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Rapping the ‘Better folk’:

Ideological and scalar negotiations of past and present

Elina Westinen¹

1 Introduction: “This isn’t for better people, this is just folk of better quality”²

Finland has two national languages: the majority of Finns (89%) speak Finnish as their mother tongue while a small minority of 5.3% has Swedish as their mother tongue (Statistics Finland, 2014a). In principle, the rights of the Swedish-speaking minority are protected by the law (Constitution of Finland 17. §)³, but the reality is often quite different. Views on the Swedish language in Finland are extremely polarized – it is both appreciated and despised. And the same goes for the allegedly better-off Swedish-speaking Finns, often referred to in Finland in a derogatory way, by using the Swedish expression *bättre folk* (‘better-(off) folk/people’). In the past, the Swedish-speaking Finns formed the leading layers of Finnish society; they thus have long traditions of upper-class culture (Roos and Roos, 1984; Heikkilä and Rahkonen, 2011). The ‘bättre folk’ stereotype is based on both this historical (‘elite’) position and the ‘ethnic mobilization’ developed by the Finnish(-language) nationalist ideologies and Finnish-speaking ideologists at the turn of the 20th century (Lindquist, 2001; Heikkilä and Rahkonen, 2011, p. 145). It has been further upheld and also reinforced by (often strong and misguided) popular beliefs and the media (Heikkilä and Rahkonen, 2011, p. 145).

In Finnish society there is an on-going public debate over the status of Swedish and, in particular, the so-called ‘enforced’ Swedish (see e.g. Mäntynen et al., 2012). This term is often used to refer to the fact that it is compulsory for Finnish-speaking Finns to study Swedish (and – vice versa – for Swedish-speakers to study Finnish) at every level of education starting either from elementary school or, at the latest, from junior high school, all the way to the university level. One extreme of the debate is represented by the Swedish-speaking Finns, who are concerned about the ‘domain loss’ of the Swedish language. Some of them feel that service in their mother tongue is insufficient in official institutions (Grönlund, 2011, p. 7). Therefore, if knowledge of Swedish was no longer required of staff in public agencies and offices, the Swedish speakers would face injustice, as they would no longer receive service in their mother tongue. At the other extreme, there are some Finnish-speaking Finns who see the state’s official policy of bilingualism, and hence the Swedish language, as a burden of the past and an unnecessary and problematic privilege favoring the Swedish-speaking minority. These attitudes towards

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The “Bättre folk” song and its lyrics were also analyzed in a Finnish-language article of the author (Westinen, 2012), but from a different point of view and aimed at a national audience. In addition, the song was included in the author’s PhD thesis (Westinen, 2014), which did not, however, specifically focus on (language) ideologies but on constructions of authenticity.

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In 1995, the Sámi, the Roma, and the Deaf languages were also given constitutional status in Finland.

Swedish-speaking Finns and the Swedish language have recently become increasingly hostile and threatening, particularly in the area of education, showcasing yet another cycle in the ongoing debate of Swedish in Finland. This is partly because the relative and absolute number of Swedish-speakers has diminished continuously throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, and it is no longer seen as a useful resource for all Finnish speakers, for example in Eastern Finland (where some people would prefer studying Russian over Swedish at school), and partly because of the recent success of the populist party *Perussuomalaiset* (the Finns), who actively question the necessity of learning Swedish at school, contrary to the politics of the pro-Swedish *Svenska folkpartiet* ('Swedish People's Party') (see e.g. Mäntynen et al., 2012: 337; Boyd and Palviainen, 2015). People voice their negative attitudes in many public forums, for example, in letters to the editor in newspapers and in social media (Grönlund, 2011, p. 7).

These majority-minority sensitivities have also been addressed in different ways in popular culture – one example of this is a recent rap song, entitled “Bättre folk” (2011), by the Finnish-speaking rap artist Pyhimys (the Saint). What makes this song particularly interesting is that it is, in fact, a commentary on the polarized attitudinal climate in Finland. Its narrator, the Swedish-speaking Robban, demands equality between people and languages, and encourages the audiences to forget the past and the stereotypes associated with Swedish-speaking Finns. By focusing on the political and ideological tension regarding languages in Finland, the song can even be seen as illustrating one of the core missions of politically-aware rap on the whole: it represents and speaks for the ‘underdog’, in this case, the linguistic minority, and its treatment in public and popular discourses. Its specific take arises from the fact that this minority is not often seen as the underdog but rather a privileged minority. The song exemplifies how rap can constitute a site for the discussion and investigation of language ideological debates in bi/multilingual societies in which one of the languages is the dominant one and others have, in one way or another, a problematic minority role. In this sense, the Finnish example of rap as societal critique resembles and is linked to rap in other similar, tension-ridden bi/multilingual settings (such as English-French bilingualism in Quebec (see e.g. Sarkar, 2009) and *te reo Maori* (Maori language) and English in New Zealand (see e.g. Mitchell, 2001b)). Thus, with a sociolinguistic and discourse analytic take, this study also contributes to the emergent tradition of sociolinguistic hip hop research outside of the United States (see e.g. Mitchell, 2001a; Androutsopoulos and Scholz, 2002, 2003; Pennycook, 2007; Alim et al., 2009; Terkourafi, 2010).

The specific aim of this article is to examine how the ideological sociocultural and -historical reality of Finland is (re)constructed and (re)negotiated by projecting various *scale-levels*, i.e. spatio-temporal scopes of understandability (Blommaert, 2010; Westinen, 2014; Blommaert et al., 2015) via the use of different linguistic and discursive *resources*. The scales can range (at least) from global, national, and regional to local, and they often intertwine and overlap. Thus, I will use the notion of scale to analyze the nuanced and multilayered nature and context of rap, in a way that transcends the simplified local-global dichotomy with the means of which many globally available discourses of popular culture have often been conceptualized (e.g. the articles in Mitchell, 2001a; Androutsopoulos and Scholz, 2002). More specifically, by paying close attention to *what* is being said and *how* it is said, I will show how the rap artist carefully creates his critique on the historical and ideological juxtaposition between the Finnish-speaking Finns and Swedish-speaking Finns and suggests his solution to how the majority should treat the minority.

In line with the aims of this special issue, this article examines how a particular local hip hop culture – Finnish hip hop – aligns itself with both the local and more global (often better characterized by the notion ‘translocal’ – see below) traditions and discourses, by projecting various scales as part of its project. It also explores how ‘fixed’, ideological *a priori* categorizations – the indexical links between the Swedish language, the particular sociocultural and -linguistic community and the ‘better-offness’ – are very much taken for granted and made use of but are also, significantly, criticized and made fluid and contestable via ironic remarks. The article is organized as follows. I begin by conceptualizing (language) ideologies and their connection to rap music, after which I describe the theoretical and methodological framework, discourse studies and sociolinguistics of globalization and the key concepts, scales and resources. To set the scene, I then sketch a picture of Finnish hip hop culture and rap music, and, finally, analyze in detail the ways in which the lyrics of “Bättre folk” ideologically (re)construct and (re)negotiate the past and present.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 (Nationalistic) language ideologies

Nationalism can be broadly defined as the ideological ways in which a nation state is (re)constructed; *banal* nationalism, in turn, denotes the everyday ideological (re)production of the established nation states (Billig, 1995). Similarly to ‘nationalism’, the concept of ideology has also been theorized in various fields such as sociology (e.g. Foucault, 1980), political science⁴ (e.g. Heywood, 2003), linguistic anthropology (e.g. Silverstein, 1979; Kroskrity, 2000), and (socio)linguistics (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007; Heller, 2007), to name but a few. In line with Verschueren (2012, p. 3-4), my understanding of the concept of ideology bears on ‘much more mundane and everyday processes than the grand political strands of thought it is usually associated with (liberalism, conservatism, socialism, Marxism, nationalism, anarchism, fascism, fundamentalism and the like)’, although of course everyday thinking (both in Finnish society and in the Finnish hip hop community) needs to be understood in relation to such ‘grand’ -isms.

