of her child's skills, underpinned as it is by a discourse of the desirability of acquiring proficiency in prominent international languages such as English, establishes her child as having proved her ability and potential to learn (Block & Cameron 2002, Phillipson 1992). While teachers refrained from similar emphases and their response to the parents' descriptions of their children's exceptional skills or abilities was often an uncomfortable silence, the practice of testing children for bilingual classes made teachers also complicit in the reproduction of meanings and competitive practices that determined 'who counts' as an appropriate pupil in school through their implementation of the process of selecting pupils. As we demonstrate in the next section, in this process Finnish language and culture were often positioned as being particularly beneficial to school success.

Immigrant background as problematic

As Thomas Popkewitz (2003:38) argues, the subject position of the ideal pupil is constructed within a national imaginary of cosmopolitanism and the cosmopolitan child. Laura Huttunen (2002:288-289) has analysed different interpretations of cosmopolitanism. According to Huttunen, ideas concerning cultural capital and privilege are often attached to a narrative of the cosmopolitan person. However, while cosmopolitanism has been used to refer to intellectuals pleading the cause of worldwide equality, in everyday speech it often refers to people who are at home everywhere, to global citizens. A cosmopolitan is thus defined in relation to its opposite, the 'local', who is strongly committed to the local community's ways of perceiving the world. (ibid.)

In our data, markers of Finnish identity, such as Finnish language and Evangelical Lutheranism, often appeared as the norm, and in establishing themselves as professional or ideal pupils, children in preschool and primary school put effort into being recognised in relation to such norms (cf. Lappalainen 2003, Lappalainen & Rajander 2005). "Different-ness" (Lahelma 2004) was often culturally defined by teachers and children in preschool and in primary school. To speak fluent Finnish was often interpreted as an embodiment of dispositions and characteristics favourable to success in school and Finnish society, also by parents. Teachers applied a discourse of linguistic and religious rights and entitlements to refer to home language and minority religion lessons during school enrolment. Yet their adoption of this discourse had limited effect on repositioning minority languages and religions as 'normal', or indeed 'desirable'. In fact, some minority parents refused to identify their home language or religion on the school enrolment forms. Bearing in mind that pupils were being selected for these classes, one likely interpretation is that these parents wanted to represent themselves as compliant with the cultural and linguistic norms and expectations of Finnish schools. Given the school's expectation that bilingual pupils have good skills in Finnish, it is also likely that these parents did not interpret the identification of a minority language as their child's home language as a wise or advantageous thing to do. As one immigrant father said, "Put Finnish, put Finnish!" in response to the teacher's question "Would you like native language lessons for your child?"

In Finland as in most of Europe, English is by far the most widely taught foreign language in school (Eurydice 2005). This reflects national interests to build educational capital and secure economic profit (cf. Block & Cameron 2002, Phillipson 1992, 1993), as it does individual interests to pursue particular choices in education. In our data, knowledge of English was constructed as a gateway to increased mobility and was connected to cosmopolitan identity. This identity was more readily available to ethnic majority children, as participation in bilingual classes and in an English club, introduced in the Birch Park Kindergarten to teach elementary English through play, favoured ethnic majority children. In the Sunny Lane School, children with immigrant back-

grounds often scored considerably lower points in Finnish in the entrance tests, which lowered their likelihood of being accepted into the bilingual classes. In the Birch Park Kindergarten, participation in the English language club was only available to native Finnish speakers, regardless of the potential interest of children with bi- or plurilingual backgrounds, as the following excerpt from one of the English club sessions demonstrates:

Eeva: My name is Eeva, what is your name?

Riika: Riika.

Eeva continues by asking names. Mei Mei, who does not belong to the club, hangs around the preschool class, goes outside but stays near the open door.

Eeva: Please, close the door.

Eeva leads the group in telling their surnames, then she turns to the club and tells them: There is a song about names.

They sing a 'name song'.

Eeva: Ok. That was great. (She switches to Finnish) So if you meet a foreigner sometime, you know how to say "Hello, I am" or if you go abroad sometime, if you're going on holiday, for example ...

Ella: We visit Tallinn sometimes.

According to Popkewitz (2001, 2003), the fabrication of the cosmopolitan child functions to govern expectations of success and failure and, specifically, of who is expected to succeed or fail. Particular kinds of pupils are imagined as embodying competencies, abilities and dispositions that are deemed of value to the nation (ibid.). The exclusion of children with an immigrant background from the English language club was argued on the basis that studying English would disturb the children's learning of their home-language and the Finnish language. Children with diagnosed or supposed learning difficulties were also excluded:

After the English club I wondered why Janne didn't participate in the club. Eeva (the teacher) explained to me that Janne has enough difficulties in learning and this has been discussed with his mother.

