



Silja Rajander

**School and choice:
An ethnography of a primary
school with bilingual classes**

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Silja Rajander

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Abstract

RAJANDER, SILJA

School and choice: An ethnography of a primary school with bilingual classes

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Based on a one-year ethnographic study of a primary school in Finland with specialised classes in Finnish and English (referred to as bilingual classes by research participants), this research traces how nationed, ethnicised, classed and gendered differences are produced and gain meaning in school. I examine several aspects of these differences: the ways teachers and parents make sense of school and of school choice; the repertoires of self put forward by teachers, parents and pupils of the bilingual classes, and the institutional and classroom practices in Sunny Lane School (pseudonym). My purpose is to examine how the construction of differentness is related to the policy of school choice. I approach this question from a knowledge problematic, and explore connections and disjunctions between the interpretations of teachers and those of parents, as well as between what teachers and parents expressed or said and the practices they engaged in.

My data consists of fieldnotes generated through a one-year period of ethnographic fieldwork in Sunny Lane School, and of ethnographic interviews with teachers and parents primarily of the bilingual classes. This data focuses on the initial stages of the bilingual classes, which included the application and testing processes for these classes, and on Grades 1–3. In my analysis, I pursue poststructural feminist theorisations on questions of knowledge, power and subjectivity, which foreground an understanding of the constitutive force of discourse and the performative, partial, and relational nature of knowledge.

I begin by situating my ethnographic field in relation to wider developments, namely, the emergence of school choice and the rhetoric of

curricular reform and language education in Finland. I move on from there to ask how teachers discuss the introduction of these specialised classes, then trace pupils' paths to these classes, their parents' goals related to school choice, teachers' constructions of the pupils and parents of bilingual classes, and how they shape the ways in which school and classroom practices unfold.

School choice, I argue, functioned as a spatial practice, defining who belongs in school and demarcating the position of teachers, parents and pupils in school. Notions of classed and ethnicised differences entered the ways teachers and parents made sense of school choice. Teachers idealised school in terms of social cohesiveness and construed social cohesion as a task for school to perform. The hopes parents iterated were connected to ensuring their children's futurity, to their perceptions of the advantages of fluency in English, but also to the differences they believed to exist between the social milieus of different schools. Parents also produced ideals such as openmindedness and cosmopolitanism in discussing their school choice, and these ideals assumed different content for the ethnic majority and minority parents.

Teachers discussed the introduction of bilingual classes as a means to ensure the school's future, and emphasised bilingual classes as fitting into the rubric of Finnish comprehensive schooling which, they maintained, is committed to equality. Parents were expected to accommodate their views and adopt the position of the responsible, supportive parent that was suggested to them by teachers. Teachers assumed a posture of appreciating different cultures, while maintaining Finnishness as a common ground in school. Discussion of pupils' knowledge and experience of other countries often took place in bilingual classes, and various cultural theme events were organised on occasion. Pupils were taught to identify themselves in terms of cultural belonging.

The rhetoric promoted by teachers was one of inclusiveness, which was also applied to describe the task of selecting pupils for bilingual classes, qualifying which pupils *can* belong. Bilingual classes were idealised as taking a neutral, impartial posture toward difference by ethnic majority teachers and parents, and the relationship of school choice to

classed advantage, for example, was something teachers and parents preferred not to discuss. Bilingual pupils were addressed by teachers during lessons in ways that assumed self-responsibility and diligence, and they assumed the discursive category of being a good, competent pupil made available to them. While this allowed them to position themselves favourably in school, their participation in a bilingual class was marked by the pressure to succeed well in school.

Keywords: content language integrated learning, feminist ethnography, poststructuralist inquiry, primary school, school choice, social differences

Tiivistelmä

RAJANDER, SILJA

Koulu ja valinnan mahdollisuus: etnografia kaksikielisellä peruskoulun ala-asteella

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Tämä on tutkimus suomalaisesta peruskoulusta, joka on erikoistunut kaksikielisiin luokkiin, joissa opetus tapahtuu suomeksi ja englanniksi. Yhden vuoden etnografisen kenttätöön perusteella tutkimuksessa jäljitetään, miten kansallisuuteen, etnisyyteen, sosiaaliseen luokkaan ja sukupuoleen liitetyt erot hakivat ja muuttivat merkitystä ja miten niitä tuotettiin koulun käytänteissä. Tarkastelen näitä erontekoja seuraavista näkökulmista: mitä merkityksiä opettajat ja vanhemmat antavat koululle ja kouluvalinnalle, minkälaisia ymmärryksiä itsestään kaksikielisten luokkien opettajat, vanhemmat ja oppilaat tuottavat ja minkälaisia institutionaalisia ja luokkahuonekäytänteitä erilaisuuden tuottamiseen liittyy? Tarkastelen, miten kouluvalintapolitiikka on kytköksissä erilaisuuden tuottamiseen. Lähestyn tätä kysymystä tiedon problematiikasta käsin, tutkien eroja ja yhteneväisyyksiä opettajien ja vanhempien tulkintojen välillä ja toisaalta opettajien ja vanhempien puheen ja heidän toimintatapojensa välillä.

Aineistoni koostuu yhden vuoden kenttätöön aikana tuotetuista kenttämuistiinpanoista Aurinkotien koulussa (pseudonyymi) ja etnografisista haastatteluista, joissa haastattelin pääosin kaksikielisten luokkien opettajia ja vanhempia. Tämä aineisto keskittyy koulun aloitusvaiheeseen. Siihen sisältyvät kouluun ilmoittautuminen, kaksikielisten luokkien soveltuvuustestit sekä kenttämuistiinpanot 1–3 luokilta. Lähestyn analyysiä feministisistä poststruktuurialistisista teoreettisoinneista käsin, joissa painotetaan diskurssien ”todellisuutta” määrittävää ja rakentavaa luonnetta sekä tiedon osittaisuutta, relationaalisuutta ja performatiivisuutta.

Aloitan tutkimukseni sijoittamalla etnografisen kenttäni laajempaan diskursiiviseen kenttään tarkastelemalla siirtymistä kohti kouluvalintapolitiikkaa sekä opetussuunnitelmien ja kielen oppimisen retoriikkaa Suomessa. Tämän jälkeen tarkastelen, miten opettajat puhuvat päätöksestä erikoistua kaksikielisiin luokkiin. Seuraavaksi tarkastelen oppilaiden näihin luokkiin johtavia koulupolkuja, heidän vanhempiansa kaksikieliseen opetukseen liittyviä tavoitteita, opettajien konstruktioita kaksikielisten luokkien oppilaista ja vanhemmista ja miten nämä muovaavat koulu- ja luokkahuonekäytänteitä.

Tuon esille, miten kouluvalinta määrittää ja rajaa käsityksiä ja mahdollistaa erilaisia tulkintoja opettajien, vanhempien ja oppilaiden posiitiosta ja miten kouluvalinta kytkeytyy ajatuksiin etnisistä ryhmistä ja luokkarajoista. Ajatukset yhteenkuuluvuudesta määrittivät opettajien puhetta ideaalisesta koulusta. He määrittivät sosiaalisen yhteenkuuluvuuden tuottamisen keskeiseksi tehtäväkseen. Vanhempien kouluvalintaan liittyvät toiveet kytkeytyivät ajatukseen varmistaa lapsillensa tulevaisuus. He liittivät sen osaltaan englannin kielen suomiin mahdollisuuksiin, mutta myös eroihin eri koulujen sosiaalisten ympäristöjen välillä. Vanhemmat tuottivat puheessaan myös idealit avoimuudesta ja kosmopoliittisesta orientaatiosta, mutta nämä saivat eri sisältöjä etniseen enemmistöön ja vähemmistöön kuuluvien vanhempien kohdalla.

Opettajat puhuivat päätöksestä erikoistua kaksikielisiin luokkiin keinona varmistaa koulun tulevaisuus. He painottivat kaksikielisten luokkien kuulumista suomalaisen peruskoulun piiriin ja ylläpitivät näkemystä, jonka mukaan suomalainen peruskoulu on tasa-arvoinen. Opettajat odottivat vanhempien sovittavan koulua kohtaan liittyvät näkemyksensä siihen positioon, minkä koulu heille tarjosi vastuuntuntoisina ja lastensa koulunkäyntiä tukevin vanhepina. Opettajat omaksuivat eri kulttuureita arvostavan position, samalla pidättäytyen näkemykseen suomalaisuudesta yhteisyyttä luovana rakennelmana koulussa. Luokkahuoneissa usein toistuvana keskusteluaiheena oli oppilaiden tietämys ja kokemus eri maista, ja erilaisia kulttuurin teemaan liittyviä tapahtumia järjestettiin kaksikielisissä luokissa. Opettajat kannustivat oppilaita identifioimaan itsensä kulttuurisen kuuluvuuden kautta.

Opettajat pitivät yllä inklusiivista retoriikkaa ja selittivät kaksikielisten luokkien soveltuvuustestien merkitystä myös tämän retoriikan kautta. Testien tehtäväksi määrittyi niiden oppilaiden valitseminen, joilla katsottiin olevan ne ominaisuudet, joita kaksikielisessä opetuksessa vaadittiin, kyseenalaistamatta tätä inklusiivista retoriikkaa. Etniseen enemmistöön kuuluvat opettajat ja vanhemmat idealisoivat kaksikielisten luokkien omaksuvan neutraalin, puolueettoman position suhteessa erilaisuuteen, ja kouluvalinnan suhde esimerkiksi luokkajakoihin oli aihe, jonka he mielellään ohittivat. Oppitunneilla tapa, jolla opettajat puhuttelivat oppilaita, toi esiin, että he odottivat oppilailta vastuullisuutta ja ututteruutta. Kaksikielisen luokan oppilaat omaksuivat heille tarjolla olevan hyvän, kyvykkään oppilaan subjektiposition. Se mahdollisti heille suosiollisen aseman koulussa, mutta samalla osallistumiseen kaksikielisellä luokalla kohdistui paine menestyä hyvin opinnoissa.

Avainsanat: feministinen etnografia, kouluvalinta, peruskoulun alaste, poststrukturalistinen tutkimusote, sosiaalinen erilaisuus, sisältöpainotteinen kielenopetus

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Cambodian New Year 2010

Silja Rajander

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1

Introduction

In 1996, I met an eight year old travelling to northern Finland on the same train, who hearing me speak English came to tell me how in her class “we have to speak English when the teacher is in the classroom,” that her class was an “international class,” and that her parents said it was “a fine thing” she had been accepted into her class. The suggestions of advantage and distinction put forward by the words “fine thing” to describe participation in such classes came to haunt me, as did the apparent ease with which my eight year old companion accepted the principles of selection and differentiation as self-evident aspects of her schooling. Written several years later, the excerpt below from my field-notes of an Introductory Parent’s Evening for parents of prospective first graders in Sunny Lane School¹ picks up the ways school choice, competition and a drive for distinction and differentiation have become constitutive of how school is lived and experienced in Finland as in many countries, themes already put forward by the eight year old I met on the train:

The teacher (of a bilingual class) explains that bilingual pupils² are “expected to have good communication skills in both lan-

¹ I have given pseudonyms to all research participants and to the places I refer to in my study.

² I refer to the teachers of the bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School as bilingual teachers, to the pupils of these classes as bilingual pupils, and to their parents as bilingual parents. These were the terms which they had adopted to refer to themselves.

guages, in Finnish and English, and so the school has tests.” She says the date.

Mother (raises her hand): What kind of language skills do you demand? What do they have to know?

Teacher: Well, there may be situations where the pupils have to demonstrate their listening comprehension, like having to tell about a picture. Their oral skills are tested, too, and so long as they’re fluent, that’s important. No special skills are required. There’s no need to practice for the tests.

Mother: No booking in advance?

Teacher: No, we don’t have booking. (Fieldnotes: February 2004, in Finnish)

This excerpt speaks to how teachers and parents (and pupils) work with and navigate processes connected to school choice, a thematic which I address in this ethnography as I examine what meanings teachers and parents attach to school and to school choice, and interpret how the “good” school, parent, teacher and pupil are constructed. As the exchange demonstrates, questions concerning pupils’ abilities and school demands have become both appropriate and commonsensical to ask before the beginning of school. There is an understanding that some children are better equipped to study in specialised bilingual classes and a corresponding acceptance of the need to disqualify other pupils, reflective of a shift to neo-liberalist education policy which took hold in education in Finland and many other countries in the early 1990s. The aim of neo-liberalist policy has been to attune education to respond to the demands of the market, such as the demands for efficiency, excellence and individual opportunity (e.g., Rinne, 2000; Rätty & Snellman, 1998; Seppänen, 2006; Simola, 2002; see also Ball, 2006; Forsey, Davies & Walford, 2008; Tomlinsson, 2005). A central problematic which has been posed and which is reflected by the excerpt above is that of educability, of “who is entitled to what kind of education” (Rätty & Snellman, 1998, p. 361). Contrary to the history of comprehensive schooling, where pupils with few exceptions attended their local school,

applying for schools outside one's school district is now a common practice in urban areas in Finland (Seppänen, 2006).