In this study, ‘ideology’ refers to two issues (see also Westinen, 2014). First, it denotes *a set of ideas, values, and beliefs* which form a more or less uniform whole, a worldview. Verschueren (2012, p. 7) argues that ideology is ‘associated with the underlying patterns of meaning, frames of interpretation, world views or forms of everyday thinking and explanations’. Moreover, ‘the ways in which these beliefs, ideas, or opinions are discursively used’ and expressed is significant (*ibid.*). Second, ideologies from the language perspective vary ‘from seemingly neutral cultural conceptions of language to strategies for maintaining social power, from unconscious ideology read from speech practices by analysts to the most conscious native-speaker explanations of appropriate language behavior’ (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994, p. 58). (Socio)linguistics tends to agree that ideology is ‘rooted in or responsive to the experience of a particular social position’ (*ibid.*); it is thus also highly personal and subjective. In general, language ideology is a domain in which language users connect linguistic structures with social categorizations and uphold this relationship (e.g. Blommaert, 2010). Language ideologies are also

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Ideology can of course also be theoretically conceptualized within the framework of politics and political orientations, but it is not the specific focus of this article; it is commented on in the analysis when considered particularly relevant.

strongly connected with the political, economic, and sociocultural circumstances in society, intertwining with other ideologies. People's language ideologies are not mutually exclusive, either; people's opinions can be affected by several types of language ideologies (Wingstedt 1998, p. 26, 169, 326–327). Characterizing ideology this way, then, involves the idea that no position is actually free from ideology.

With reference to language ideologies, a few more remarks about 'language' are necessary (see also Westinen, 2014). Languages do not exist as empirical, observable, separate, 'objective' sociolinguistic phenomena. Rather, we use bits and pieces of language – whichever 'variety' or 'register' these may derive from. Languages do, however, have a very significant existence as *language ideological constructs* (influencing language behavior, perception, norms, and policies). Recent work in sociolinguistics has argued that the traditional concept of 'languages' is (merely) an ideologically and socio-culturally constructed abstract entity (Jørgensen and Møller, 2014, p. 73). While categories such as 'languages', 'varieties', and 'dialects' may seem useful for linguists, educators, and other gatekeepers (Heller, 2007; Jørgensen, 2008), 'languages do not exist as real entities in the world and neither do they emerge from or represent real environments; they are, by contrast, the inventions of social, cultural and political movements' (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007, p. 2). The idea of languages as ideological constructs entails an *ethnolinguistic assumption*. In Europe, in particular, the assumption of separate languages coincides with the rise of the nation states in the 1800s, and the Herderian, national, romantic ideology accompanying it. A nation consisted 'naturally' of (only) one people and (only) one language (Jørgensen and Møller, 2014) and of 'language use and ethnic or cultural group identity in a linear and one-on-one relationship' (Blommaert et al., 2012, p. 2–3).

2.2 Language ideologies in rap music

Language ideologies also play a crucial role in local hip hop contexts, intertwining with and affected by larger social, political, and cultural contexts. Since both hip hop culture and hip hop studies 'originate' in the United States, most hip hop research on language ideology also examines the US context (see, e.g. Morgan 2001; but for Denmark, see Stæhr and Madsen, this issue; for Eastern Africa, see Perullo and Fenn, 2003). Rap music emphatically draws on the vernacular, often including speech-like features. Thus, it rarely displays many elements of standard language(s) (Androutsopoulos, 2009, p. 50; but see Stæhr and Madsen, 2015 for the use of the standard language in Danish rap music), since the 'vernacular speech in rap lyrics emphasizes the subversiveness of hip hop with respect to mainstream culture and its harmony with vernacular cultural values' (Androutsopoulos and Scholz 2003, p. 473). Originally, US rap music turned a stigmatized language variety, African American Vernacular English (AAVE), into a 'resistance vernacular' (Potter, 1995, p. 57), i.e., a positively valued linguistic code, or even 'a prestige code' in some contexts. As Morgan (2001, p. 188) has argued, '[h]ip hop's language ideology is consciously and often defiantly based on urban African American norms, values, and popular culture constructed against dominant cultural and linguistic norms', relying on African American English and General American English. Rap is, and always has been, thus very much about the language of the streets. The lyrics often reflect the language (use) of real life and of the neighborhoods the rappers live in (or, alternatively, construct something as 'real' language use), also frequently resulting in language mixing (see e.g. Sarkar, 2009).

The use of English, and particularly AA(V)E, can often be motivated by identity work and 'seen as a means of claiming membership' in the *Global Hip Hop Nation* (H.S. Alim's term; Higgins, 2009a, p. 98;

see also Higgins, 2009b, p. 92–115). The Finnish hip hop scene is part of this ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1991). In fact, across the globe, young people actively engage with (sub)cultures and activities that are *translocal* (Leppänen et al., 2009) in nature, spanning and cutting across local cultures, contexts and groups (Leppänen, 2012; Blommaert, 2010). Alim (2009, p. 107, emphasis added) has suggested we understand the Global Hip Hop Nation as ‘a network of overlapping and intersecting *translocal style communities*, with members in particular localities “making a choice to be connected across recognized boundaries” (Cooke and Lawrence 2005, p. 1) and negotiating their identities and memberships in the simultaneously localizing and globalizing imagined world of Hip Hop’. Like many other hip hop scenes, Finnish rap music also makes use of global Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL; Alim, 2003) by drawing on and adapting shared hip hop vocabulary and expressions. The local languages, such as spoken vernacular Finnish dialects and slang, most often form the main resource used in the lyrics. Starting to use one’s own mother tongue instead of, or alongside, English is often (but not always) a sign of localizing the culture (see e.g. Sarkar, 2009). Such language choices may depend on, for example, each artist’s explicit language ideology, target audience, themes or competence in a given language.

2.3 Approach: Discourse studies and the sociolinguistics of globalization

In addition to global hip hop studies, I draw on insights from discourse studies and the sociolinguistics of globalization. I consider rap lyrics as both discourse and discourses (e.g. Blommaert, 2005; Johnstone, 2002). They are *discourse* in the sense that they are both spoken and written text (though the emphasis is often on the former), in the medium of language, and they achieve various things in the world (Johnstone, 2002). Rap lyrics also entail and (re)produce *discourses*, conventional ways of speaking and thinking (about various issues), which, in their part, contribute to ideologies and power. The discursive practices of rap create the social reality of rap and vice versa. In this process, the artists make use of earlier discourse(s) and simultaneously create new ones. In the discourse of rap, the mobilization of complex and varied linguistic and discursive resources plays a key role. The object of my analysis – Finnish rap music – is a case in point: by making use of several resources, it represents and (re)constructs, in its own unique way, different ideologies at play in Finland – in the present but also in the past.