I said: I just wondered how the children were selected, do they volunteer, or?

Eeva continued by telling me: these bilingual children don't participate.

A paradox was that some children with immigrant backgrounds had relatives in many European countries such as Britain. One could argue that knowledge of English would have had special relevance for them. Yet children who spoke minority languages at home were excluded from the English club whether they were fluent Finnish speakers or not. This exclusion was based on a homogenising discourse which connected belonging to particular linguistic groups to the likelihood of difficulties with school-related learning. This was reflected in how children produced hierarchical divisions in their peer relations, such as that between 'whole-day children' and 'half-day children', as the excerpt below from an English club session demonstrates:

Eeva: So, then I have four cards here. They are with different colours. Ella, what colour is it?

Ella: Vihree (Finnish for 'green')

Eeva: It's green. (She continues by asking the colours of other cards)

Eeva: Then you can colour these balloons with yellow stars ... (she explains the same in Finnish)

Eeva (in Finnish): You have learned very fast, nobody has learned as fast as you have.

Emma (in Finnish): It would take a lot more time for the 'whole-day' children to do it.

In pre- and primary school, the desired subject position constructed in educational practices and pursued by children was that of being knowledgeable and skilled in school subjects. Emma's comment illustrates the inner hierarchies at work in the preschool class. 'Whole-day' children, who spent their whole day at preschool because their day care was organised in the same kindergarten, were conceptualised as falling behind the abilities of the 'half-day' children, who participated in preschool activities for four hours every day, after which their day care was organised by their families. Incidentally, 'whole-day' children often had an immigrant background or were diagnosed as having learning difficulties or a history as clients of child welfare.

The discourse commonly propagated by the teachers who participated in our studies emphasised every child steadily progressing at an individualised pace from one level of attainment to the next. This liberal, inclusive discourse failed to reconceptualise, however, the definition of what counts as 'desirable' performance in pre- and primary school, and some children were interpreted as more or less permanently unable to attain the desired level of school learning, despite their knowledge and appropriation of dispositions and skills deemed culturally worthy. This interpretation coincided with the problematisation of the current policy of integration, as reflected in Silja's field notes below:

I walked together with Hanna (a teacher of the 'Finnish' class[7]) to the bus stop. When we were out of the school yard, Hanna told me she was worried about one of the pupils in her class, Adiva, who had siblings in the school and "none of them seem to be doing very well in school". Hanna continued, telling me that "I've always wondered about when these kinds of pupils will notice that they're not quite the same as the other children in their class, now we have this policy of integration, and all. I wonder to what extent it [integration] is for the best of the child. Take Adiva's family, they're all a bit lost in school, but their mum just goes on about how Farah [Adiva's sister] will become a doctor and about how 'Adiva reads all the time, all the time – I can't stop her from reading, it's getting on my nerves, she reads everything, what's written on cereal boxes, the fridge door, everything!'". Hanna continued:

"Adiva is one of the slowest readers in my class. Her mum has visited the school a couple of times, but she doesn't seem to understand".

Proficiency in Finnish reading was often mentioned by teachers in the Sunny Lane School as a core skill in school and is a central determinant in Hanna's definition of Adiva's inability to perform as a pupil. Adiva's inability is further underscored by her concentrated effort to acquire these skills, which marks her as a "body out of place" (cf. Skeggs 2004). Integration, according to Hanna, falsely assumes that all pupils can cope with the same level of demands that school requires, and thus at some stage less able pupils are likely to realise their deviance from 'normal' pupils. The implication is that parents, such as Adiva's and Farah's mother, should guide their children towards realistic desires concerning their future to avoid misinterpretations of their abilities and experiences of failure in the future.