The value of fluency in English in the exchange above appears self-evident. In Finland the teaching and learning of foreign languages has long been emphasised as a means to respond to the demands of internationalisation and, from the 1990s, also to Europeanisation (e.g., Nikula & Marsh, 1996, 1997). It is thus hardly surprising that following the introduction of school choice policy in Finland in the early 1990s, one area into which schools branched out was that of foreign language learning. Preschools with English clubs, the introduction of foreign language lessons at an earlier stage than before, the diversification of foreign languages on offer, and the opportunity to select a school on the basis of one's interest in particular foreign languages all emerged to make possible the pursuit of personal interests in the area of foreign language learning. (Cf. Marsh, 2002a; Merisuo-Storm, 2002; Nikula & Marsh, 1997; Seppänen, 2006.) Classes applying a Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach, which aims to teach different aspects of the curriculum through the medium of a foreign language, were introduced in the late 1980s. These classes have become increasingly popular in both primary and secondary schools in Finland³. Most of these classes take place in English, which has been the most popular foreign language studied in Finnish schools from the 1960s (Eurydice, 2005), and aptitude or entrance tests have been introduced by some schools to select pupils for CLIL classes.⁴

³ The School Act of 1983 enabled the use of foreign languages to teach different school subjects, but it was not until the specialisation of schools and the policy of school choice was introduced that these classes rapidly began to increase. At present, there is no official number of schools in Finland with CLIL programmes. However, at present, 24 municipalities have schools registered with a national network, established in 2005, of CLIL schools, and many of the registered municipalities have several schools with CLIL programmes (CLIL Network).

⁴ In 1996, Nikula and Marsh noted that only a small number of these schools selected their pupils for these classes. In 2003, Sunny Lane School and the two schools whose teachers I interviewed employed entrance tests. The Internet pages of municipal school departments in cities such as Espoo, Helsinki, Jyväskylä, Oulu, Tampere, Turku and Vantaa reveal that most schools with CLIL programmes employ entrance tests (CLIL network). In Sunny Lane School, these tests were officially referred to as "language tests" by teachers. Parents most often referred to the tests as "entrance tests." I have adopted the latter term to foreground that passing the tests was necessary to being selected into the bilingual classes.

Schools, Gordon, Holland and Lahelma (2000b) write, are multileveled places where practices of citizenship that embody particular understandings of what it means to belong are negotiated, challenged and performed by pupils and teachers. As the work of a diverse body of researchers demonstrates, language learning is central to the politics of difference, to defining who belongs and under what terms (e.g., Anderson, 1991; Bernstein, 1975/1999; Bourdieu, 1991; Cameron, 1998; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992). In this ethnography, I set out to explore the production of “differentness” (Lahelma, 2004), investigating what is involved in applying for and participating in classes that have specialised into Content Language Integrated Learning in English in Sunny Lane School, an urban primary school in Finland. In Sunny Lane School, these classes were commonly referred to by teachers, parents and pupils as “bilingual classes,” sometimes with the addition “in Finnish and English.”

School space, how it is constructed and experienced, is of particular interest to my study. Pursuing Lefebvre’s (1974/1991) understanding of space as a product, school choice, as a spatial practice, can be understood as producing and legitimising particular kinds of school spaces, known through their identification with the presence or absence of potentially disruptive or dangerous others (cf. Gallagher & Fusco, 2006). In Sunny Lane School, pupils participating in bilingual classes often came from many school districts outside the catchment area of the school, with pupils in bilingual classes moving, metaphorically and literally, through spaces and across boundaries to reach the school. In the context of this border-crossing, I pursue the specialisation of schools into the space of how differences are produced, asking who are discussed as the appropriate, desirable pupils in bilingual classes, and how these pupils are asserted and assert themselves as belonging.

Ethnographic questions and data

Pursuing an understanding of the significance of the relational ways in which we enter the realm of the social, I explore the relationships of teachers and parents, but also pupils, to school choice and social differentiation. I trace ways in which teachers, parents and pupils make sense of school choice, and the ways in which they position themselves and others in so doing, examining the interconnections, overlaps and differences between the ways they discuss schooling and bilingual classes. As Reay (1998) argues, to understand more fully the reproduction of differential educational outcomes, we need to approach:

the cocktail of teachers' expectations of children, parental expectations of school, differential relationships of power between parents, teachers, children, local government and the state, as well as the intricate layering of discourses informing both parents' and teachers' understandings of the relationship between culture and educational achievement (...) (p. 68).

While, as Reay rightfully observes, neither parents nor teachers can be responsible for educational inequalities, as Varenne (2008) claims, "it is school people who will reform schooling" (p. 363), and parents, teachers and pupils inevitably all influence the ways in which changes take shape in school. This ethnography is thus about the teachers, parents and pupils in Sunny Lane School and weaves together data generated over a one year period of fieldwork in the school and from interviews with nine teachers, twenty-five parents of bilingual pupils in the school, and one parent of children in the school's regular Finnish classes. The data I analyse also includes interviews with two teachers of two other primary schools in Finland with CLIL classes in English, and of a teacher of an English Language Kindergarten which some of the pupils in Sunny Lane School had attended.

As Erickson (1984) observes of ethnography, "the fieldworker generates a situation-based inquiry process, learning, through time, to ask

questions of the field setting in such a way that the setting, by its answers, teaches the next situationally appropriate questions to ask” (p. 51). When starting out on my dissertation, I was preoccupied by the triplet Finnishness, multiculturalism and internationalism, approaching these from the question of how education participates in raising “future citizens” (Gordon & Lahelma, 1998). On the basis of my teaching experience and preliminary analysis of various texts, I identified these as discourses that are often present in discussions of CLIL. In my discussions with teachers, I identified these discourses as of particular interest to my study:

Mikko: What is it, exactly, that you’re studying?

I tell him I am studying how Finnishness, multiculturalism and internationalism are constructed in school, in everyday practices, and in how they are discussed, particularly in the context of bilingual classes.

Mikko: Sounds pretty vague! (Fieldnotes: January 2004, in Finnish)

The above is from a conversation I had with Mikko, a bilingual teacher, during a school break in the staffroom of Sunny Lane School. It was a cold, winter day and we were sitting on the couches by the windows, I with my notebook and pen in hand, markers of my identity as an ethnographer. Outside the snow fell softly. By this time, I was a familiar sight in the school, but unlike teachers and pupils, the purpose of my being there was sometimes a puzzle, and teachers, pupils and parents sometimes asked me what it was “exactly” that I was studying. To varying degrees, I found it difficult to answer this question. Firstly, I was concerned that were I to specify particular questions, I would invite particular responses to my ongoing presence in school, a concern that has been well documented by others in methodological discussions of qualitative research (e.g., Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 142; Measor & Woods, 1991). Secondly, I was plagued by an (ethnographic?) unreal desire to record as much of as many aspects of what was taking place in school as I could, giving rise to a proliferation of ques-

tions outside those which I had first written and a rejection of some of my original questions.

How citizenship and nationality are constructed, and normality and difference are negotiated and gain meaning framed my interest in and my negotiation into the ethnographic field of Sunny Lane School. As my ethnographic fieldwork progressed, I began to be increasingly drawn to the ways in which bilingual classes were demarcated: to how belonging to the school community was presented by teachers, parents and pupils, and to the discursive production of the good teacher, good parent and good pupil in the context of the bilingual classes. My purpose became that of exploring the identities bilingual pupils perform and are called on to perform by teachers and parents, and examining how these are marked as un/problematic. Later, reading and analysing my data, I revised my initial questions into the following questions which I explore in my research:

How are bilingual (CLIL) classes and their pupils construed in official educational discourse and by teachers and parents?

What kind of qualities are connected to the pupils, parents and teachers of these classes?

How do nationed, ethnicised, “raced”, classed and gendered differences gain significance in definitions of who belongs?

How are ideal bilingual pupils constructed, managed and regulated?

What implications do teachers, parents and pupils identify school choice as having, and what is required of bilingual pupils to assert themselves as belonging to the social milieu?

What rewards and demands are seen as in store for bilingual pupils?

Discourse, Gale and Cosgrove (2004) write, is “appropriate to, or associated with, a particular context” (p. 128). In similar ways, specificity in

the form of specific questions and interests rises out of discursive contexts. In my work, the specificity of the questions I ask are related to the specialisation of schools and to selection procedures made possible through school choice, and my interest is in the kind of understandings of school, pupils, teachers and parents that the process of school and pupil selection makes possible.⁵ My purpose is to draw attention to continuities, but also to shifts and changes as the policies from a central level are translated into practice; “evol[ing], chang[ing] and decay[ing] through time and space and their incoherence” (Ball, 1997/2006, p. 17).

Seppänen (2006, pp. 100–104) identifies two theoretical approaches that have been put forth to explain the school choice-making processes of parents and pupils. The first way of thinking about school choice draws on rational action theory, which assumes parents’ and pupils’ choices reflect a rational approach to decision-making involving the weighing of “pros” and “cons” of different alternatives on the basis of particular criteria such as school standards. The potential of this interpretation to explain school choice and, specifically, parents’ and students’ motivation to apply for particular schools has, however, been called into question as choice making is affected by both conscious and unconscious processes, and possibilities to exert control in decision-making are often limited by factors over which people have no control (cf. Ball, 2006; Walkerdine, Lucey & Melody, 2001). Further, it has been pointed out that this interpretation falsely generalizes desires for high academic standards to all parents, and fails to account for the ways in which educational credentials are standardised through policy-initiatives and public discourse. The construction of particular kinds of parents as privileged choice-makers may also construe parents as able to access and exert power they do not possess (cf. Reay, 1998). As Metso

⁵ While school choice has been studied through analyses of pupils’ and parents’ preferences, the effects of choice on the comprehensive school system, and the ways that ethnicity, class and gender, for example, are connected to school choice (cf. Seppänen, 2006, pp. 20–21), research on schools with foreign language or CLIL programmes in Finland has tended to focus on aspects related to second language learning, such as the acquisition of communication skills and the effects of participation in a CLIL class on pupils’ Finnish skills (cf. Jäppinen, 2005; Merisuo-Storm, 2002; see also Smit & Dalton-Puffer, 2007).

(2004) notes, partnerships between parents and teachers continue to be unequal, favoring the decisions of teachers with parents being discussed mainly as an additional resource and background group in school. Also, there is a tendency to underestimate the rationality of working-class and minority parents' choices. The second theory which draws on Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction, offers an alternative understanding, interpreting choice-making as not simply geared toward maximising personal benefits, but as influenced by feelings and emotions and reflecting unconscious processes such as the desire to belong. This interpretation places emphasis on the connection between differences in educational outcomes and unequal symbolic and economic resources. (Seppänen, 2006; see also Coldron & Boulton, 1991; Hatcher, 1998; Reay & Ball, 1997; Reay & Lucey, 2003; Reay, 1998, 2000.)

While it is important to be sensitive to tensions between representation and equality, and to rational and emotional ways of reasoning about the choices people make regarding their lives, my purpose in examining the questions above is to pursue a “knowledge problematic” (Popkewitz & Lindblad, 2000).⁶ I move across various times and spaces to investigate how discourses of social difference are spoken of in particular spaces and unstated yet present in others, pursuing the understanding that what is important in language is what it does (Rose, 1999), of the constitutive force of discourses as they traverse and shape institutional practices, social milieus and possibilities of being. As an ethnographic study committed to the ways particular people live and narrate their lives and to what could be termed the messiness that characterises everyday life, my purpose is also to foreground multiplicity and an understanding of selves as in process. My research interest is thus less to do with “who does what” than with “what is thinkable” in the

⁶ Popkewitz and Lindblad (2000) differentiate between an *equity problematic* and a *knowledge problematic* in educational policy research. From the perspective of an equity problematic which often assumes a liberal or neo-Marxist position, they write, attention has been drawn to questions of access and representation, to the exclusion and marginalisation of minority groups. On the other hand, a knowledge problematic, they write, draws from postmodern political theories and focuses on systems of reason, such as the rationale of education reform and its connection to the generation of nationed, classed and gendered differentiations.

ways teachers, parents and pupils interpret the purpose of education and how they experience the demands and pleasures of schooling and produce themselves as appropriate subjectivities (cf. Popkewitz, 1998, pp. 16–17, 2001, p. 166).