To describe the complex and multifaceted nature of rap music, I draw on Blommaert’s (2010) sociolinguistics of globalization, in particular on the concepts of ‘scales’ and ‘resources’. According to Blommaert (2010), a sociolinguistics of globalization is a sociolinguistics of mobility where the objects of interest are *the actual, concrete resources* (the little bits of language) people make use of ‘in real sociocultural, historical and political contexts’ and to which they attribute different values and degrees of usefulness (Hymes, 1996, chapter 3; Blommaert 2010: 5). These resources are never static but, rather, they move in time and space (Blommaert, 2010, p. 5). One’s ability to use particular resources gives an indication of the locality they derive from; resources are thus very much ‘placed’. (Blommaert 2010, p. 101). In addition, they indicate traces of, for example, one’s social position, class, age, gender and ethnicity.

Scales – spatio-temporal frames, levels, or dimensions of meaning-making (Blommaert, 2010; Westinen, 2014; Blommaert et al., 2015) – are a useful conceptual and analytical means through which a phenomenon like hip hop can be understood in a multi-faceted way: both space (e.g. local, national, global) and time (e.g. different historicities) are explored and considered. Blommaert (2010, p. 34,

emphasis added) describes scale as ‘*semiotized* space and time’. Scales thus entail and construct ‘semiotic recognizability’, as some things (e.g. the concept of ‘*bättre folk*’) make sense on one scale-level but not necessarily on another. In fact, (sociolinguistic) scales can best be understood in terms of the *spatiotemporal scope of understandability*. Hence, exploring the degrees to which particular signs can be expected to be understandable and ‘indexical’ of something is significant; semiotized space-time refers to the way in which space and time define the scope of meaningful semiotic activity. Scales can be seen as a particular form of *indexical order* (Silverstein, 2003, 2006; Blommaert, 2005), i.e. in addition to ‘pure’ (denotational) meanings, every utterance carries a range of sociocultural meanings: for example, the use of Finland Swedish utterances in Helsinki may evoke stereotypical identity characteristics of a well-off, upper class citizen. Words and utterances thus index social norms and identities (Blommaert, 2005, p. 11, 252), and this indexical meaning is what ‘anchors language usage firmly into social and cultural patterns’ (p. 12).

Some hip hop scholars, for example Forman (2000, 2002), have used the notion of scale in its spatial sense. In his research on space, place, and race and the significance of ‘hoods’ in US rap music, Forman referred to ‘the local scale’, when discussing for example the (local) hoods. Moreover, few sociolinguistic studies have applied the notion of scale to rap music. In discussing Chinese hip hop online, Varis and Wang (2011) have used the notion of ‘scale’ in a somewhat similar fashion to my approach. They argue that in and through his lyrics, MC Liangliang detaches himself from both the local folk theatrical form and the national opera tradition, while “orienting towards the global super-vernacular of hip hop” (p. 80). Here, the meaningful scale for the rapper is neither the local nor the national, but rather the global. Many hip hop scholars have, however, approached hip hop culture and rap music as ‘multi-scalar’ (though not using ‘scale’ as a concept) by emphasizing the multi-faceted nature of hip hop, by highlighting the dialogue and interconnectedness between the local and the global, and by not de-historicizing hip hop culture and rap music, but rather taking into account both the origins and the current context. The present study will, thus, be somewhat pioneering in its effort to analyze rap lyrics from the point of view of scale as a scope of understandability (but see Westinen, 2014).

3 Finnish hip hop culture and rap music

Hip hop offers us a good example of on-going globalization processes. Today, there is hardly a country in the world that has not been affected by some aspect of hip hop culture. Hip hop is a global phenomenon; yet, it is constitutive of this culture to always have a particularly *local* form and expression. The spread of hip hop culture across the globe has been described by Androutsopoulos and Scholz (2002) as mainly a local adaptation of a global cultural phenomenon. Alim (2009, p. 3), in turn, suggests the concept of Global Hip Hop Nation – thus referring to a ‘multilingual, multi-ethnic ‘nation’ with an international reach, a fluid capacity to cross borders, and a reluctance to adhere to the geopolitical givens of the present’. As elsewhere, Finland too has its own unique hip hop culture. However, it has not yet been studied extensively, at least in the field of sociolinguistics (but see e.g. Kalliokoski, 2006; Leppänen and Pietikäinen, 2010; and Westinen, 2010, 2012, 2014 for pioneering studies).

Hip hop culture arrived in Finland from the United States in the 1980s. Initially, breakdance and graffiti were the most visible and popular activities of the culture; however, rap music gradually also began to attract Finnish youth and some rap groups were formed. After the *first wave*, somewhat characterized by

humor and parody, relating partly to the seemingly rather long distance from the ‘mother country’, and the *second wave* at the beginning at the turn of the 21st century (marked by big record labels and mainstream success, along with the use of ‘Finglish’, the mix of Finnish and English), we are currently witnessing the *third wave* of Finnish hip hop (see also Kärjä, 2011; Westinen, 2014), during which Finnish hip hop culture and rap music have diversified and become more visible. Nowadays, rap is a meaningful music genre amongst others, mixing with and crossing borders with those other genres. Finnish is used a great deal in rap; it is, in fact, much more common than English. Finnish-language rap has gained popularity and prestige amongst the youth, rap music is continuously played on the radio, gigs are being held all over the country, and rap artists have become significant local (or even national) idols, who also organize workshops and give lectures at universities. Several ‘scenes’, i.e. the local places and communities of the culture, exist mainly in the urban areas, of which the Helsinki metropolitan area is the biggest. The different artists and groups represent both mainstream (i.e. popular and widely known and circulated via media) and underground aspects and themes of hip hop. As Finland is a fairly small country in terms of its population, the actors in the scene(s) tend to know each other and collaboration also takes place. During the past few years rappers with an immigrant background have also become active in the Finnish hip hop scene (see also Westinen in press; Westinen forthcoming).

4 Rapping the *Bättre folk*

4.1 The sociocultural, -historical and -linguistic context

Finland was part of Sweden from c. 1150 until it became part of Russia in 1809. The borders of the nation state of Finland, formed during the period of autonomy under Russia, have never actually matched the cultural and linguistic borders. After 1809, there were many Swedish speakers in Finland (Lehtonen, 2004, p. 181). Coinciding with the national romanticism thriving in Europe (Östman and Mattfolk, 2011 p. 76), Finnish nationalism slowly rose under the Russian rule (Lehtonen and Löytty 2007, p. 109). As part of this ideological process, known as ‘Fennicization’, many Swedish speakers changed their names and switched their language to Finnish; in accordance with the ideal of the time, ‘one nation—one language—one state’ (Östman and Mattfolk, 2011, p. 76).

As a result of the long shared history of Finland and Sweden, the Swedish-speaking minority, most of whom live along the coastal areas and in the Helsinki metropolitan area, is still perceived (stereotypically, by the Finnish-speaking Finns) as a wealthy, well-educated elite and, analogously, Swedish as an (‘old’) elite language, a ‘relic’, which Finnish-speakers should not be required to learn or know. The current sociocultural and -historical context evoked in the song is that of the contemporary bilingual Helsinki area, where the protagonist, Robban, lives.⁵ In this bi/multilingual urban city, young, educated people often have both Finnish- and Swedish- speaking friends and acquaintances with whom they use both languages. However, as elsewhere in Finland, even in this metropolitan context, Swedish and the speakers of Swedish face suspicion and hostility. Some monolingual Finns still consider Swedish speakers to be a ‘foreign elite’ striving to enforce their language and power over Finnish-

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Of the inhabitants of Helsinki 5.8% are Swedish-speaking, while 8.3 % of inhabitants of Uusimaa, the surrounding province, are Swedish speakers, which is much higher than other parts of the country, which are primarily Finnish-speaking (Statistics Finland, 2014; retrieved on 3 March 2016 from <http://www.stat.fi/tup/alue/kuntienavainluvut.html>).

speaking Finns. A study on linguistic attitudes of the Helsinki metropolitan area shows that (i) many respondents⁶ were irritated by the mixing of Finnish and Swedish, and (ii) the general attitude towards the Finland Swedish was rather negative (Vaattovaara and Soininen-Stojanov, 2006, p. 245; see also Nyman-Kurkiala, 1996, p. 79–99; McRae et al., 1988, p. 9).