As argued by Skeggs (2004:155), cosmopolitanism is intrinsically related to one's class position. Thus it is fundamentally concerned with "possessive individualism", with having access to and inscribing oneself with cultural resources of exchange value as defined by the national and global elite (ibid.:157-162). When cosmopolitanism was constructed in pre- and primary school, its orientation was extremely Eurocentric. In an interview Sirpa had with Youssuf, he expressed his impression that it was forbidden to speak his home language, Somali, at preschool. This impression was probably based on a misunderstanding. However, it illustrates that Somali culture was relatively rarely seen in the light of being a resource for children (see Lappalainen 2008). A similar understanding underpinned the ways some parents discussed school choice in the Sunny Lane School. As demonstrated by the following extract from Silja's fieldnotes of a Parents' Evening designed to provide parents with information on the foreign language options available at the Sunny Lane School, for some parents school choice had less to do with the specialisation of the school in different subjects than it had with an effort to find a school with a more favourable ethnic composition:

I sit down on a bench near the back. There is an ethnic majority couple sitting in front of me. They turn around to smile as I slide down behind them. I ask them if they are here for the 'school info' (for next year's first graders' parents) or for the 'language info' (on the various foreign language options available). They are here for the latter. I tell them who I am and why I am here.

The mother tells me they would like to get both their children into the same school, their oldest child was in another school already. She describes her/his school: "There are something like over thirty nationalities represented in her/his school and there have been a lot of conflicts between the Finnish children and other children. I guess there will continue to be problems for as long as their parents don't know any Finnish. Often religion plays an important role, too, when they settle their matters".

I: "So your decision to look into this school wasn't based on just language choice?"

Father: "No, no. It doesn't make any difference whether they learn English or Swedish. . . These things are as clear as day, if you want to do well and succeed in school. I'm ready to drive my children to school every day if I have to. Probably the teachers are better in a school like this, too. They probably have more teachers applying for jobs in schools like this".

In this excerpt, the mother and father employ a discourse of "cultural difference" that focuses on the cultural incompatibility of "others" to integrate (cf. Lentin 2004) into Finnish society. This, they claim, results in conflicts between 'the Finnish children' and 'other children' in their children's school, identifying sameness and otherness through identifiers such as nationality, language and religion. This 'us – them' division gains significance through inferences made to pupils' parents, and it is not just the child but the family that is defined as needing to adapt[8], as reflected in the mother's suggestion that the acquisition of Finnish skills by other parents would possibly resolve the pupils' inter-group conflicts. The mother and father interpret immigrant pupils as potentially threatening the educational success of their children, and identify this as the reason why they are looking for another school for their children. "Other" children and their families are constructed as adding "negative value" (Kenway & Bullen 2003:139) to schools.

To conclude; the language of the cosmopolitan child

In preschool and primary school, language learning acts as a site for categorising children and their families. Teachers, parents and children participate in this process, which takes place within a national imaginary that connects different educational needs, abilities and future prospects to children representing different groups in society. Despite the rhetoric of individual freedom and self-fulfilment present in preschool and primary school, and despite discourses of cosmopolitanism that underpin foreign language education, our analysis suggests that discourses and educational practices circulating in preschool and primary school rely heavily on ideals of Finnishness. This emphasis participates in consolidating an understanding of the fundamental differences between linguistically and culturally inscribed groups. While our data includes instances of teachers taking account of and emphasising the positive value of linguistic diversity, the discursive practices evident during the initial stages of school operated in relation to minority ethnic pupils, to exempt these pupils in implicit and explicit ways from academic expectations related to school and to foreign language learning. The "language of the cosmopolitan child" in our title thus refers to the pursuit of language learning as a vehicle to maximise individual educational opportunity; the idealisation of particular languages and language learners in preschool and primary school; and the

identification of particular children for participation in educational activities associated with cosmopolitanism. While minority children often endorse cosmopolitan identifications, we suggest that language learning discourses and practices normalise and naturalise the inability of these children to succeed in preschool and primary school, in effect preventing minority children from forging identities that are interpreted as valuable.

Bibliography

Aro, Mari (2009) *Speakers and Doers. Polyphony and Agency in Children's Beliefs about Language Learning,* Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 116, University of Jyväskylä. http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-3532-0

Adams St. Pierre, Elisabeth (2000) 'Poststructural Feminism in Education: An Overview', *Qualitative Studies in Education* 13 (3): 477-515.

Beach, Dennis, Tuula Gordon & Elina Lahelma (2003) (eds.) *Democratic Education: Ethnographic Challenges*, London: The Tufnell Press.

Block, David & Deborah Cameron (2002) 'Introduction', in David Block & Deborah Cameron (eds.) *Globalization and Language Teaching*, London & New York: Routledge.

Davies, Bronwyn (1989) *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales: Preschool Children and Gender,* Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Davies, Bronwyn (1993) *Shards of Glass: Children Reading and Writing Beyond Gendered Identities,* Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Davies, Bronwyn (2006) 'Subjectification: the Relevance of Butler's Analysis for Education', *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 27 (4): 425-438.