An overview of the structure of this study

I have chosen to write my work as a trajectory, starting first by introducing my ethnographic field and by contextualising my work within education reform, and then moving on to examine in the light of ethnographic data how the coordinates of belonging to bilingual classes are discussed by teachers and parents, and how different meanings of belonging, of being in place, emerge in the discursive practices that take place in school. In the empirical chapters, I situate my analysis within time, beginning with the time before the bilingual classes, moving on to school enrollment and the entrance tests, then moving on to interpret the consequences of school selection for the ways in which bilingual classes are discussed and to the discursive practices that unfold in bilingual classes. Here I pursue Butler's (1990) idea of performativity to examine the discursive practices that take place in the context of bilingual classes, examining the cultural frames through which pupils are produced as particular subjects: as raced, classed, ethnicised and nationed, religioned, gendered subjects (cf. Beach et al., 2003; Davies, 1993; Fine, Weis, Powell Pruitt & Burns, 2004).

In Chapter 2, *Spaces of ethnography: Methodological and empirical starting points*, I introduce my approach to ethnography and describe my entry into the field. Ethnography is a method of study (fieldwork), a process (interpretation and writing), and a product (most often produced in written form) (Palmu, 2003; Salo, 1999; Van Maanen, 1988). Ethnography entails an embodied practice central to which is “being there.” However, as Larsson (2006) notes, ethnography entails a complex process which involves more than simply “viewing phenomena in their everyday context” and writing down one's findings (p. 178; see

also Gordon & Lahelma, 2003, 2007; Hakala, 2007; Van Maanen, 1988). Who one is writing of and for; what is the position one writes from; are ethnographers travelers; what happens in-between, before and after arrival and departure? Moreover, does one progress from the familiar to the strange, or is ethnography as Visweswaran (1994, pp. 23–29) suggests in analysing women’s ethnographic accounts, always also a study of “home?” These are questions that have been increasingly asked in the context of ethnographic approaches to “studying small” (Ball, 2006) and “studying up” (Van Maanen, 1988). Ethnography, as St. Pierre (in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) writes, entails a process of interpretation in which writing is not merely an outcome, a representation or repetition “of the real,” but is a method of inquiry (p. 967; see also Richardson, 2000). Interpretation characterises the whole research process: the selection of particular methods and focuses of analysis and the observations made (Van Maanen, 1988). Pursuing an understanding that there is no objective language or neutral space to write from, calls have been made for more dialogic and self-reflective research praxis (cf. Hakala, 2007; Lather, 1991b), and in this chapter my purpose is to situate myself within my ethnography.

Education, school choice, language and social difference and the part these play in evoking particular places and spaces are central themes in this study. Relatedly, in Chapter 3, *National education: Language, identity, differentiation and choice*, I work towards an analysis of the introduction of Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in Finland. I examine three processes that have contributed to its introduction: the emergence of education as a national project; Europeanisation and internationalisation efforts in education in Finland; and recent discursive shifts in education. I begin by contextualising these within discussions on citizenship and difference. The task of schooling in modern nation states has been to produce future citizens, and in Finland this task has by tradition been closely aligned with the task of nation-building, producing an image of Finland as culturally homogeneous (e.g., Ahonen, 2003; Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2000b; Lappalainen, 2006; Tuomaala, 2004). From the end of the 1980s,

internationalisation and Europeanisation efforts have come to bear on schooling in Finland (Alasuutari & Ruuska, 1998; Rinne, 2000). At the same time, a discursive shift towards a neo-liberal ethos took place in Finland and in many countries. This promulgated a view of the individual as an autonomous, self-responsible agent in a liberal society, and suggested that education, as well as other public services, should be managed from the perspectives of competition, cost-effectiveness and choice (cf. Beach, Gordon & Lahelma, 2003; Rinne, 2000; Simola, 2002; see also Ball, 2006; Forsey et al., 2008). The impact of these discursive shifts on education in general, and foreign language education in particular, provides the focus for this chapter.

In Chapters 4 to 8, I examine how the social landscape of Sunny Lane School is figured, pursuing the specialisation of schools into the place of how differences are made. I draw attention to how the bilingual classes are interpreted as fitting in with other, mainly Finnish classes, and how school locality and neighborhood are discussed by teachers and parents, exploring how these understandings are intermeshed with particular understandings of pupils, parents, and teachers. In the brief *Epilogue* that begins this section, I move ahead in time with a poem that brings together, in condensed form, some of the expectations that teachers voice of coming first graders and their parents during a Parents' Evening organised in May 2003 for the parents of prospective first graders of the Finnish and bilingual classes, drawing attention to the ways in which school, as a shared institutional space, is figured. In so doing, I pursue a performative, interrogative approach to writing that aims to foreground complexity, immediacy and the porousness of language and of social life (cf. Alexander, 2005; Brady, 2005). I pursue this approach in also other parts of my work through poems which aim to foreground particular concepts and dramatic tension that relate to the themes of the chapters to which they are connected, and through ethnographic writing which pursues, at times, an impressionist style (see Van Maanen, 1988).

In Chapter 5, *Teachers discussing the introduction of CLIL classes: Demand, survival and impression management*, I analyse how teachers

make sense of school choice and the specialisation of their school, examining the justifications they provide for the introduction of CLIL classes and how these are connected to broader social discourses in school, such as those of social difference and deviance. I also examine how teachers position themselves in relation to perceived changes in schooling, and what is perceived as *not* having changed.

In Chapter 6, *Claiming and naming: Applying for school*, I move on to examine the practice of selecting students for the CLIL classes in Sunny Lane School, examining the repertoires of self put forward at the particular time and moment of enrolling and testing children for bilingual classes. I draw attention to the ways in which notions of differentness (Lahelma, 2004) and normalcy are constructed during these initial stages of the bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School. I examine what the application and testing make thinkable and visible, and explore the kinds of subjectivities that are legitimated in the context of school application and the entrance tests.

In Chapter 7, *Teachers and parents discussing school choice: Ideas of inclusion and differentiation*, I explore, in the light of data generated through ethnographic interviews and fieldwork, how bilingual teachers and parents interpret the influence of pupil selection for the bilingual classes and what differentiations between pupils they produce in so doing. I begin by examining how teachers justify the need for entrance tests and how they construe bilingual pupils and their families, moving on in the second part of this chapter to examine the rationale underpinning parents' choice of the bilingual classes. I explore how parents discuss school selection and their choice of the bilingual classes, and how they describe the ethnic and classed composition of the bilingual classes and of Sunny Lane School.

I then move on in Chapter 8, *Interpretations of landscape and maintaining a culture of work*, to examine how the focus on the needs and abilities of individual pupils, which underpins the selection of pupils by teachers and of a school by parents, is connected an emphasis on individual responsibility and commitment to school work. I analyse how a discourse of school as work is articulated, and draw attention how this

discourse participates in the production of difference. I ask what is expected of pupils and parents to belong, and how the coordinates of belonging, of fitting in, are defined and how the ideal of good, hard working pupils is present in the context of everyday school.

In Chapter 9, *Figurations of belonging in school*, I ask how teachers and parents approach Finnishness and cultural diversity, analysing how they position themselves in relation to national sentiment and cosmopolitan ideals, and how they interpret raced, religioned, and sexed labelling in school. I also examine the production of cultural belonging and cultural difference in the ethnographic data I generated on everyday lessons and special events related to the calendar year.

The perspectives of the different chapters cast teachers, parents and students in different lights and in changing positions within school and in relation to each other. Thus in *Conclusions*, I summarise similarities and differences across teachers' and parents' perspectives and positionings, and discuss the influence of practices associated with school choice to the question of how social differences gain meaning in school.

2

Spaces of ethnography: Methodological and empirical starting points

In my research, the concept of space has been an important means to conceptualise how school choice is connected to the construction of difference and otherness, and how it is connected to the constitution of particular kinds of subjects as valuable in school. I am interested in the consequences of how school space is imagined for the teachers, pupils, and parents who inhabit school spaces. I pursue Lefebvre's argument for a shift from focusing on "*things in space [sic]*" to the actual *production of space [sic]*" (1974/1991, p. 37), as well as poststructural feminist theorisations of the situated and relational nature of knowledge (e.g., Ellsworth, 2005; Hakala, 2007; Hey, 2006).

In school, the concept of space is linked to pedagogical practice in many ways. School space is a normative space, conditioned by grids of intelligibility through which teachers and pupils make sense of themselves and each other. (Gordon et al., 2000b; Hakala, 2007; Renold, 2006a.) Pedagogy implies movement in and through space, "bodies in motion", moving through school to various destinations (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 121). Pursuing this perspective, Gordon et al. refer to time-space paths of places of learning, analysing how space, time and the movement of pupils takes place in school. Likewise, in her research *The position of knowing better and the space for knowing other-*

*wise*⁷, Hakala (2007) approaches pedagogical relationships between teachers and pupils through the concept of pedagogical dialogue, and the concepts space, position, and place, which she identifies as being metaphoric, and attached to physical and material places.

Ethnography is a research practice that has a special relationship with space. It is connected to a research practice of going, being, interrogating and writing about a particular *somewhere*. As a scriptural practice, ethnographers produce a space: in place of a blank page, a script, an interpretation of the field for readers to engage with (Palmu, 2007; Salo, 1999; Van Maanen, 1988). In this chapter, my purpose is to provide an account of “getting there”, of my “fieldwork, textwork, and headwork” (Van Maanen quoted in St. Pierre, 1999, p. 267). As Koro-Ljunberg and Greckhamer (2005) suggest, it is not always clear why researchers choose ethnography nor how they situate their work within “the multiplicities of ethnography” (p. 287; see also Denzin & Lincoln, 2005c, p. xvi). Ethnographers, they emphasise, should be more explicit about the theories and epistemologies that guide their research, taking care to justify and exemplify these in their work. Relatedly, my purpose is to explicate how I approach ethnography and how I negotiated my ethnographic field, providing a brief account of how I came to conduct my ethnography in Sunny Lane School and introducing the ethnographic data I generated while there.

2.1 Directions and transgressions of research methodology

“Methodology”, Skeggs (1998) writes, “is a theory of methods” informing decisions concerning who and how to study, how to interpret and how to write (p. 17). As such, methodological questions are connected to epistemological and philosophical questions (Harinen 2000, p. 51). Thus there are many ways of approaching ethnographic research,

⁷ *Paremmiin Tietäjän Paikka ja Toisin Tietämisen Tila*

reflecting differences in the assumptions of practitioners on issues such as what presents an ethnographic case and the role of theory in generating an ethnography (Tavory & Timmermans, 2009). As it is often emphasised, however, central to ethnography is the experience of having been there, in the field: “It is I [*sic*] who was *there* [*sic*] doing the fieldwork, not somebody else (...) It is I who have *been there* [*sic*]”, as Erickson (1984, p. 58) emphasises. While ethnographers can employ a variety of research methods, a central feature of ethnography as a research method is thus that of studying “naturally occurring talk and interaction” (Gubrium & Holstein 2000, p. 491). Ethnographers’ insight, Erickson suggests, is due to their first-hand knowledge of the field and their task is to “stay around until it makes sense and then report it” (p. 59). While this realist view of ethnography as producing increased, clearer vision has been challenged, the ideals of examining phenomena in context and writing situated investigations continue to be central to ethnography, even as increasingly the ethnographic field is understood as being co-constructed by the ethnographer and participants in concrete and analytical terms (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p. 170; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b; Hakala & Hynninen, 2008; Van Maanen, 1988).

As Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) argue, “the analyst’s theoretical preoccupations determine not only what data is selected for analysis but also how it is perceived” (p. 7). As I began my ethnographical work, I identified it as situated in the tradition of feminist ethnography. I was drawn to this tradition because of the sensitivity it shows to issues related to interpretation and representation, taking questions of reciprocity, honesty, accountability and responsibility into consideration (cf. Gordon et al., 2000b, 2002; Skeggs, 2001; Visweswaran, 1994). As Sherman Heyl (2001) observes, ethnography and ethnographic interviewing have been viewed as “particularly attractive [by feminists] because they allow for gathering data experientially, in context, and in relationships characterised by empathy and egalitarianism” (p. 374). My choice of ethnography was much the result of happy coincidence: of reading ethnographic accounts that I found challenging, interesting

and persuasive. I was drawn to the ways in which feminist ethnographies were written, incorporating insights from the grass-root level as well as perspectives on positions of power. I was also moved by the self-reflexive accounts of many feminist researchers and the commitment, informed by an understanding of the potential to transform, to write in ways that invite active readership (e.g., Gordon et al., 2000b; Palmu, 2003; see also hooks, 1994). Thus I pursue a feminist research praxis which Coffey and Delamont (2000) argue is “about the methodological framing, outcomes and reflections of research and the research process” that “recast [research] as personal, emotional, sensitive, reflective and situated in existing cultural and structural contexts” (p. 124).