English is considered by most Finns as a useful and important resource, and they use it for both domestic and international purposes in various domains (Leppänen et al., 2011). During the 21st century, globalization processes have made this resource increasingly important. As part of this more general process of change, the previously mentioned ‘hip hop English’ (African American Vernacular English) is also being adopted across the globe through popular culture and hip hop culture. The role of English in Finland is less controversial than that of Swedish, although not without some debate about its functions. For example, in language political debates and policy documents (Hakulinen et al., 2009), English is often perceived as posing a threat to the Finnish language and its status, for example in scientific and business domains. These few examples show that language ideological debates are, partly due to historical reasons and partly due to ongoing globalization processes, thriving in various sections of Finnish society.

4.2 The song and the method of analysis

“Bättre folk”⁷ is a telling example of how a ‘small story’ (Bamberg, 2004; Georgakopoulou, 2007) – in this case, a popular cultural text – can index and reformulate ideological social, political, and historical discourses as well as ideological notions about ‘languages’ and language users on the ground, in a particular sociocultural and historical setting. Pyhimys (b. 1981), a Finnish-speaking rap artist from the Finnish capital, Helsinki, wrote the lyrics of “Bättre folk”. He is a very experienced rap artist who has released several albums and often collaborated with other Finnish rap artists. Among other things, he works as a production manager at Johanna Kustannus (Johanna Publishing), owns his own record company, Yellowmic, and is involved in various rap projects and groups (such as Teflon Brothers and Ruger Hauer). The song examined here is from the album *Medium*, which was released in 2011. Robban, a young Finland Swede, is the song’s narrator. Besides the lyrics, to illuminate the origins and themes of the song from the artist’s own viewpoint, I also draw on interviews and discussions I have had with him, as part of my research (Westinen, 2012, 2014).

The analysis shows how Pyhimys (re)constructs and (re)negotiates the ideological sociocultural and -historical context of Finland by projecting various scale levels via the use of different linguistic and discursive resources. Analytically, this task entails seeking answers to the following questions: Which scale levels are projected through linguistic and discursive resources, and how do the scales function in the lyrics? What are the specific discursive features (narrative conventions, discourses, topics, speech act

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They were from 18 to 24 years old, all born in the Helsinki metropolitan area. No information is given on their mother tongue, but based on the demographics of Helsinki, one can assume that most of them were Finnish speakers.

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Pyhimys has made no music video for “Bättre folk”. The song was added on YouTube by a private user and can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGEo4Otu1HU>. The song is played with a ‘live’ band, incorporating numerous instruments. It can be described as jazzy, and hence it is by no means typical rap music. It is not, however, possible within the scope of this article to also examine the musical aspects together with the linguistic and discursive ones (but see Westinen, 2014 for remarks about jazz and humppa sounds in the song and their associations with class).

patterns, and cultural references) and linguistic resources (varieties, slang, and dialects) made use of in “Bättre folk”?

With the concept of *scale*, the scope of understandability, it is shown how the rap song under investigation (re)constructs and (re)negotiates its (past and present) ideological sociocultural and historical contexts as important coordinates for meaning. Treating rap lyrics as *narratives* involves investigating how they are constructed as stories (with a plot) and studying the role and actions of their main protagonist in the story. As suggested by Androutsopoulos and Scholz (2002, 2003) and Androutsopoulos (2009), typical *topics* in rap lyrics include self-presentation, scene discourse (talk about the hip hop scene(s)) and social critique. *Speech act patterns*, or genre-typical verbal actions, can refer, for instance, to boasting, dissing (‘disrespecting someone’), or time and place references. *Cultural references*, an old routine associated with African American verbal games and plays (Morgan, 2002, p. 58), is something contemporary rap artists often make extensive use of when referring to, for example, luxury products or well-known song titles. In analyzing the *linguistic resources* (Blommaert, 2010, see above) mobilized in the song, attention will be paid to the ways in which its contents are verbalized, with the help of features of particular languages, varieties, slang, and dialects.

4.3 Analysis: Scales and resources in “Bättre folk”

“Bättre folk” describes the majority–minority sensitivities in the (past and present) sociocultural context of Finland from an adopted minority viewpoint. The clearest indication of the Swedish-Finnish perspective in the song is that its protagonist and narrator is Robban, a Finland Swede from Helsinki, who shares details about himself and his life. Moreover, we learn about historical and contemporary events that involve confrontation between a minority, the Swedish-speaking Finns, and the majority, the Finnish-speaking Finns, along with the common history between Finland and Sweden. Thus, narrative-wise, the story mainly projects the national scale, but as we will see below, the local scale is also significant.

In the analysis, I will explore how various scale levels are projected in the lyrics via particular linguistic and discursive resources, by showcasing five excerpts.⁸ “Bättre folk” consists of three stanzas, a chorus, and a coda. In the excerpts, the ‘language’ with which the resources are (commonly) associated with is marked for clarity, and the following symbols are used: spoken vernacular Finnish is the default text, Finland Swedish (which differs from the Swedish spoken in Sweden mostly in pronunciation and vocabulary)⁹ is underlined, (standard / vernacular / African American Vernacular / Finnishized) English is **bolded**, Helsinki slang is in *italics*, and standard Finnish¹⁰ is both *in italics and underlined*. My aim in marking the resources this way is not to convey the traditional view of separate ‘languages’ but to render the lyrics and the resources understandable to the reader and, simultaneously, exhibit their hybridity. In some cases, the resources used may be interpreted to ‘belong’ to more than one ‘language’ and I will

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The lyrics are included in the appendix.

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See Östman and Mattfolk (2011) on the standardization of and ideological negotiations between Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish.

¹⁰

Standard Finnish (whether spoken or written) is ‘unified’ Finnish, with little variation, following specific norms; spoken vernacular Finnish (which also appears in the written form), in turn, is more colloquial and differs from the standard in terms of its grammar, vocabulary, and syntax (e.g. Viinikka & Voutilainen 2013).

discuss these accordingly. In my analysis, I show how each of these resources serves a specific purpose: how they, on their own or mixed with others, all contribute to the projection of various scales and to the (re)negotiation and (re)production of ideologies. The first excerpt is as follows:

(1)

Bättre folk, bättre folk
 tää ei oo paremmille ihmisille
 tää on vaan parempaa musaa
bättre folk, bättre folk
 tää ei oo paremmille ihmisille
 tää on vaan paremman laatuinen **folk**

Better folk, better folk
 this isn't for better people
 this is just better music
better folk, better folk
 this isn't for better people
 this is just **folk** of better quality

In the first excerpt (i.e. the chorus of the song), the resources that Pyhimys mobilizes project both the national and global scales. “Bättre folk” is both the title and the general theme of the song. The national scale is projected here in that it is a very loaded sociocultural and -historical concept and reference, as it immediately triggers connotations of the stereotypical view the majority holds of the (better-off) minority. In addition to the role of the media in maintaining this ‘familiar image’, being visible and active in the political and cultural domains has also kept the stereotype of the Swedish-speaking minority as the ‘bättre folk’ alive (ibid.; Boyd and Palviainen, 2015: 62; Heikkilä and Rahkonen, 2011). Finland Swedes themselves argue, however, at least in interview situations, that the stigma of ‘betterness’ is nowadays very outdated, wrong, and even awkward (Heikkilä, 2011, p. 49).