Davies, Bronwyn, Suzy Dormer, Sue Gannon, Cath Laws, Sharn Rocco, Hillevi L. Taguchi & Helen McCann (2001) 'Becoming Schoolgirls: The Ambivalent Project of Subjectification', *Gender & Education* 13 (2): 167- 182.

Eurydice (2005) *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe,* Brussels: Eurydice (The Information Network on Education in Europe).

Goldberg, David (1997) *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America,* New York & London: Routledge.

Gordon, Tuula, Janet Holland & Elina Lahelma (2000) *Making Spaces: Citizenship and Difference in Schools,* Chippenham, Wiltshire: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Gordon, Tuula, Elina Lahelma & Dennis Beach (2003) 'Introduction. Marketisation of Democratic Education: Ethnographic Challenges', in Dennis Beach, Tuula Gordon & Elina Lahelma (eds.) *Democratic Education. Ethnographic Challenges*, London: The Tufnell Press.

Harinen, Päivi (2000) *Valmiiseen tulleet. Tutkimus nuoruudesta, kansallisuudesta ja kansalaisuudesta,* Helsinki: Finnish Association of Youth Research.

Heller, Monica (2002) 'Globalization and the Commodification of Bilingualism in Canada', in David Block & Deborah Cameron (eds.) *Globalization and Language Teaching*, London & New York: Routledge.

Huttunen, Laura (2002) *Kotona, maanpaossa, matkalla: Kodin merkitykset maahanmuuttajien omaelämänkerroissa*, Helsinki: SKS.

Kasanen, Kati, Hannu Räty & Leila Snellman (2003) 'Learning the Class Test', *European Journal of Psychology of Education* XVIII (1): 43-58.

Kenway, Jane & Elizabeth Bullen (2003) *Consuming Children. Education – Entertainment – Advertising,* Maidenhead, Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Lahelma, Elina & Tuula Gordon (1997) 'Learning to Be a 'Professional Pupil'', *Educational Research and Evaluation* 3 (22): 119-139.

Lahelma, Elina (2004) 'Tolerance and Understanding? Pupils and Teachers Reflect on Differences at School', *Educational Research and Evaluation* 10 (1): 3-19.

Lahelma, Elina & Tuula Gordon (2010) 'Comparative and Cross-Cultural Ethnography', in Jaakko Kauko, Risto Rinne & Heli Kynkäänniemi (eds.) *Restructuring the Truth of Schooling – Essays on Discursive Practices in the Sociology and Politics of Education,* Jyväskylä: Finnish Educational Research Association.

Lappalainen, Sirpa (2003) 'Celebrating Internationality: Constructions of Nationality at Preschool', in Dennis Beach, Tuula Gordon & Elina Lahelma (eds.) *Democratic Education: Ethnographic Challenges,* London: The Tufnell Press.

Lappalainen, Sirpa & Silja Rajander (2005) 'Maailmankansalaisia ja muuta väkeä', in Reetta Mietola, Elina Lahelma, Sirpa Lappalainen & Tarja Palmu (eds.) *Kohtaamisia kasvatuksen ja koulutuksen kentillä*, Helsinki: SKS.

Lappalainen, Sirpa (2008) 'School as 'Survival Game': Representations of School in Transition from Preschool to Primary School', *Ethnography and Education* 3 (2): 115-127.

Laws, Cath & Bronwyn Davies (2000) 'Poststructuralist Theory in Practice: Working with 'Behaviorally Disturbed' Children', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 13 (3): 205-222.

Lentin, Alana (2004) 'Racial States, Anti-Racist Responses: Picking Holes in 'Culture' and 'Human Rights'', *European Journal of Social Theory* 7 (4): 427-443.

Lindblad, Sverker & Thomas Popkewitz (2003) 'Comparative Ethnography: Fabricating the New Millennium and Its Exclusions', in Dennis Beach, Tuula Gordon & Elina Lahelma (eds.) *Democratic Education: Ethnographic Challenges,* London: The Tufnell Press.

NBE (2004) *National Core Curriculum for Basic Education*, Helsinki: National Board of Education.

Nuolijärvi, Pirkko (2000) 'Muuttuva maailma ja yksilön kielelliset oikeudet: Tapaus suomi', *Kieliviesti* 3/4: 4-11.

Phillipson, Robert (1993) 'Human Rights and Foreign Languages', in Kari Sajavaara, Sauli Takala, Richard D. Lambert & Christine A. Morfit (eds.) *National Foreign Language Planning: Practices and Prospects,* Jyväskylä: Institute for Educational Research.