In my research I pursue a poststructural perspective which moves from the question *why* to that of *how* (St. Pierre in Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 969). Poststructural analyses emphasise the partial, located and unsaid in the ways in which meaning is represented, drawing attention to the ways in which we position ourselves within discursive categories.⁸ Material inequalities, experienced within the body, itself discursively constituted, are approached through interrogating “language; a decentred subject; and an unstable truth,” exploring “how the self comes into being” (Youdell, 2006, p. 512; see also Davies & Hunt, 1994; Davies, 2000b; Gordon et al., 2000b; Weedon, 1987). As

⁸ Poststructuralism is variously interpreted as a theoretical movement born out of opposition to the universalism and determinism of humanism and structuralism, while owing many of its theoretical insights to structuralism (cf. Howarth, 2002; Weedon, 1987). Whereas poststructuralism is premised on an understanding that there is no stable factual reality that is the direct referent of words, underlining the undecidability of language and meaning, humanist thought insists on the transparency of language as a referent of the real, which St. Pierre (2000) argues has the effect of “producing, and even enforcing, order out of randomness, accident and chaos” (p. 480; see also Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 47; Howarth, 2002, pp. 42–45; Weedon, 1987, p. 24). While poststructuralism draws its insights on language from Saussure’s thesis of language as constituting social reality, it breaks from Saussurean notions of language as being a closed system with a fixed essence. Instead, meaning is assumed to be continually on the move, and language is approached as a process, as productive and as the site where social power is organised and contested, “the place where one’s sense of self – one’s subjectivity – is constructed” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 961). Taken into the context of society and social practice, structuralism assumes “there is a clear *analogy* between language and social relationships” and that society consists of clear, logical structures that are “self-contained, self-regulated and self-transforming entities” (Howarth, 2002, p. 17). It is this determinism that poststructuralist analyses oppose, with Papastergiadis (1997) claiming “one of the ‘achievements’ of poststructuralist theory [has been] to liberate the subject from notions of fixity and purity in origin” (p. 257).

Søndergaard (2002) suggests in her article on empirical analysis, a post-structural approach can help researchers attend to how social practices, cultural patterns and subjectivation are constituted (p. 188), focusing on “connotating processes and interpretations” to examine how inclusive and exclusive processes take place, how categories are maintained and challenged, and attending to conventional cultural storylines which participate in creating identities by offering a framework for interpreting different characters and lines of action (p. 191). Notions of individual agency are troubled or stirred, producing accounts that underline unevenness and ambiguity, that account for and foreground complexity, drawing from an understanding of subjectification as a dual process in which one is “simultaneously subjected and at the same time [becomes] an agentic, speaking subject” (Laws & Davies, 2000, p. 206). This understanding, Davies (2000a, p. 133) proposes, “enable[s] us to see the subject’s fictionality, while recognising how powerful fictions are in constituting what we take to be real” (see also St. Pierre 2000, p. 496).

Space, as a metaphor for thinking otherwise, has been an important position from which to imagine “taking to the air,” to borrow Cixous’ term, to challenge thought, hypothesis and negotiate with academic convention. As Kaartinen (2002, p. 23) interprets Cixous in dramaturgical form: “Let yourself go! Let go of everything! Lose everything! Take to the air! Hélène Cixous says, to me, often.” As metaphors, “taking to the air” and also “daring to be surprised,” to borrow a phrase introduced to me by Pirkko Hynninen, can be taken to refer to a performative dimension of deconstructive research: the rethinking of pathways of interpretation and the “letting go” of given trajectories of truth. The exercises of taking to the air and daring to be surprised thus incorporate a post-foundational perspective on questions of language, knowledge, truth, power and subjectivity, such as on the universal claims of grand narratives. St. Pierre (2000) suggests post-foundational perspectives need to be interpreted in relation to humanism which she posits has come to be:

the air we breathe, the language we speak, the shape of the homes we live in, the relations we are able to have with others, the politics we practice, the map that locates us on the earth, the futures we imagine, the limits of our pleasures. (p. 478)

Deconstruction is a central form of poststructuralist critique of language, which Weedon (1987) argues “arises out of a fundamental critique of humanist discourses and their conceptions of subjectivity and language” (p. 163). It is an act of un-doing that questions “the location of social meanings” in language, Alvesson and Sköldberg posit (2000, pp. 154–155; see also Davies, 1993; Weedon, 1987). For Derrida, deconstructive work is “reducible to neither a method nor an analysis (the reduction to simple elements)” (Davies, 2000b, p. 170). Deconstruction works by “looking *at* [*sic*] rather than *through* [*sic*] the linguistic surface” (Levine quoted in Davies, 2000b, p. 134). Lather (1991a) suggests it is a device for interpreting how we speak and know the world and our-selves – through disrupting and demystifying the play of language (p. 167; see also Søndergaard, 2002), with the aim of upsetting the internal hierarchies of language (Howarth, 2002; Lather, 1991a; Weedon, 1987). Indeed, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) define deconstruction as an “ironic method” in which “the marginal is transformed into the principle” (p. 154). Relatedly, poststructural feminist analyses have drawn attention to the ways in which “women” and “femininity” serve as the negative condition for the positive terms “men” and “masculinity.” However, flexibility, not fixity, is understood as characterising the preservation of binaries, for as Spinoza and Dreyfus argue:

One term of the distinction will end up being defined more loosely (...) manliness will be defined more clearly and will be treated as a clear type while womanliness will be defined more loosely, as being more or less subservient to manliness, and therefore as an inferior type to manliness. (Quoted in St. Pierre 2000, p. 481)

This focus on language has sometimes led to critique of deconstructionist work as being logocentric, as producing merely destructive and negative interpretations of social life. Rather than resulting in aporia, the focus on language as an open system and on discourse – understood as “a historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories and beliefs” (Scott quoted in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485) – is, poststructuralists argue, particularly well tuned to grasping the ways in which “we are at the same time shaped by forces external to us, and yet through that very shaping, gain the possibility of power and agency” (Laws & Davies, 2002, p. 206; see also Davies, 2000a, pp. 133–139; St. Pierre, 2000). As the work of Judith Butler (e.g., 1997, 2004) seeks to demonstrate, it is through asserting ourselves within particular discourses and taking these up as our own that we achieve a sense of who we are and can be, as individuals and as collectives, thus locating ourselves as particular subjects in history and within shared narratives.

Pursuing such understandings requires practitioners to work with and keep together sometimes quite contradictory and complex thoughts, such as that the subject is “both constituted and constitutive [*sic*]” (Davies, 2000b, p. 139) and “is revised and (re)presented through images, metaphors, storylines, and other features of language” (p. 137). Bodies are signified in particular ways, “by what they can do, by the affects of which they are capable” (Deleuze and Parnet quoted in Davies, 2000b, p. 17). The body is not, Butler (1993) posits, clearly bounded nor prior to cultural inscription. Social reality is thus understood to be relational, co-constructed, contingent and consisting of ongoing, plural processes. Individual subjects live these processes in time, but time, like social reality, is never entirely present, for as Weber (quoted in Davies, 2000a) writes, time “will never fully have taken place” (p. 28).

Ethnography, ethics and writing

Presence can be had only through the citation of authenticity, through something (we have heard) called “live” or have seen called life. (Phelan quoted in Alexander, 2005, p. 415)

Ethnographies are a curious way of conducting research grounded in an history involving an episteme of looking, transcribing and interpreting. Ethnographies often begin by the description of how the ethnographer enters a place designated as the field, listening, witnessing and participating until the strange becomes familiar, and then departing to read, analyse, write and eventually disseminate from the position of one who knows the field (Salo, 1999; Van Maanen, 1988). The storyline is often one of arriving home, of recognising familiarity and homeliness – or, in its place, being a stranger and longing for a place where one fits in and seamlessly belongs. For example, Behar (1999) acknowledges: “I became an ethnographer because I lost my home in Cuba and was drawn to anthropology, the discipline that invested fieldwork to give a name to its ceaseless wandering and search for home” (p. 474).

As a methodological approach, ethnography has often been associated with “giving voice” and “working small” (e.g., Ball, 2006, p. 4). The move is toward coming closer, and the appeal of ethnography is often that of coming to know in more depth and detail the field one has marked out to study. Likewise, in choosing ethnography I looked to it as a means of coming closer to the ways in which teachers, pupils and parents interpret school choice, recording understandings of school produced in everyday contexts and analysing ruptures and variations to these understandings. This “coming closer,” for its appeal to the dogma “coming to see” or “learning from,” is a movement that warrants precaution, with Spivak (Sharpe & Spivak, 2002) criticising the term “learning below,” which she describes as “too pious sounding”, preferring that of “fieldwork” because, she posits, “it’s less self-ennobling” (p. 620).

Kaplan (2003) examines the etymological links between travel and theory, and introduces two ways in which travel is linked, etymologi-

cally, to theory. Firstly, in Greek antiquity the etymology of theory referred to “a ‘body of *theors*’ [*sic*]” (p. 207), to sacred envoys of the state who performed religious rites and duties and whose members were also referred to as “spectators,” as “one[s] who travel[led] in order to see things” (p. 208). As Kaplan goes on to point out, travel is also linked etymologically to the French word *travail*, which she relates to “the labour of theorizing, the troubling of subjects of theory, or the work of travel and theory” (p. 208). Discourses of travel – and the work of theory – are, she notes, imbricated in location, in the idea of the subject who traverses from one site to another (p. 209). Kaplan suggests a different approach to theorising travel to generate more useful, complex analyses. She proposes theorising travel:

as a Foucauldian field with diverse points in tension with one another or even as a continuum with a point of origin and a discrete itinerary of sites, rather than the older binary format of “this” versus “that”, [to engender the possibility of] more plural subjects. (p. 220)

Taken into the context of ethnography – which is often presented as a journey from home to the field and back home again, as movement from the familiar to the strange, as if setting out on a preordained route – such an understanding raises questions about how knowledge of the field is produced, about what happens in-between, before, and after arrival and departure. The “lines between fieldwork and homework are not always distinct”, as Visweswaran (1994) writes, suggesting that engaging with “getting there” may enable ethnographers to reconceptualise the relationship between “being here” and “being there” (p. 112; see also Salo, 1999). Increased calls have been made for reflexivity, for maintaining openness and sensitivity to the twists and turns on the way and to recognising the researcher’s part in producing data (cf. Pillow, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b), taking seriously Visweswaran’s (1994) reminder of the importance of homework in writing ethnographies, and her claim that the “*field* [*sic*] and *home* [*sic*] are dependent,

not mutually exclusive, terms” (p. 113; see also Palmu, 2007; Salo, 1999).

A central area of research ethics across different paradigms is that of validity – of what truth claims practitioners assume can be drawn from data. What we can assume our observations as telling about a specific culture, Van Maanen (1988) notes, is a question which has increasingly been posed of ethnography. The link between culture and ethnography is not merely a matter of being there (more or less persistently), of seeing, hearing, taking notes, writing and producing an interpretation “as if what was then in [our] head[s] (and field notes) could be uncorked like a bottle and a message poured out” (p. xii). Culture is as much “created through writing (...) as it determines writing itself”, Van Maanen claims (p. 6; see also Howarth, 2002, pp. 32–43; Visweswaran, 1994, p. 80). Ethnography, like translation, “is also a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages – of cultures and societies”, Grapanzano writes (1986, p. 51). The ethnographer, marked as a “he” by Grapansano, is one whose task is to decode and interpret messages, recognising their contingency and the provisional nature of interpretations, telling tales that are readable as referents of the “real.”