The loadedness of the concept of ‘bättre folk’ can also be seen in the language – in Swedish. This particular concept would simply not work in the same way in Finnish, as it would not have the same power, effect, or connotations, and no particular translation of it exists. This is because in Swedish the concept indexes a significant historical and cultural image of the Swedish-speaking Finns as the stereotypically better-off and wealthier part of the nation. In addition to making use of the ‘original’ meaning, Pyhimys also decontextualizes the concept and recontextualizes it by giving a new meaning, one that indexes folk music, on a global scale.¹¹ Thus, the word ‘folk’ – a Swedish word referring to ‘people’ – no longer only refers to people on a national scale (‘this isn’t for better people’), but, rather, its meaning is suggested to be understood in the sense that the word has in English, as folk music, indicated by the equation of ‘music’ and ‘folk’ in the lines ‘this is just better music / this is just folk of better quality’. This can be characterized as a process of (re-)entextualization (Bauman and Briggs, 1990; Silverstein and Urban, 1996; see also Higgins, 2009b; Leppänen et al., 2014), whereby Pyhimys takes a discourse element from the traditional, (ideological) national discourse of the Finland Swedish people and reassigns it a new meaning, in another context, that of global music and hip hop. Pyhimys may thus be indirectly hinting that rap music, in particular, is this kind of better ‘folk’ music. *Both* meanings of the word ‘folk’ remain present in the song, however, and, in this sense, Pyhimys thus creates a ‘double-voiced’ discourse, to use Bakhtin’s (1981, p. 324) words. ‘Bättre folk’ simultaneously expresses ‘two different intentions’ (ibid.), when it ‘[inserts] a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has, and which retains, an intention of its own’ (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 189). Pyhimys then also ironizes the original ‘bättre folk’ meaning, suggesting that there are, in fact, no ‘better people’. Pyhimys confirmed this interpretation, commenting: ‘The idea started off from the concept of bättre folk and that the word folk would refer to music in that’ (Pyhimys, 2010).

¹¹

Of course, not everyone who speaks English all over the world will be aware of the meaning of ‘folk’ as in folk music, but the scope of understandability is definitely much larger than that of the ‘bättre folk’ expression (in Swedish).

The second excerpt continues Robban's story:

(2)

Lainaa satanen,
Jag kan inte ringa min folks, jag hatar dem
lukeeks mun otsassa pappa betalar
ku toivomus kaivost taas kolikkoja naaraan

Lend me a hundred,
I can't call my folks, I hate them
does my forehead say daddy pays
when I'm picking coins out of the wishing well again

In the second excerpt, the discursive and linguistic resources Pyhimys uses project the local and global scales. The story is local, Robban's own. First, he asks people to lend him money and he does this in Finnish, probably because the 'surrounding environment' in the context is Finnish-speaking. He then switches to Swedish, when he talks about his own Finnish Swedish family. Here, Robban relates how – contrary to the stereotypical view *pappa betalar* 'daddy pays' that some Finns have about Swedish-speakers – he simply cannot call his parents and ask for money from his father. Like 'bättre folk', the expression *pappa betalar* is another recurrent sociocultural concept that is ideologically attached to the stereotypically wealthier Finland Swedes. The protagonist of the song, Robban, however, has to rely on other people for money, or even 'pick out coins out of the wishing well'. Thus, in doing this, Robban disengages himself from this particular stereotypical view of the Swedish-speaking Finn. Again, in the interview Pyhimys confirmed this view: 'The aim of "Bättre folk" was to present "a small problem" that occupies a person's life, in this case, reverse discrimination. The narrator [Robban] is not managing as well as others in the same minority group' (Pyhimys, 2010). By this, Pyhimys means that *we stereotypically assume* that Swedish-speaking Finns are rich, and that this reference group would not normally face discrimination because of their wealth and success. Robban, however, does not fit into this stereotypical category – and hence, he is seen an even more of a 'failure' who can be discriminated against.

At the linguistic level, we can clearly see how the Finnish-speaking Pyhimys adopts a character through which he makes various issues heard. The Swedish-speaking Robban is thus the narrator 'animated' (Goffman 1981) by Pyhimys as the voice of the Other, the Swedish-speaking Finn. He does this with the help of a mixture of (spoken) vernacular Finnish and Finland Swedish. This kind of language use, using these particular resources and also mixing them, clearly indexes Robban as a Swedish-speaking Finn, and also sets the context and the scale of the song as a national Finnish one. In addition, Robban uses the word 'folks' to refer to his parents here. This word, popular particularly amongst the youth, has the effect of *temporarily* raising the scale to the global level in that it can be seen as deriving from English, but it only gains its full meaning here as a local reference to Robban's parents ('min folks' – 'my folks'), thus making the translocal *connectedness* of scales significant here. Blommaert (2011), in fact, suggests that we are dealing with *en/de-globalization processes*: some semiotic forms are 'prepared to go global' and we can only understand these globally distributed resources when they are de-globalized, i.e. localized to specific conditions (Blommaert, 2011, p. 5; see also Pennycook, 2007; Blommaert, 2010).

The kinds of discourses that this small story in "Bättre folk" indexes and (re)formulates are manifold. Here, in the *pappa betalar* reference, we can see how Pyhimys draws on a national discourse of the prejudice often voiced in language and political ideological debates of *the Swedish-speaking minority as an elite group* who are imagined as more successful – for example, having sought-after and well-paying jobs (Kivistö and Mäkelä, 1967, p. 133–135) – and in every way 'better' than the Finnish-speaking majority (Heikkilä, 2011, p. 22). The discourse thus consists of ideologically (re)constructing Swedish-

Finns as a ‘better’ part of the nation that most significantly exudes in their mother tongue; put differently, the Finnish-speaking Finns continually (re)produce ‘Finland-Swedishness’ through their ways of thinking and speaking, which further legitimizes a certain ‘right’ kind of understanding of Finland-Swedishness (Lönqvist, 2001, p. 443). Some Finns believe in and speak for the ideology of monolingual/-cultural Finland; in this scenario, Swedish speakers are seen as only a burden of the past, who should not be given any specific status due to their mother tongue, as shown, for instance, in the political agendas of the previously mentioned Perussuomalaiset. In this discourse, then, the political and linguistic ideologies necessarily intertwine.

Somewhat paradoxically, then, (some) Finns also want to keep the myth of Swedish-speaking elitism ‘alive’; they want to object to the language and people speaking it, something which seems to be part of being ‘a real Finn’ – some Finns thus construct their identifications as Finns in relation to the Swedish-speaking ‘Other’. Via Robban, Pyhimys takes for granted and addresses the partly fixed ideological prejudice targeted at the Swedish-speaking Finns. This discourse is realized – in the form of ironic counter-discourse – by denying the commonly held stereotypes about the Swedish-speaking Finns. Robban both indexes and reformulates the discourse of ‘Swedish speakers as an elite group’, for example, with his *pappa betalar* reference. Here, contrary to the fixed stereotype of wealthy Swedish-speaking Finns, Robban is represented as a poor man who has to borrow money from other people, instead of easily getting it from his father or parents. Pyhimys may thus also criticize Finnish nationalists and their agenda of the ‘elitism’.