Phillipson, Robert (1992) *Linguistic Imperialism,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Popkewitz, Thomas (2001) 'Rethinking the Political: Reconstituting National Imaginaries and Producing Difference', *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 5 (2/3): 179-207.

Popkewitz, Thomas (2003) 'Governing the Child and Pedagogicalization of the Parent: a Historical Excursus into the Present', in Marianne N. Bloch, Kerstin Holmlund, Ingeborg Moqvist & Thomas Popkewitz (eds.) *Governing Children, Families and Education. Restructuring the Welfare State*, New York: Palgrave.

Rajander, Silja (2010) *School and Choice: an Ethnography of a Primary School with Bilingual Classes,* Helsinki: Finnish Educational Research Association.

Rinne, Risto, Joel Kivirauma, Piia Hirvenoja & Hannu Simola (2000) 'From Comprehensive School Citizen Towards Self-Selective Individual', in Sverker Lindblad & Thomas Popkewitz (eds.) *Public Discourses on Education Governance and Social Integration and Exclusion: Analyses of Policy Texts in European Contexts,* Uppsala: Uppsala University.

Rinne, Risto, Joel Kivirauma & Hannu Simola (2002) 'Shoots of Revisionist Education Policy or Just Slow Readjustment? The Finnish Case of Educational Reconstruction', *Journal of Education Policy* 17 (6): 643-658.

Sahlberg, Pasi (2007) 'Education Policies for Raising Student Learning: the Finnish Approach', *Journal of Education Policy* 22 (2): 147-171.

Salo, Ulla-Maija (2003) 'Becoming a Pupil', in Dennis Beach, Tuula Gordon & Elina Lahelma (eds.) *Democratic Education: Ethnographic Challenges,* London: The Tufnell Press.

Seppänen, Piia (2006) *Kouluvalintapolitiikka perusopetuksessa – suomalaiskaupunkien koulumarkkinat kansainvälisessä valossa*, Turku: Turku: Finnish Educational Research Association.

Skeggs, Beverly (2004) *Class, Self, Culture*, London & New York: Routledge.

Whitty, George (2010) 'Matketization and Post-Marketization in Contemporary Education Policy', in Jaakko Kauko, Risto Rinne & Heli Kynkäänniemi (eds.) *Restructuring the Truth of Schooling – Essays on Discursive Practices in the Sociology and Politics of Education,* Jyväskylä: Finnish Educational Research Association.

Authors

Silja Rajander
PhD, Researcher
Institute of Behavioural Science
Siltavuorenpenger 20 R
P.O. Box 9
00014 University of Helsinki
tel. +855-12300971
Email: silja.rajander@helsinki.fi

Sirpa Lappalainen
PhD, (title of docent) Post doctoral Researcher
Research Unit of Cultural and Feminist Studies in Education
Institute of Behavioural Sciences
Siltavuorenpenger 5 A
P.O. Box 9
00014 University of Helsinki
tel. +358-0505851567
Email: sirpa.lappalainen@helsinki.fi

Notes

1. Translated by the authors.
2. Finland is officially a bilingual country and speakers of Finnish and Swedish have equal constitutional rights. Swedish-speaking Finns have a school system of their own and Swedish as a mother tongue assumes a parallel position to Finnish in the current Core Curriculum (NBE 2004). Linguistic minorities such as Sami, Roma, sign language users and immigrants are addressed in a separate section of the curriculum. (NBE 2004)
3. Possibilities of choice have been expanded by diversifying foreign language options available to pupils through the introduction of specialised foreign language programmes and foreign language clubs, and through the identification of foreign language options as one criterion on the basis of which pupils can apply to schools outside their school district, for example.
4. Approximately 95 % of children in Finland participate in preschool education, which is most often organised in kindergartens administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.
5. This is a pseudonym, like all the names of the research participants in this article.
6. Our studies are sub-studies of the research project "Inclusion and Exclusion in Educational Processes" directed by Professor Elina Lahelma and funded by the University of Helsinki and the Academy of Finland.
7. Teachers, pupils and parents applied the term 'Finnish classes' to those classes in the Sunny Lane School where instruction took place in Finnish.
8. This, we suggest, is also related to a general inclination to construct pre/school pupils as still in a process of becoming and thus as incapable of being 'really bad' or 'racist', for example. This was also apparent in inferences made to how "small" or "innocent" primary school children "still are" in the Sunny Lane School.