The assumptions of being able to hear and see have been questioned by many, with Talburt (1999) suggesting ethnographers engage in acts of “queering ethnography,” examining “how epistemologies that rely on seeing and hearing can be brought into dialogue with epistemologies that question what is seen and heard” (p. 529). In a similar move, in their analysis of different approaches to ethnography, Koro-Ljunberg and Greckhamer (2005, p. 296) identify critical ethnographies as typically addressing issues from the viewpoint of the oppressed, “in an attempt to empower them and/or contribute to social change”. In comparison, they define deconstructive ethnographies as a means to “think ethnography”, challenging traditional perceptions of the field as already constituted and of “culture as source of truth” (p. 298). Deconstructive ethnographies, they write, “may produce various subjective interpretations and fragmented meanings” (p. 297; see also Ahmed, 2000; Foley,

2002.) On a similar line, in her book *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (1994) Visweswaran suggests ethnographers attend to failure as a site on which to challenge and reconfigure the starting points of their research, arguing that reflexive ethnography rests on similar assumptions of truth as normative ethnography (p. 78). Failure, she writes, is often methodological but is also epistemic, pointing to “difficulties in our own epistemological assumptions and representational strategies” (p. 98). Visweswaran suggests ethnographers should engage more with interrogating who “I” am (pp. 23–29), exploring, “who am I, who are I, at this very moment?” to quote Cixous (1991, p. 143). This question relates to questions of validity, to the truthfulness and trustworthiness of researchers’ accounts (Minh-Ha, 1991, pp. 43–44; Oleson, 2005, p. 251), for as Walkerdine et al. (2001) posit, to hear what participants are trying to say, we need to acknowledge, examine and challenge our own deep-seated, socially-constructed desires and fantasies (p. 89; see also Richardson in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 964).

The ethnographic text is not only not an object, it is not the object; it is instead a means, the meditative vehicle for transcendence of time and place that is not just transcendental but a transcendental return to time and place (Tyler, 1986, p. 129).

As a research approach, ethnography is infused by writing and its product is most often produced in written form. St. Pierre (in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) pursues an understanding of writing as a method of inquiry, suggesting “writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing *is* indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery” (p. 967). Ethnographic data are not pure data waiting to be discovered, but are generated by the researcher, and ethnographic insights entail the interpretation of interpretations (Tyler, 1986; Van Maanen, 1988). A consideration of ethnography as ethics, thus, includes a consideration of what the researcher’s part is in producing knowledge⁹, and an acknowledgement

⁹ This argument can be extended to social research and qualitative research in general. Dorothy Smith

of the partial and situated nature of interpretation (Pillow, 2003, p. 176; Visweswaran, 1994). Researchers have pursued an epistemology of partial truth as a means to resist closure and authorial voice, to trouble the subject – object schism and foreground fragmentation, unevenness and contradiction, troubling the conceptualisation of research as progressing smoothly from data collection to analysis (cf. Chase, 2005, pp. 664–665).

In recent years, qualitative researchers have paid increasing attention to the consequences of research analyses, often in combination with the recognition that truth and knowledge are partial, situated and on the move. In doing so, these writers refrain from suggesting seamless subjectivities, foregrounding the partial and contradictory nature of knowledge, the multilayered and situated nature of classroom practice. This purports to a notion of critique which is mindful and respectful of the complexities of the will to transform classroom practice, and is critical of truths as to what works and is effective in education (cf. Hakala, 2007; Sykes, 2004), and of the disjunctions between thought and practice. As Talburt (1999) suggests:

By shifting analysis to the enactment of *practices*, educational researchers may be able to theorise the roles of knowledge/ignorance, silence/voice, and invisibility/visibility in constructing the selves, experiences and practices of (...) subjects in social and institutional contexts. (p. 529)

Ethical issues are central to ethnography and are inextricably connected to the practice of writing ethnography (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001; Tyler, 1986). Research ethics, it has been underlined, cannot be reduced to informed consent, which is approached as a process (cf. Christians, 2005; Hakala, 2007; Hoskins & Stoltz, 2005; Oleson, 2005). As recent

(1987), for example, points out that “[a]lthough sociological inquiry is necessarily a social relation, we have learnt to disattend our own part in it. We recover only the object of its knowledge as if that stood all by itself and of itself” (p. 92).

ethnographic analyses have often underlined, ethnographic texts present one among many possible representations and are written from a particular perspective. Partial disclosure – *not* erasing the researcher’s presence, allowing for messy texts and *not* glossing over the sometimes uncomfortable historicity of how we do research and interpretation – and the foregrounding of partial accounts have been proposed as ethical tools for ethnographers (Hakala & Hynninen, 2007; see also Chaudry, 1997; Pillow, 2003; Salo, 2007; Visweswaran, 1994). Calls have also been made for ethnographies that allow for active readership, including the analysis of the ethnographer’s discursive practices.

What are my own sites of privilege and loss? (Visweswaran 1994, 107)

While Malinowski, like other “fathers” of ethnography, Behar (1999) observes, wrote ethnographic texts that “used a dispassionate and distant voice that studiously avoided any discussion of his personal life and emotions” (p. 472), today questions such as how one writes and represents the point of view of research participants; who is one writing of and for; and what is the position from which one writes, are increasingly posed within ethnography (Hakala & Hynninen, 2007; Palmu, 2007; Van Maanen, 1988; Visweswaran 1994). For example Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) alert researchers of the need for reflection and the tendency to “hear what we expect to hear or feel comfortable with and screen out the rest” (p. 89; see also Pillow, 2003). Visweswaran (1994) argues ethnographers should move from a politics of identity to a politics of identification, studying the shifting subject positionings of the researcher, and writing texts that emphasise an understanding of the split subject who is “continually in the process of construction” (p. 62). Relatedly, some researchers have adopted more reflective approaches to research. Others have turned to reflexivity as a narrative strategy to examine the ways in which they have positioned themselves and been positioned, examining the demands and expectations directed at particular subjects and relating the co-construction of meaning and the discomforts experienced during the research process.

(Cf. Chaudry, 1997; Coffey, 1999; Pillow, 2003; Riesmann, 2003; Wasserfall, 1993.)

A poststructural and postmodernist approach to embodied knowledge foregrounds the awkward balancing between personal, experiential and socially acceptable ways of knowing, the impossibility of resolving how we know and the discomforts of reflexivity (Chaudry, 1997; Hakala & Hynninen, 2007; Pillow, 2003; Tierney, 2002). Reaching through spaces between self and other and appreciating both relationality and distance is not an easy task in research. Richardson (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) asserts the image of the crystal for the validity of postmodernist qualitative inquiry. Through crystallisation, she suggests, we can explore and alter our perspectives: it enables us to “know more and doubt what we know,” retaining our “core vision” (p. 963.) The metaphor of the crystal suggests transgression, as well as new relationships with and new ways of knowing about self and other. Reflexivity, Guba and Lincoln (2005) write, “is a conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself” (p. 210). Davies (2000b) claims reflexivity is a central exercise in poststructuralist analysis. She argues that “Basic to working with poststructuralist theories is recognizing oneself as discursively constituted and at the same time, as a poststructuralist writer, pushing the boundaries of one’s own subjection” (p. 9).

In marked contrast to earlier ethnographic work, ethnographers pursuing postfoundational theorisations no longer construe themselves as observant outsiders disentagled from the social relations of the research field, but as figured through similar processes and subject to similar expectations and emotions (Coffey, 1999), as working from *within* to *without*, engaging positively with aporias and representational indeterminacies (Lather, 2001). Reflexive accounts have often corresponded with calls for textual experimentation and “more dramatic retelling[s] of events” (Tierney 2002, p. 385), drawing from a recognition that identities are performed as they are co-constructed (Alexander, 2005; Riessman, 2002, 2003).

There is a growing literature of reflexive accounts documenting the ways in which social dynamics related to gender, race and class, for example, affect researchers in their research engagements have been (e.g., Chaudry, 1997; Coffey, 1999; Visweswaran, 1994). The ways in which researchers recognise themselves as being affiliated with privileged or unmarked identities is less expedited. There are silences and controversies in the narratives of self of researchers, although the nature of ethnography, of being personally involved in what we are studying, has been presented as often moving ethnographers to reflect on and understand new aspects of their personal lives (cf. Chaudry, 1997; Telles, 2000; Visweswaran, 1994). In analysing my data, for example, I have been moved by the narratives of some research participants in ways that have prompted me to pursue various courses of action in my personal life that otherwise I may not have pursued. Here I stop, however. While often moved by reflexive texts, there are those with which I feel uncomfortable. Reflexivity raises new questions about ethics and confidentiality.¹⁰ Even as it is perhaps impossible to communicate the full consequences of participation in our study to our informants (e.g., Christians, 2005; Hoskins & Stoltz, 2005; Malone, 2003), it is perhaps even more difficult to gain informed consent from those who are part of our lives outside the field, not to mention the antagonisms of engaging in fieldwork that never ends (cf. St. Pierre, 1997b; see also Murphy & Dingwall, 2001; Reed-Danahay, 2001).

While I have written this study, I have been reminded of different sides of my life: of how one knows and experiences school as a pupil, parent and teacher. I come to my work from multiple and sometimes conflicting perspectives. To quote Paechter (2003), “I am thus not moving between subject positions, but inhabiting several simultane-

¹⁰ After finishing my fieldwork, I had this discussion with Annina:
 Silja: Annina, could I write about some of your school experiences?
 Annina: But mum, what if one of my friends reads it and finds out what it was like for me. I don't want them to know. (She elaborates this point).
 Silja: What if I don't use your name. We could invent a name for you.
 Annina: Yeah! Maybe. But they might guess and I don't want them to know. (Personal diary entry: June 2003, in Finnish)

ously” (p. 45). I have often found myself reading the narratives of parents, teachers and pupils from a closeness when interrogating axes of advantage, gender and nationality in their accounts. In reading the stories of research participants through the lense of personal experience, I have made surprise discoveries of different interpretations of school choice and difference, and of the self–repertoires that intersected and ran across teaches’, parents’ and pupils’ narratives. While generating data on the initial stages of school, at the same time I was also enrolling my daughter, Annina, in school, filling in paperwork and making mental notes of similarities and differences. As an ethnographer interested in the understandings and discursive practices of teachers, parents and pupils and asking questions related to school choice and the construction of nationality and difference in school, I draw from diverse personal experiences of being a pupil Hong Kong and in Finland, a mother of two children, and a primary school teacher of a CLIL class in the 1990s. My most recent experiences of school and school choice relate to my children’s, Annina’s and Mei Mei’s, experiences in many ways. I have talked, encouraged, helped and learned alongside and from them. I have reminded them of homework and sat by their side watching them writing their first words on paper, words that have grown **longer**, more *fluid* and smaller. We have changed schools and countries. This study has been written for the most part in Finland, but also in Nepal and Cambodia. My interpretations are influenced by my experience as somebody on the inside-outside of cultural belonging, and the episteme of recognising something as familiar and the associated coherence to which familiarity is often attached have always been somewhat alienating for me. Many of the practices in Sunny Lane School were recognisable to me not in their familiarity but in their strangeness. The concepts “familiar” and “strange” and the idea of fighting familiarity were often in reverse for me, for my feeling was often that of fighting strangeness which had become a familiar emotion. Familiar and strange were frustratingly perplexing concepts for me, for they invoke fixity of time and place, a stable place of reference and belonging. For me, home is an idea I carry with me, a place I have never recognised as clearly

defined, bounded and singular. Was I studying home in choosing a Finnish school? For sure, I experienced moments of familiarity as I sat listening to lessons, sang songs, walked in single file to lunch, helped put pupils' artwork on display or read the notices on the walls, (such as the one that read "Beware! Kangaroos!" that one day fell off the wall and slid behind the bookshelf with nobody noticing it had fallen until I picked it up – had it become forgettable in its familiarity?) While the pictures of Finnish presidents lining the school walls felt strange, I decided that the setting – the long corridors lined with coat racks and pupils' artwork, even the framed pictures of Finnish presidents looking on – was familiar. Somewhere else it had been other faces in frames, other flags and anthems.

2.2 Negotiating the field: Entry points into school ethnography

Richardson suggests researchers consider different metaphors for research to interrogate the claims they make of knowledge, the social realm and of theorizing (in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 973). In my work I employ the metaphor of conversation to underline the multifold, ongoing negotiations over meaning that take place throughout the research process, in different locations, with different people and different research paradigms. While framed within shared understanding, different rules apply to a conversation than to a script; conversations are more open, more messy. As Kvale (quoted in Sherman Heyl, 2001, p. 371) notes, the meaning of conversation, in the Latin original, was that of "wandering together with". As a metaphor, I invoke conversation to emphasise commitment to dialogue that does not imply an epistemological assumption of harmony or straightforward linearity, but one of connectedness of which resistance and daring are a part, as are negotiation and reflection. That this conversation should unfold is dependent on negotiating entry into a particular setting. Ethnographers enter spaces they do not own, and permission needs to be

gained – and gained again and again – into particular sites so that particular research interests in mind, observations can be made and questions asked. The purpose of this chapter is thus to provide an account of how I negotiated my entry into Sunny Lane School.