Yet another discourse drawn upon in the song is that of *hip hop as a global voice for social equality*. Right from its beginning, rap music has always been a voice for minorities, disenfranchised individuals, and group(s) in the margins (see e.g. Rose, 1994) – and it continues to embrace this role in different parts of the world. Social critique is indeed one of the most recurrent universal topics of rap music (Androutsopoulos and Scholz, 2002). In “Bättre folk”, this global discourse is localized, indexed, and reformulated in a way that places a representative of the majority (Pyhimys) as the one who voices, via the character of Robban, the experiences and feelings of the minority. What makes this particular version of voicing the minority quite different from, for example, the above-mentioned North American scene, is that in this case the particular minority is not socially or economically marginalized or disenfranchised but is a linguistic and cultural minority that has long been the focus of prejudice and suspicion because of its historical alleged ‘elite’ status. In “Bättre folk”, the discourse of rap as the voice of the disenfranchised is thus constructed ironically; this shows, for instance, in the way in which Robban is represented as defending the rights of the so-called better people by *denying* the stereotypes often associated with Swedish-speaking Finns, for example, their wealthy lifestyle – for Robban it is one of the many things with which he disidentifies. In excerpt 3, we move towards a more historical context:

<p>(3)</p> <p><u>1323</u> sai <u>Österland</u> itärajan Muttei menny Jussi suosiolla taakse vajan ja vuosisatojen ajan <u>ni var orjat, vi var borgare</u></p>	<p>in <u>1323</u> <u>Österland</u> got its eastern border but Jussi didn’t go behind the shed voluntarily and for centuries <u>you were slaves, we were bourgeois</u></p>
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In the first line, we can see a cultural time and place reference (one of the seven speech acts of rap music, as suggested by Androutsopoulos and Scholz, 2002), consisting of the year 1323 and Österland. It is atypical of rap in the sense that it does not ‘ground’ the rapper or the protagonist in current times and places (cf. Forman, 2002) but refers to distant past – which nevertheless has meaning in the context and

themes of the song. This cultural time and place reference indexes a specific place and point in history. In the year 1323, a peace treaty was negotiated between Novgorod (nowadays Russia) and Sweden, defining officially,¹² for the first time, Sweden's eastern border (Gallén, 1968). Echoing this historical relationship between the two realms, the song refers to Finland as 'Österland', the eastern part of Sweden, in Swedish, further indexing the particular role Finland played under the Swedish rule. Here we can see the historical scale of 'Sweden as a Nordic superpower' being projected. Moreover, we can see here how Pyhimys may simultaneously voice and make fun of a typical nationalistic discourse, which often utilizes references to historical events to claim legitimacy in the present day, and how he also voices and makes fun of hip hop discourse, which typically does not refer to 'bookish' kind of knowledge such as historical events (cf. Bakhtin's previously mentioned double-voiced discourse).

A particularly interesting name choice in the next line is the cultural reference to Jussi, a stereotypical, resilient Finnish man who does not give up easily. Many Finns might in fact interpret 'Jussi' intertextually by associating him with the famous novel trilogy *Täällä Pohjantähden alla* (1959–1962) ('Here under the Northern Star') by Väinö Linna, one of the best-known Finnish novelists. The trilogy begins with the sentence 'In the beginning, there was the swamp, the mattock – and Jussi'. One of the protagonists, *Jussi Koskela*, was extremely hard-working and resilient and, with time, became an epitome of the Finnish man. According to Pyhimys (2012), he did not specifically and explicitly refer to Koskela but rather to Finnish-speaking Finns in general. Nevertheless, the particular opening line of the novel did (perhaps unconsciously) affect the choice of the name.

At the discursive level, the fourth line of this excerpt refers to the period of Swedish rule, when Finns were the 'slaves' of the Swedish 'bourgeoisie'. Thus, the historical image we get from this excerpt is that Finns are subordinate to Swedes, the ruling elite, but not without a fight – 'behind the shed' (in Finnish) is a national cultural reference to execution (i.e. to take someone behind the shed and kill them there). These asymmetrical roles ('orjat' and 'borgare') are expressed in each people's mother tongue. In this excerpt, we can also see Robban's viewpoint at the level of personal pronouns ('you' and 'we' in Swedish). The plural 'we' suggests that it is not only Robban's narrative that is told, but also a more *collective* narrative, that of the Finland Swedes (or Finns) in general. Whereas elsewhere in the lyrics, it is obvious that Robban is the narrator who shares his life, opinions and views with us, here we observe a more collective narrator. These two narratives, or voices, are in a dialogue with one another in that Robban's story is linked to the history of Finland and its different populations. In addition, these different voices bring with them different 'historicities' – the collective 'we' here has historical origins, as it brings forward the voices of and from the past.

In this excerpt, we can see how Pyhimys draws on *the national historical discourse* about the tension-ridden history of Sweden and Finland. As was mentioned above, the fact that Finland was colonized by the Swedish empire for nearly seven hundred years has significantly contributed to the still current cultural suspicions towards the Swedish-speaking Finns (e.g. Lönnqvist, 1981; Tandefelt, 1995; Heikkilä, 2011). "Bättre folk" indexes (and reformulates) this historical discourse in these four lines. In and through them, Pyhimys contextualizes the present (national scale): he links it to but also contrasts it with the past (scale) – this particular history is the reason why the fictional character Robban is still seen, by the Finnish-speaking Finns, as part of the 'bourgeoisie' and 'bättre folk', although, as we have seen above, he clearly does not self-identify with the stereotype.

12

As indicated in 4.1, Finland was part of Sweden already before this peace treaty.

Here Pyhimys draws on the resources he has access to – those offered by national, mainstream education. By using this voice of ‘education’, indexed by the general, ‘national’ historical knowledge, Pyhimys evokes connotations of being a national spokesperson or educator. In Finland, basic education is accessible to everyone and its quality is relatively even, regardless of school or area, and, therefore, most of his audiences can be expected to share his educational background. This can be interpreted as an egalitarian educational ideology in itself. Thus, for example, when he raps here about history (via Robban), he can, at least in principle, expect most of his listeners to be able to interpret the lyrics and their significance to Finland without much difficulty. His references and their meanings, along with the linguistic resources he utilizes (such as Finland Swedish and standard Finnish), are basically available and understandable to everyone. In these ways, this excerpt is constructed and interpretable on at least the national scale which is implied by the national history of Finland, projected in the song as a meaningful interpretative frame. In excerpt 4, Robban continues his story:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>(4)</p> <p>kyl mä näen miten ne <i>yytsii</i>
 et jos mul ois <u>99 problemer</u>
 niin raha ei ois yks niist</p> | <p>I can see how they're <i>staring</i>
 like if I had <u>99 problems</u>
 money wouldn't be one of them</p> |
|--|--|

The resources Pyhimys uses here project the local and global scales and their translocal interconnectedness. In the story we can see how, like the majority of Finns, even the local winos (i.e. drunkards) stereotypically assume that money is no problem for the Swedish-speaking Robban – the minority is expected to be wealthy. The winos' actions are described by the Helsinki slang element ‘yytsii’ (‘stares’), which furthermore indexes Robban's grounding in (the) Helsinki (metropolitan) area. The excerpt also includes a ‘global’ cultural reference to a rap song entitled “99 problems” by a famous American mainstream rap artist, Jay Z. This is yet another instance of (re-)entextualization since the meaning of this cultural reference is translocal. In his song, Jay Z has ‘99 problems but a bitch ain't one’, whereas here, the phrase *99 problemer* (in Swedish; thus also phonetically closer to the original, English form) is localized into Robban's life and the Finland Swedish context: both the winos and Robban are local characters, and the problem that Robban (stereotypically) does *not* have is money. In addition, its meaning is related to hip hop culture, in the sense that only those who are familiar with American rap music, and Jay Z in particular, are able to recognize and identify this (re-)entextualized element in the song. Thus, here we can see that, besides the voice of the (mainstream) education, Pyhimys incorporates another voice in his song. This other ‘voice’ (Bakhtin, 1981) that Pyhimys makes use of in his lyrics is that of a subculture, in particular hip hop culture. However, unlike his educational voice, the hip hop voice, manifest in his use of subcultural jargon and subcultural references, is only meant for certain audiences: access to these is restricted. This subcultural voice also invokes the translocality of hip hop as something consisting of but also going beyond the local.