School as a setting for ethnography

As Hall (1981, p. 10) suggests, education provides a prism through the study of which we can “examine many of the major issues and problems – social, moral, economic” facing societies, and largely influenced by the sociological stream in ethnography in which fieldwork is conducted at home (cf. Van Maanen, 1988, pp. 21–23), researchers have set out to interrogate discursive practices in school, the official and hidden curriculum, and the influence of classed, raced, and gendered divisions. School ethnographers often describe their work as that of making the familiar strange, identifying their aim as that of providing new insights into the processes at work in school, such as processes of differentiation, regulation and control. Disturbing notions of fieldwork and familiarity, of smooth places from which tales to narrate the field, ethnographers have increasingly foregrounded that there are many tales to be told of school. (Cf. Delamont & Atkinson, 1995; Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2001; Gordon, Holland, Lahelma & Tolonen, 2005; Hakala, 2007; Lahelma & Gordon, 2007; Palmu, 2003.) As Gordon et al. (2005) observe:

visible and audible action attract the gaze, while silence and stillness can go unobserved. This focus of the researcher’s gaze has implications for the analysis of resistance and power. With it we are more likely to observe practices of power used by teachers and processes of resistance adopted by students (...) (p. 114)

Teachers and pupils, most notably, inhabit school spaces – but only for part of the day and for part of their lives, and they do not leave their

other attachments or obligations home when they come to school, but these are present in many ways in school. School, as a public institution, is linked to a variety of interests – local, regional and national, as well as economic, social and cultural. As Hall (1981) argues, education “will tend to be harnessed and made to conform, by means of specific mechanisms, not simply to the interests of particular groups or classes, but to the dominant tendencies *of the whole system [sic]*” (p. 10). The task of education, Gordon et al. (2000b) note, is that of both emancipation and regulation. In teaching, this is translated into the ideal of including pupils into school, teaching knowledge and skills deemed necessary in society, and organising classroom practices so that “all” children can participate (cf. Popkewitz, 1998).

While porous, school space is produced as bounded and secure. Rules apply as to attending school, to not crossing over school boundaries during the school day, as also to what it means to be a pupil. These rules are taught to new pupils through a variety of practices. Pupils are required to move about school so that they are in the right place at the right time and in the correct manner. This is facilitated by the organisation of school space, which governs expectations as to the kind of subjects we expect to find in particular locations at particular times; in classrooms, the staffroom, school corridors, changing rooms and the playground, for example, and how we expect these bodies to move through these spaces. (Gordon et al., 1999.) In Sunny Lane School, desks were arranged in particular ways, and, on occasion, were rearranged for particular kinds of activities. “T”¹¹ for girls and “P”¹² for boys designated which toilets and changing rooms were reserved for girls and boys respectively. The ringing of the school bell marked the beginning and end of lessons, and during the school day pupils were not permitted to stay indoors during breaks unless the weather was too cold or wet, in which case they stayed in their class with their teacher. This

¹¹ T for *tytöt*, girls

¹² P for *pojat*, boys

constitution of space in school participates in producing and policing subjectivities, in configuring bodies with particular meanings, reflecting cultural norms and placing demands on pupils to interpret and position themselves as particular kinds of “speaking/writing subject[s]... through a simultaneous separation from and immersion in landscape” (Davies, 2000a, p. 61; see also Gordon et al., 2005; Löw, 2006). As Somerville (2004) writes: “Being out of place is strongly related to learning: learning a correct body, learning words that will make the situation familiar, learning through intergenerational stories – learning to the category of bodily competence in place” (p. 56).

While school appears as a place where pupils need to conform to the expectations and norms identified by teachers (and parents), pupils play an active part in maintaining and negotiating the terms for classroom participation. As the work of Davies (1989, 1993) points out, pupils come to school already knowledgeable of socially significant discourses, beliefs, and practices. Classrooms are thus sites of “dispersed, shifting, and contradictory contexts of knowing,” as Ellsworth (1992, p. 114) writes. They are characterised by immediacy and are structured, in part, through predetermined, but not unchanging relationships based on race, sex and class, for instance (Sykes, 2004; see also Fine, 2004; Gordon et al., 2000b; Skelton & Francis, 2003).

Poststructural feminist explorations of classroom practice underline the shifting nature of power, the ambiguities of efforts to give voice to and empower pupils (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989/1992; Hakala, 2007; Hakala & Hynninen, 2007; Lather 1991b; Orner, 1992). Feminist pedagogies recognising the limits and contradictions of discourses of emancipation, and the need to “work with rather than be paralyzed by the loss of the Cartesian stability and unity” to quote Lather (p. 46) have been proposed (see also Luke & Gore, 1992). The purpose is not to overcome differences, nor is this seen as possible (Hakala, 2007). As Ellsworth (1987) proposes:

the construction of meaning and social positions is always performed in interest of perpetuating some sets of relations over

others. This “interest” necessarily establishes unequal or contradictory relationships between the social spaces defined by boundaries of difference. (p. 34)

The reproduction of divisions between pupils on the basis of categories of race, ethnicity, class and gender are a persistent, if changing, feature of schooling. As Roman and Stanley (1997) claim, schools “are sites of hegemonic struggles to legitimate some social identities and communities while delegitimizing others” (p. 206). Teachers, parents, and pupils are inscribed in different ways: as masculine or feminine, white, black, straight, or homosexual subjects, for example. Such cultural inscriptions contribute to the subject positions they assume in school, and to who counts as a viable pupil, teacher and parent. (Cf. Acker, 1995; Dlamini, 2002; Luke & Gore, 1992; Sykes, 2004; Vogt, 2002.) The relations between teachers, pupils, and parents are complex, for as Popoviciu, Haywood and Mac an Ghail (2006) posit, “As an individual can be located within a range of social relations at one time, the formulation of identities through a range of discursive positions is a highly complex, ambivalent and unfinished process” (p. 399). Yet positioning oneself as a parent, teacher, or pupil in school takes place in relation to each other, in shared, seemingly obvious ways. The interaction between teachers and parents, and teachers and pupils, is to a large extent organised in ways that maintain teachers’ professional knowledge over that of parents, and adult authority over children (cf. Davies, 1993; Gordon, 2006a; Hakala, 2007; Metso, 2004). On this line, one of the teachers at Sunny Lane School emphasised “I am your teacher, *not* your friend” to a pupil shouting for her attention outside in the playground during the first week of school.

In Finland, the figure of the teacher is translated into practice, in part, through the metaphors of the teacher as a model citizen and *kansankynttilä*.¹³ These construe the teacher as a model of diligence and

¹³ *Kansankynttilä*, literally translated means *candle of the people*. In Finland, this metaphor has been used to describe teachers’ civilising mission in local communities, as well as their social position, which was second only to the clergy in the agrarian communities of the past. The metaphor of the model citizen refers to the

high personal morale, and a holder of enlightened knowledge whose task is to impart the necessary knowledge and skills to pupils to enable their enlightened participation in a society committed to progress. (Cf. Rinne, 1986, pp. 36–38, p. 197; see also Hakala, 2007; Simola, 1998.) The work of teachers has been described as immediate and autonomous (Coffey & Delamont, 2000, p. 15), as a labour process (Ozga & Lawn, 1988), a practice of knowing (Freire, 1985, 1998), an ethics of caring (Acker, 1995; see also Vogt, 2002), as perpetuated by hierarchial relations of power (Giroux & McLaren, 2001), and as implicated in the assumption that teachers know better (Ellsworth, 1989/1992; Hakala, pp. 22–24).

Being a teacher is not set in stone; there is movement between “privileged speaking subject and Inappropriate/d Other” (Ellsworth, 1989/1992, p. 115; see also Sykes, 2004). Teachers’ work is affected by school policies and the discursive positionings these make available to them. Teachers are under surveillance and regulated. They are expected to achieve the dual task of education – regulation and emancipation – by fulfilling their duty to discipline, exercising control over pupils. (Cf. Ball, 1997/2006; Gordon et al., 2000b; Hakala, 2007.) Simola (1998) observes that from the 1960s, a shift has taken place in Finland from “value-rational” to “goal-rational” thinking about schooling, placing the official goals mediated by documents such as the national curricula as the starting point of both policy and practice, placing restrictions on teachers’ freedom to determine what takes place in their classroom. While school policies position teachers as instruments of change, teachers are frequently absent presences in official documents (Hakala, p. 51), and in research on classroom practice, when mentioned, teachers are often presented as “cardboard cut-out people,” as “one dimensional caricatures”, Ball claims (p. 22).

Sexual differentiation – naturalising a binary divide between men and women and identifying particular kinds of subjects as reflecting the

role which teachers have been expected to assume, as articulated by official documents. (Cf. Hakala, 2007; Rinne, 1986.)

qualities of true womanhood and manhood – has had particular significance in the history of teaching. Today, the spaces of school are often conjoined with female presence, with female teachers teaching, nurturing and caring for pupils, but this has not always been the case. The feminisation of teaching took place in response to the introduction of mass education, which dictated a tremendous demand for teachers, and importantly, female teachers were particularly attractive for they were paid considerably less than men (Grumet, 1988; Walkerdine, 1992; see also Rinne, 1986). Interestingly, the shift to progressive ideals in education, Walkerdine (1992, p. 17, p. 18) notes, coincided with the introduction of ideas of nurturance and love in pedagogy, which were classified as properties of female teachers. Children, as implied by the discourse of pupil-centered progressive pedagogy, were to be free from overt control, and the teacher – a woman – was positioned as accountable for liberating, through love and caring, the natural child into the realm of rational order. (Acker, 1995; Gómez, 2008; Hoffman, 2003; Walkerdine.)

In Finland, women account for the vast majority of those employed as teachers in comprehensive school. On the other hand, about sixty-four percent of the principals are men (Statistics Finland, 2005.) The feminisation of teaching has been the cause of concern in Finland, and calls have been made to increase the number of men in the teaching profession. Female teachers have been problematicised as unable to ensure the education of particularly boys towards a stable, healthy, coherent gender identity, and, by implication, to fulfilling their full potential as pupils. (Cf. Lahelma, 2000; see also Alajääski, 1996.)

Parenting is likewise marked by the involvement of women and absence of men, and is signified as a predominantly female area of life. Yet as Reay (1998) notes, parenting is frequently assumed to be a gender neutral activity and the norm of “the unitary, ungendered subject” is left unquestioned, despite its being a “social practice where most of the activities are carried out by women” (p. 9). Mothering should be recognised as work, rather than a uniquely feminine activity as is suggested by discourses that construe nurturing and caring as uniquely feminine attributes,

Reay emphasises (see also Kulmala & Vanhala, 2004; Metso, 2004).

Facilitating Lareau's term "concerted cultivation" which she uses to capture the ways in which middle-class parents use their cultural resources to generate advantage for their children, various studies have examined the ways in which parents – more precisely mothers – organise their children's lives, introducing structured educative activities to nurture their children's development in their struggle to ensure an advantaged future for their children (Ball & Vincent, 2006/1998; Davies & Aurini, 2008; Reay, 1998; Walkerdine et al., 2001). However, while what parents do is of consequence to their children, as Walkerdine et al. underline, "subjects do not pre-exist the discursive practices through which what it means to be a subject are constituted" (p. 116). As Walkerdine et al. observe, studies on parenthood often suggest children turn out the way they do because of how they were raised by their parents (p. 115; see also Mietola & Lappalainen, 2005). Taking an oppositional perspective to parenthood and the reproduction of advantage to those suggested by traditional theories of socialisation, they suggest a focus on "strategies of regulation, forms of government and power that regulate the day-to-day experiences of ordinary people" (p. 115), and draw attention in their analysis to "the 'truths' through which a modern individual is assumed to be produced" (p. 116) that idealise particular bourgeois ways of parenting and mothering, prioritising rational argument over emotion.

As Martin and Vincent (1999) observe, in school the types of citizenship made available to and practiced by parents is the kind in which parental activity is directed towards three roles: the volunteer, the consumer and the recipient of tutelage (p. 151). These modalities for parental participation, they note, are often "heavily gendered and racialized." There is a tendency for minority parents to be interpreted as problematic and in need of professional tutelage (p. 148.) Mothers, more often than fathers, are called on to participate in school and are expected to support their children with school work. School selection, likewise, is most often the work of mothers. (See also David, Davies, Edwards, Reay & Standing, 1997; Reay, 1998; see also Metso, 2004.)

Negotiating entry and generating data

Here I begin the task of representing through writing my ethnographic field, Sunny Lane School. This is a task that must be – done. I weave into this narrative fragments from my fieldnotes to demonstrate some of the ways in which I negotiated entry and what constitutes the field with participants. The practice of negotiation in research is often related to concerns such as gaining access to particular sites on the one hand, and reciprocity on the other. Murphy and Dingwall (2001) observe that “Conventionally discussions about openness in research have focused on what participants are told about the objectives and nature of the fieldwork and analysis” (p. 343). In ethnography, the research process characteristically cannot be determined in advance (Palmu, 2003, p. 35), which calls for a process of negotiating with participants. Charmaz (2005) writes of negotiation in research as presenting a form of interaction differing from everyday interaction and persuasion in assuming as an ideal that all participants are able to affect the process of interaction and are “aware of the content and structure of the ensuing interaction” (p. 526). Understood as such, negotiation takes a step further than informed consent, maintaining consent as an ongoing process rather than an outcome: as beginning before fieldwork and continuing after. Negotiation, as an allegory for research as an ethically orientated practice, is never fully attained.

In December 2002, I began the process of looking for a school in which to conduct an ethnographic study, my aim being to find a school with CLIL classes (in English) and focus on these classes. I had worked before this as a teacher for four years in a primary school in similar classes which were referred to as “English classes.” Through this experience, I had some familiarity with the history of this approach to foreign language learning in Finland, and with the language learning assumptions and associations to which it is often connected. With a list of contact details of schools with CLIL classes in English that I had devised on the basis of personal knowledge and some searching on the Internet, I prepared to phone several schools in various geographical

locations, progressing down my list until I found a school that showed potential interest in participating in my study. Faced with the task of picking up the phone, dialing a number and then presenting my case, I was anxious to phrase my request properly and prepared a brief list of things to say. Cognisant that “The *way* [*sic*] in which we know is most assuredly tied up with both *what* [*sic*] we know and our *relationships with our research participants* [*sic*” (Guba & Lincoln 2005, p. 209), my concern was to make a favorable first impression, preferably making an appointment with the principal to meet her or him in person to detail my research plans. With the list I had compiled by the phone, I proceeded to call the first school on my list, calling the principal seven times the following day and leaving a message on her voice machine, stating briefly who I was, my interest in conducting research in Sunny Lane School, and that I would try and contact her again soon. I wrote in my diary on the 5th of December:

I hope this schools works out. Yet I am conscious of the fact that this is just the first step, securing the principal’s interest and confidence. The major step, I feel, is to secure the interest and trust of the teachers involved – interest in that what I’m doing is significant and, well, interesting to find out about and to discuss together. (Ethnographic diary: December 2002)

It was another three days before I tried calling again, after the Finnish Independence Day and the weekend. On Monday the 9th of December, (Annina’s birthday – I had a cake to bake and other party things I had promised to attend to), I managed to reach the school secretary (why hadn’t I thought of this before?) I asked her when a it might be a good time to call the principal, who she told me was in a meeting. In the afternoon, an hour before our friends were due to the party, I managed to reach the principal. I quote my fieldnotes of this phone-call at length to provide a glimpse into how I negotiated my entry into Sunny Lane School, and also to provide an account for how I positioned myself with participants and how the character of our encounters took shape:

14.55: Thought I'd give it a quick try again before the neighbours arrive to Annina's birthday tea, so I called the principal again (...) This time she answers.

I say something in the manner of: Hi, this is Silja Rajander. I don't know if you remember me, I've been trying to reach you about my research.

She: Yes! (recognition in her voice), now I remember, I remember reading, was it in an email or was it from the phone?

Her voice is fairly quiet, friendly (...) She apologises for her flu, saying she hoped I could hear her or understand her or something.

I: Yes, so I'm looking for a school for my research.

I explain I'm a postgraduate student and my plan is to conduct research looking into issues of citizenship in education, telling her I am interested in "the English classes."

She is quick to correct me, saying "bilingual classes."

I affirm "yes, the bilingual classes." I continue by telling her "I worked in a school with similar classes for four years," and explain that this is how I had become interested in studying these classes. I tell her I would like to come and meet her face-to-face, suggesting it might be best if we meet whereby I could tell her more about my research and she could ask any questions that come to mind.

(I hadn't meant to talk for long. I had planned to arrange an appointment to discuss my plans in more detail, but somehow we got to talking).

I tell her I plan to conduct an ethnography and that I would like to study the everyday practices of a school over the period of one school year.

She asks something like "do you mean to do a comparative study or?"

I: No, but a descriptive study, to like describe what some things are like in school.

I tell her I'd like to follow one class in one school for one year. I also tell her I would like to collect some preliminary research data by following the entrance tests, and ask her whether they organise such tests.

She: Yes.

I say I would also like to collect some information on, for example, why parents want to put their children into the bilingual classes.

She says something in the manner of “m-hmm” and then “what grade would you like to follow?”

I tell her my preference would be focus on the first grade, as so much takes place during the first year: children are introduced to school and I find this initial stage in school really interesting.

She says she needs to talk to teachers; “it is up to them to decide,” and did she get me right, I want to study one class in one school?

I affirm this, saying that I would also like to conduct some interviews with teachers and parents. I emphasise that although my purpose is to concentrate on one class, I am interested in the whole school. I also say that I can act as a resource, “as like a person who is there when help is needed by the teacher (...) like with scissors and things.” I also say that “to my understanding, these kinds of classes have not been studied very much.”

She tells me that at the moment there has been a “big survey going on” studying the language skills of pupils in these classes, so yes there is research going on. This study has taken up quite a bit of the teachers’ time and energy, she says, lots of papers to fill in and return, consuming lots of lesson time etc.

I: Mmm, ethnographic study is quite different, though.

I tell her ethnography often includes a variety of methods such as participatory observation, interviews, questionnaires, and present ethnography as more flexible – “I want to interview teachers, at what time and place we can work out, won’t involve lots of questionnaires” – and emphasise that “in ethnography, school practices are studied as they take place in everyday school.”

At some point in our discussion she asks me whether I have a research permit yet. I tell her no, not yet and that I had understood from my supervisor that it might be better to find a school first and then ask for a permit once I know where I’ll be conducting my study.

We agree to meet this Thursday. I say that I really appreciate the opportunity to meet her so soon as I was sure they were in a hurry “now that it was almost Christmas and all.”

She says she has a few slots, but that probably the staff would not meet collectively before Christmas. She suggests that I come this Thursday morning during break, explaining that while not all the teachers will be in the staff-

room, it would be a good forum to briefly introduce myself, as teachers often get together during this break to discuss any issues arising.

We agree that I come a little earlier to meet her, so we can discuss my research a little more together first. She tells me I can have a look around the school, too, which I find very kind and encouraging. She affirms we meet on Thursday, adding “so long as this flu doesn’t get any worse,” as we end the phone call, adding she didn’t believe that would happen. (Ethnographic diary: December 2002, in Finnish)

The relationship of the researcher to her field is a reciprocal relationship. How we define and interpret our field is influenced by our experiences of being positioned and positioning ourselves in particular spaces, social, mental and physical. (Coffey, 1999; Gordon et al., 2000b, pp. 136–137.) As reflected by my notes, I was anxious not to become a burden to the school. Reading ethnographies written mainly in Britain and the United States with an eye on how researchers negotiated consent for their fieldwork at the time, I had prepared myself for difficulties in negotiating entry into a school, and hoped to establish good rapport with participants. I was grateful for the principal’s response, questioning yet open to the possibility of research. In turn, I wanted to be open about the nature of ethnography, which to my advantage in this situation, set it apart from other methodologies in its commitment to observing phenomena in their everyday context. However, my adoption of the term “resource person” (see Salo, 1999), and her assertion that it was up to the teachers to decide, both in their own way recognised that one year is quite a long time to spend in one school, focused on one class – something that we returned to towards the end of my study. Evoking my past experience as a teacher was, I recognise, a move to build trust, to demonstrate that I had some understanding of the conditions under which teachers conduct their work. Recognising the importance of the initial stages in school (e.g., Gordon et al., 1999; Lahelma & Gordon, 1997; Salo, 1999), I stated my preference to participate in Grade 1 lessons to the principal, and mention I am interested in interviewing both teachers and parents.

I prepared myself well in advance for our meeting on Thursday, finding out how to get to the school, working out a transportation schedule and printing out a map. Come Thursday, I arrived in Sunny Lane School well in advance of break time, and as the principal had invited me to look around, I wandered along the school corridors. I looked at the pupils' art and craft work on display ("same topic, but with variety," I wrote in my diary); made note of the location of classes, (Grades 1–3 were located closest to the main entrance, the staffroom and lunch hall); and spent some time reading the notice board in the corridor outside the staffroom. This notice board had pinned on to it two large photographs, one of the school staff and another of all the teachers and pupils; and various official documents, including notices, minutes of meetings, and a printed version of the school's curriculum. The staffroom was close to the main entrance of the school, and outside the staffroom the hallway had been furnished with two sofas and some plants. Pupils, I was later to find out, often sat here after school, and these sofas were where I was to have the odd discussion with some of the mothers as they picked their children up from school.

After a brief tour of the school, I decided to find my way to the principal's office. The door to the staffroom was a-jar, as was the door to the principal's office. I made my way in, greeting the principal who told me in friendly fashion that I could leave my coat in the cloakroom, which I did. A large table stood in the middle of the staffroom, surrounded by chairs, and a small sofa area sat by this. Some cupboards, and a long row of bookshelves with the flags of many countries standing on top of it, had been pushed against the walls. A flapboard stood close to the table, and notices written on sticky paper had been stuck onto the window of the small kitchenette and onto a mirror in the cloakroom. The windows overlooked the school yard. The principal took me on another round of the school, apologising several times about some desks and chairs which stood in neat piles in the corridor, explaining they had had to place them somewhere for the Christmas Concert. I said something along the lines of "it's too bad schools don't have bigger storerooms where you could place things like that." The principal con-

tinued along along a similar line, describing some of the classrooms as small, too small. She said perplexedly “when we applied for bilingual classes, we didn’t know we’d get other [special education] classes, too.” She told me she had already discussed the possibility of me coming to Sunny Lane School to work as an ethnographer with the bilingual teachers, and that one of the teachers had said she might be interested in participating in my ethnography. However, the principal commented, this teacher would not be teaching the first grade the following year, although it had not been determined with certainty which the teacher would teach the first grade. I sensed that the teacher who would possibly be the first grade teacher was uncertain of the prospect having a researcher regularly present in her class, and I was relieved that my participation as a researcher had merited positive response from one of the bilingual teachers.

My meeting with the teachers in the staffroom was brief and informal. The principal introduced me with a few words, and then I discussed my research a little with teachers who expected to be teaching the bilingual Grades 1 to 3 the following school year, as well as other interested teachers. They were particularly keen to hear what kind of research ethnography was, and what my reasons were for wanting to study their school and the bilingual classes. I learned that while most of the teachers of the Finnish classes had taught at the school for over five years, only one of the bilingual teachers had worked in the school for over five years. The school had a bilingual class at each grade level, and included among the bilingual staff were two native English speakers, the other bilingual teachers being ethnic Finns. Most of the teachers were women, and with the exception of a few teachers of minority language and religious groups, all the teachers were white. The school had approximately four hundred pupils, and while with few exceptions pupils belonging to the Finnish grades lived in the school district, the majority of bilingual pupils and pupils in special education classes came from other school districts in the municipality. The average income and educational levels of parents living in the school district, one of the teachers identified, were on the upper end of the municipality’s spec-

trum. The school was described by several teachers as not being particularly multicultural, which they connected to the relatively low number of immigrant families in the school district and to the school's requirement that all pupils in bilingual classes have to have good Finnish skills.

As I prepared to leave after the break, the principal said she was confident they would be able to find a class for me, "at least with one of the classes," she expressed. I maintained my interest in the initial stages of school, stating I would be interested in observing the entrance tests, and we agreed that if I had my research permit, I would participate in observing the entrance tests in March 2003.