All in all, the excerpt is a linguistic mixture of Helsinki slang, spoken vernacular Finnish, and Finland Swedish. The (Finland) Swedish *99 problemer* is, however, an ‘ungrammatical’ expression (correctly: *99 problem*), indicating perhaps the artist's non-nativeness as a user of Swedish. Pyhimys also confirmed this when he noted: ‘I don't have Finland-Swedish roots and I am not at all sure whether the cultural references are accurate. However, that's not what's important, but rather that the listener identifies with Robban's view on the world that's shaped by one's own reference group’ (Pyhimys, 2010). Here, in Pyhimys' comment, we can see a clear distinction between his outsider's viewpoint and that of Robban, an insider. The last excerpt under investigation is as follows:

(5)

Kansanlauluissa aina sama teema

oma kulttuuriperimä korkeimpana ihanteena

jos ei yhteen sulauduta, jää vaan Adam och Eva,
låt mig leva

Folk songs always have the same theme

our own cultural heritage as the highest ideal

if we won't assimilate, only Adam and Eve will be left,
let me live

Linked with the theme of the song, the two first lines clearly index a national scale, because we can hear an authoritative historical voice, the formal voice of education or even the voice of the state, which, linguistically and discursively, imitates and recycles a textbook-like style. This voice is realized with the help of features of an official resource – standard Finnish: for example, all the words on these lines have been conjugated the standard way and no elision has been made. Spoken vernacular Finnish could not be used to similar effect. Content-wise, what is said in the standard, textbook-ish style implies national ideological protectionism and (ironic) reinforcement: how we should preserve and protect ‘our own cultural heritage’. Through this kind of re-entextualization, Pyhimys makes an ironic comment on the (fixed) nationalistic and protectionist cultural ideology, thus criticizing it. Hence, the use of the textbookish style combined with the critical gaze on nationalism can also be characterized as ‘double voicing’ in the Bakhtinian sense.

On the third and fourth line of the excerpt, the projected local, national, and global scales again combine and mix. There is a sociocultural reference to the Bible and the Paradise in which only Adam and Eve are left. This can be seen as simultaneously projecting global and national scales: the characters are ‘global’ (i.e. globally known images – or at least recognized by people who know the Bible), but on the national scale, Robban seems to imply a situation in which, in order to survive, the Swedish-speaking minority (of which he is part) should not live on its own, separate from the rest, but it should blend in and assimilate with the others, the Finnish-speaking majority. The Biblical characters are actually referred to in Swedish, which further indexes the Swedish-speaking minority in the context of the song, and thus the national scale. The Swedish sentence *Låt mig leva* (‘Let me live’) can be seen as referring, on the local scale, to Robban’s wish to live his private life as a Swedish-speaking young man – hence the reason why this particular line is in Swedish. In this excerpt, it is interesting to notice how the theme of national history triggers an entirely different and ‘separate’ repertoire, consisting of standard Finnish and (Finnish) Swedish, and one which does not include (‘hip hop’) English at all. Through these five excerpts, we have learned how exactly, on the level of scales and resources, Pyhimys (re)constructs and (re)negotiates the ideological sociocultural and -historical reality of Finland. Next, we turn to the concluding discussion.

5 Fixed and fluid ideological negotiations

In the analysis of one Finnish rap song, indexical of how hip hop culture and rap music in particular can take part in and project larger social processes, like language ideological debates in bi/multilingual societies across the globe, I have shown how ideologies are (re)constructed and (re)negotiated by projecting several scales, scopes of understandability. These processes take place both at the discursive and linguistic levels, which are always intricately connected and intertwined. In several instances, Pyhimys amplifies the indexical meaning of the discursive resources (narrative, topics, discourses, speech act patterns, and cultural references) by how he says it, i.e., through Finland Swedish, spoken vernacular Finnish, standard Finnish, English, or a mixture of some or all of these resources.

In these excerpts, we saw unexpected but also planned use, juxtaposition, and mixing of various resources. For example, the use of Swedish can be seen as partly unexpected. This is because, although Swedish is a national language of the country, and Pyhimys lives in Helsinki, where Swedish is used and heard frequently, Swedish is still a relatively uncommon resource in Finnish rap music, particularly to the extent it is used in “Bättre folk”. On the other hand, the use of Swedish is deliberate: the main idea of the song is to foreground the voice and experiences of a minority representative, the Finland-Swede Robban, and to (re)construct particular old and new social stances and roles. Hence, the use of Swedish is highly justified. By making use of these particular resources, the rapper creates an ironic and reverse picture of the traditional division between the Swedish-speaking Finns and Finnish-speaking Finns. Through these resources, Pyhimys orients to the still relatively delicate ideological issues of social class, power, and majority-minority sensitivities and considers marginalized voices and experiences of a particular language minority.

In sum, the scales (as projected by the linguistic and discursive resources) on which the story and the discourses become meaningful are intertwining, complex, and partly mutually conflicting. They are complex in the way they often partly overlap, such as the historical discourse of Finland under the Swedish rule and the current discourse of Swedish speakers as an elite – the latter is the result/relic of the former. The discourses conflict in the sense that the present and the era of Finland under Swedish rule are set in opposition to each other: the poor Robban is definitely not part of the past bourgeoisie and its current ‘remnant’, the *bättre folk*. Through Robban, Pyhimys ideologically voices how, in the past, there was a divide between Finns and Swedes, but also that we should nowadays simply let bygones be bygones. In fact, the song is about resolving conflicts and forgetting the past – it aims to argue that Finns are nowadays all equal – there are no ‘*bättre folk*’ (better people). This ideological demand for equality is local and national, but it also relates to the political themes typical of hip hop culture more generally. Another conflict can be seen in the third discourse of hip hop as a global voice for social equality: the discourse has clearly been localized here to Robban’s life – but we can see an instance of reverse discrimination here. Whereas in the global discourse it is usually the underprivileged ones who face discrimination, here, in the very local context, it is the (alleged) ‘elite’ members who have to deal with prejudice of all kinds. The song can also be seen as a prime example of how history (things that happened a long time ago) continues to shape our sense of identity, our language ideologies, and language use to a very large extent. The story and the discourses thus project several, partly overlapping scale-levels, both in time and in space – and it sets an example of how we need to understand and examine the *multifaceted* nature of rap music.

Previous research on hip hop cultures across the globe (e.g. Mitchell, 2001a; Androutsopoulos and Scholz, 2002) has suggested that hip hop culture is, in fact, a local appropriation and re-contextualization of a ‘global’ (originally US) cultural model. However, hip hop culture can also simultaneously be seen as a *continuation* of old, (already) local story-telling traditions – suggesting that it has coeval origins (Pennycook and Mitchell, 2009) that are not necessarily only ‘here’ or ‘there’. This dual process can be seen, for example, in the language choices, as well as in the topics, narratives and cultural references that rappers relate in their lyrics. My argument here, however, is that hip hop is always an inevitable blend of different scales and that, by projecting these scales through the mobilization of various resources, rap artists are able to occupy different positions and voices in their lyrics. The scales should not, thus, be seen as a dichotomy between the local and the global – rather, they are inseparable and highly interwoven, mixing and blending in a variety of ways. The new kinds of discourses that are

produced through these scales are complex and heterogeneous, and very typical of contemporary globalization processes. Moreover, what ‘global’ in fact denotes in each case is open for examination, as we have seen in many of these examples. It does not imply universal understandability or availability but rather a process and a discourse where meanings are in the end always negotiated locally (cf. Pennycook, 2010; Blommaert, 2010), hence suggesting a translocal connectedness of scales.

6. Concluding remarks

By adopting a minority voice, Pyhimys creates representations of the minority and their relationship to the majority. He himself does not have an ‘insider’s’ view, but his role is to offer another viewpoint on Finland Swedes that is not often publically voiced and discussed: that they, too, may be poor and underprivileged and that, in an ideal world, people should not let their prejudice guide their thinking and behavior. Pyhimys’ lyrics project (but also challenge and criticize) the nationalistic ideologies of one nation – one country – one language. However, Pyhimys himself also seems to speak for an ideology, that of equality and democracy, a world guided by less prejudice and stereotypes.

In connection with the song and its message, we can ponder on Pyhimys occupying a position in the Finnish hip hop scene that invests him with the authority and power, through his songs, to educate and ‘enlighten’ the youth. His ‘political’ message encompasses the equality of both people and languages. This is the position that he, intentionally or not, seems to take in local ideological debates over language and identity. What he does in and through “Bättre folk” is to ‘challenge the sociopolitical arrangement of the relation between languages, identities and power’ (Alim, 2009, p. 13) and thus, in his own way, contests prevailing ideologies and attitudes attached to Swedish and Finnish in Finland and, finally, produces linguistic awareness, consciousness, and equality of people and voices. Pyhimys’ skillful use, play, and mix of local/national/translocal/global resources, as well as with local/national/global scales, such as decontextualizing ‘folk’ from (only) the national scale to ‘folk’ on (also) the global scale, provide a means for his agenda, and for him to assert specific forms of legitimacy: that the song is, first and foremost, to be understood in the national and local framework, but not without significant, symbolic, reach to the global context, whenever it is meaningful and legitimate. In doing this, he also re-defines the national discourses by using perspectives and resources from different contexts.

With particular reference to (language) ideologies, within the storyline, nationalistic-laden ideologies (one nation–one language–one state) are taken for granted, brought forth and also problematized by/in Robban’s ‘odd one out’ type of experiences. Pyhimys also denaturalizes nationalist ideologies by making highly visible that national power structures are essentially an outcome of historical processes and hence not ‘natural’ at all. Moreover, what Pyhimys also emphasizes in the lyrics is the rap ideology of ‘keepin’ it real’ – he draws on local linguistic resources to share local experiences while making use of translocal hip hop cultural references. Another possible way of seeing this is through *fixity and fluidity*, as suggested by Otsuji and Pennycook (2010). They argue that ‘fixed’ and ‘fluid’ identities are necessarily intertwined: fixity ‘becomes meaningful only through the interaction with fluidity’, and both of these concepts are needed, if we truly want to understand the relations between language, culture, and nation, along with people, who ‘appear to incorporate within their own hybrid practices both fluidity and fixity’ (Otsuji and Pennycook, 2010, p. 243). This is what we can also see in this article: the rap artist reproduces and ‘plays around’ with highly fixed ideological notions of language, people, and nation, while at the same time creating an ironic and fluid reversal of the roles and discourses – and hence participates in, de/reconstructs, and criticizes the past and present ideological negotiations of belonging, difference, and Otherness in continually diversifying Finland.

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Hejsan

Jag är kallas Robban

mul on Volvo, takaluukussa koppa
kessuu halv toppa
jag kan inte stoppa

mul on autossa aina sama CD,
Lasse Melbergs första EP
mut en äänestä RKP:T,
jag är ingen cliché, en säästä huvi-veneeseen
Lainaa satanen,
Jag kan inte ringa min folks, jag hatar dem
lukeeks mun otsassa pappa betalar
ku toivomus kaivost taas kolikkoja naaraan
min credit är slut
mut mä en huolestuta ihmisii niinku noi muut
kai se riippuu mist sä tuut,
ja miltä näytät, Uffist kledjut, men ser bra ut
mun aina uskotaan selviivän,
selviithän? Nej, En selvinpäin
mitä sä koet syrjinnän merkitsevän
koska mä koen sen myös toisinpäin

Bättre Folk, Bättre Folk

Tää ei oo paremmille ihmisille
tää on vaan parempaa musaa
Bättre Folk, Bättre Folk
Tää ei oo paremmille ihmisille
tää on vaan paremman laatuinen **folk**

1323 sai Österland itärajan
Muttei menny Jussi suosiolla taakse vajan
ja vuosisatojen ajan
ni var orjat, vi var borgare
mut miten mun pitäis korjaa se
kaikki ristiin tääl paneksii
mut ei pulsarit pummi mult euroo,
vaan Amexii
kyl mä näen miten ne yytsii
et jos mul ois 99 problemer
niin raha ei ois yks niist
Kansanlauluissa aina sama teema
oma kulttuuriperimä korkeimpana ihanteena
jos ei yhteen sulauduta, jää vaan Adam och Eva,
låt mig leva
erityiskohtelu en halua vaik sais
Jos vaiks menneet kokonaan unohdettais
ei kai kukaan tästä ääneen valittais
mut kaikki olis pelkureita jos ne uskaltais

Shout-outs till alla mina vänner från Västra Nyland till
all the way to the Östra Nyland!

Hello

My name is Robban

I've got a Volvo, a crate of beer in the trunk
half a pack of smokes
I can't stop

I've always got the same CD in my car,
Lasse Melberg's first EP
but I don't vote for the SPP,
I'm no cliché, I'm not saving for a yacht
Lend me a hundred,
I can't call my folks, I hate them
does my forehead say daddy pays
when I'm picking coins out of the wishing well again
I'm out of credit
but I don't worry other people like those other people do
I guess it depends where you come from,
and how you appear, clothes from Uff, but it looks good
they always think that I'll be fine,
will I? No, not sober
what do you think discrimination means
cos I experience it also the other way around

Better folk, Better folk

This isn't for better people
this is just better music
Better folk, Better folk
This isn't for better people
this is just **folk** of better quality

in 1323 Österland got its eastern boarder
but Jussi didn't go behind the shed voluntarily
and for centuries
you were slaves, we were bourgeois
but how am I supposed to fix it
everyone's just fucking each other here
the winos aren't begging a euro from me,
but Amex
I can see how they're *staring*
like if I had 99 problems
money wouldn't be one of them
Folk songs always have the same theme
our own cultural heritage as the highest ideal
if we won't assimilate, only Adam and Eve will be left,
let me live
I don't want any special treatment, even if I could get it
What if we just forgot all about the past,
no one would complain about this out loud,
but everyone would be a coward, if they dared

Shout-outs to all of my friends from Western Nyland to
all the way to Eastern Nyland!