In school, ethnographers are neither teachers nor pupils, and need to negotiate a space for themselves as a participant and observer in classes designed for teachers and pupils, and in a social world produced as consisting of adults and children (Kasanen, 2003, pp. 68–70; Lappalainen, 2006; Palmu, 2003, pp. 35–36; Thorne, 1993). While teachers can demonstrate collaboration and interest in the ethnographer's presence, the experience of having an ethnographer observe the day-to-day affairs in their classroom for a prolonged period of time can be the cause of concern and distress for teachers. For example Kasanen (2003) quotes the teacher in her study as having identified at the end of her fieldwork, the school term had been particularly hard for her due to the presence of "another, passive grown-up [sitting] in the class"¹⁴ (p. 69). After reflecting on the potential burden on the teacher on focusing on one class only and wanting to include perspectives from different classrooms, I decided to opt for a "home class," participating in the lessons of also other classes and focusing on the bilingual Grades 1–3. Thus in my introductory letter to teachers which I distributed a few weeks later, I no longer specified directly which grade I would be participating in, describing my work as follows:

I will be collecting ethnographic data at your school by observing the everyday life of your school as implicit in school practices,

¹⁴ *luokassa on istunut toinen, passiivinen aikuinen*

procedures and documents. I am particularly interested in your school's bilingual classes. (Appendix 1)

Following my meeting with teachers, I maintained contact through email and phone with the principal and with the vice principal of the school, the latter being a teacher of a bilingual class and thus, the principal observed, better placed to respond to my questions. Eventually, one of the bilingual teachers told me she was willing for me to follow her class and we agreed for her to be my home class teacher. Later that spring, knowing how difficult it often is to find substitute teachers for the bilingual grades, I volunteered to substitute for her for three days, which gave me the possibility to familiarise with the organisation of time and space in the school – such as the structure of timeschedules and the general layout of the school – and to introduce myself to the pupils in my home class and to the teachers.

In early February 2003, I interviewed the principal of Sunny Lane School and two teachers of bilingual classes. On the basis of these interviews, I pursued my research to also other locations. Included in my analysis is also the interpretation of the interviews of one member of staff at the local education department, Annikki; an interview with Sandy, who represented a private English kindergarten; and two senior members of staff from two primary schools with CLIL classes, Ritva from Suensaari School and Minna from Pudas School. Both these schools had been mentioned by the teachers I interviewed in Sunny Lane School and both had introduced CLIL classes in English. Suensaari School, like Sunny Lane School, organised their teaching on the principle of “fifty-fifty” or “Finnish-English,” whereas Pudas School organised all but Finnish lessons, in principle, in English. Due to their emphasis on learning both languages, Sunny Lane School and Suensaari School called these classes “bilingual classes,” whereas in Pudas School these classes were referred to as “English language classes.”¹⁵ In all three

¹⁵ CLIL is commonly referred to as “learning and teaching non-language subjects through a foreign language,” “content-based language instruction,” “language sensitive content instruction,” and “bilingual education,” for example (cf. Marsh, 2002a; Merisuo-Storm, 2002). CLIL has been the preferred term

schools, CLIL classes were not available for all those interested, and children had to participate in entrance tests designed to measure their language skills. At the time of my ethnography, all three schools had CLIL classes at each grade level, and the arrival of CLIL classes in the schools, I was told, had increased the number of pupils considerably, having doubled or almost tripled the number of pupils in the schools from when their numbers were at their lowest.

On Monday the 4th of August 2003, I received a large, brown envelope from Sunny Lane School. Eager to see what was inside, I ripped it open. It was letter that was sent by the principal to all the teachers at the school, in English and in Finnish, and I felt warmed to have received it, too. The letter in Finnish read: “*Tervetuloa kesälomalta – terveisiä koululta!*”¹⁶ and in English, with a slightly different title: “Welcome to our planning day on Monday the 11th of August, 2003.” The letter included a separate page with a list of all the staff at the school, and a smaller sheet of paper headed “Dear Colleagues” directed to bilingual teachers. This marked the beginning of my ethnographic field year, the first few weeks of which were a busy helter skelter of working out school and family schedules, of introducing myself to teachers, parents and pupils. At an informal coffee with the School Council, I explained that I would be “*mukana tutkijana*”¹⁷ in the school, and in a Parents’ Evening that was organised at the beginning of school term, I introduced myself as a “researcher from the Department of Education in Helsinki University and I am here mostly with the bilingual classes, as a researcher, this year, and also here as another grown-up.” I repeated these themes of being a researcher interested in what takes place in

adopted by education practitioners. The terminology is still unsettled, however. In Finland, the curriculum of 2004 refers to “instruction in a foreign language.” To identify the languages selected for these classes as foreign, however, can be misleading, for while CLIL was initiated in Finland and Europe to respond to the perceived needs of foreign language education, for some pupils attending these classes the ‘foreign’ language is their mother tongue. In my study, I refer to CLIL classes when referring in general to classes organised on the principle of teaching through a foreign language, and to bilingual classes when referring to the CLIL classes in Sunny Lane School.

¹⁶ *Welcome back from summer holidays – greetings from school!*

¹⁷ *Mukana means with (someone or something), tutkijana means as a researcher.*

school and being a grown-up to pupils before participating in any lessons with them. What it actually meant to be another grown-up in school (without keys to classrooms or similar responsibilities as teachers and teacher assistants in school), not belonging to any of obvious category – teachers, teacher assistant, parent or pupil – was something I had to negotiate throughout my fieldwork, never attaining comfort or confidence in my positioning as another grown-up. Work as an ethnographer was at times acutely lonesome, a constant state of being on the “inside outside,” and I was thankful for the space of a home class, and the possibility of building more personal bonds with both its teacher and pupils.

During the school year, I participated in school days on average three days a week, negotiating individually with teachers other than my home class teacher on participating in lessons, trying to avoid being apologetic or intrusive, but also to be sensitive to when teachers appreciated time alone with their class, as the excerpt below demonstrates:

On the way to Niki’s class I ask her, as she looks uncertain, whether she would like to spend the beginning of the lesson alone with her pupils, so that I don’t take up the few minutes time they have to prepare themselves for assembly as it is their ‘assembly turn’. (I haven’t introduced myself to her class yet, and we have agreed that I introduce myself to all the classes whose lessons I participate in first, so that I can explain to the pupils why I am there and what I am doing). Niki looks relieved. She says “that would probably be quite good so I have time to tell them a little bit about assembly.” (Fieldnotes: August 2003, in Finnish)

Metso (2004) observes in her ethnography that parents are not often present in school in Finland, and Sunny Lane School was no exception to this, although the absence of parents was not so marked as that of the secondary school parents described by Metso. On daily basis, parents were to be seen fetching pupils from the first and second grades from

school, although most parents did not fetch their children until after five o'clock from the After School -club. In addition, mothers in particular dropped by at school, for example to take their children to dentist appointments. Parents' participation, however, was mostly limited to official occasions such as Parents' Evenings, open doors-events, the Christmas Sale, Christmas and Spring Concerts, Autumn and Spring Church, or in the case of some parents, to the parallel events for Ethics and religious minority pupils. In addition, a small number of parents attended the school's Parent's Association meetings and School Board meetings, the latter being attended by elected parents only. In addition to these official events, there were less formal class get-togethers that were relatively popular particularly in the bilingual grades, taking place on average one to three times a year.

Much of the interaction between parents and teachers in Sunny Lane School was private, and took place either through confidential parent-teacher conferences or through pupils' books, which served as both a homework diary and as a message book between parents and teachers. This was naturally information I did not have access to. In my home class, however, parents had a joint email list to which they added me for the period of my ethnographic year. This list mainly served as a forum to remind parents of oncoming events in the class and for parents to coordinate the organisation of special events such as an International Food Evening. These emails were one means through which I came to know parents – to identify whose parent so-and-so was, as well as some of the details regarding their lives – and a means to briefly introduce myself when I was added to the list. As not all parents had access to emails on regular basis, I also sent a letter via the pupils' diaries to the parents of my home class, explaining what I would be doing in school and sharing my contact details. In addition, I introduced myself to the parents of my home class at the Parents' Evening that took place soon after school began in autumn 2003.

While teacher and pupils are constantly on the move in school, talking and asserting opinions, my part as an ethnographer was more one of quiet observation and participation. I took running fieldnotes of les-

sons, recording what was said, in what sequence and to whom. I also took note of the ways in which classrooms were organised and on the movement and body language of teachers and pupils during school. I often cross-checked some observations I had made during lessons with teachers during breaks, checking whether I had heard or understood correctly, and these often grew into discussions on the lessons, of which I also took notes. I videotaped and audiotaped various events in school, and collected various documents such as the school's curriculum and newsletters teachers wrote to parents, and took photographs of the school. I attended various staff meetings, including planning events, weekly meetings and various informal teachers' events. The school principal added me to the staff email list for some – not all – emails directed to teachers with meeting agendas and minutes, updates on oncoming events, and so on. I observed the entrance tests at Sunny Lane School three times. In contrast to my encounters with pupils, teachers and parents in the context of school lessons and various other events, I rarely knew the names or background details of the parents or children beforehand and many of the parents and children I met with in these initial stages I did not meet again. In my personal diary I also kept notes, with permission, of discussions I had with personal acquaintances, including several parents who had selected a school with specialised classes and a teacher who taught a CLIL class.¹⁸

During my fieldwork, I struggled with learning to write quickly, without having to look into my notebook all the time, and adopted some basic guidelines on writing shorthand. Regardless of these efforts, I was not satisfied with how much – or how little – I was able to record of the events and discussions that unfolded in school. I brought in a video camera, but this proved unhelpful, for it proved more in the way than I and my notebook, was restricted to one angle at a time, and some pupils appeared to be stressed by its presence. Perplexed, I limited the video mainly to mainly staged events such as school concerts (cf. Lap-

¹⁸ I do not include excerpts from these notes, but it was interesting to note similarities across their narratives and those of the participants in my study.

palainen, 2006) and continued taking notes in as much detail as possible of what teachers and pupils said in classrooms, how they moved about in school and the meanings they attached to their actions, also making note of key features such as which class, lesson, grade and teacher was in question. I included some notes on my emotions and feelings. I worked intuitively, but also consciously, generating data in relation to particular interests, but also working against myself to include surprise moments and revelations, reading myself into writing by dedicating some time, throughout my fieldwork, to reading methodological texts, ethnographic accounts and studies on culture and society, such as Willis' *Learning to Labour* (1977), and Gordon, Holland and Lahelma's *Making Spaces: Citizenship and Difference in Schools* (2000b), as well as poetry and fiction that engaged with the themes of nation, race, class, and gender.

While my note-taking set me apart as a researcher in school, the paper and pen-approach fit in well with classroom work. During most lessons, pupils were engaged in writing, and my taking notes of "all kinds of things" during lessons was rarely interpreted by pupils as an extraordinary undertaking. However, pupils often demonstrated keen interest in my writing, particularly in what I was actually writing about:

Adele (pupil, stopping on her way out for break): Silja, what are you writing about?

Silja: About all kinds of things. Like the kind of things that you do in school and what people talk about here.

Adele: Oh. (Skips out the door). (Fieldnotes: September 2003, in Finnish)

Sometimes pupils would come to me to ask how many pages I had written, and whether I had written about them or their friends. I was careful to maintain the confidential nature of my notes, allowing pupils to read only such excerpts that were related specifically to them.

Questions of confidentiality are linked to negotiating the perimeters of one's study so that participants are aware of when one is merely par-

ticipating and when one is also making observations, for example. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005c) write, “We do not have an undisputed warrant to study anyone or anything” (p. xvi), and Van Maanen (1988) posits “self-imposed limits mark all ethnographies” (p. 5). Research ethics require certain steps to be taken along the way, such as seeking approval from local authorities or, where they exist, ethics committees. Compared to other countries, in Finland ethics protocols related to research are not very complex (cf. Halse & Honey, 2005). In pursuing my research, I required approval from the Department of Education at the University of Helsinki for my research plan and also from local education authorities for conducting the research, and consent from research participants (Appendix 4). Ethnography, as a study of the everyday, poses also other questions for ethics which in conventional research are often understood as resolved through ensuring informed consent. These questions relate to concerns to protect privacy and confidentiality, but also to oppose deception and maintain research participants are aware of what it is they are involved in, ensuring the accuracy of data (e.g., Christians, 2005, pp. 144–145). Confidentiality and safeguarding people’s identities, particularly from insiders, are issues that are not resolved simply through pseudonyms, and relate to broader discussion on the epistemological assumptions of truth claims and on research ethics (Christians, 2005, p. 145; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; see also Hakala & Hynninen, 2007; Smith, 2004).

As research originating from the fields of anthropology and sociology (Van Maanen, 1988; Visweswaran, 1994), ethnography, like most research, has contributed to colonising the world, intervening as a “racist project” in the lives of those others researched (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a, p. 2; see also Behar, 1999, pp. 472–473). Yet as an ethnographer I wrestled with the ways teachers were constituted through authority in school, and with the socioeconomic privilege that was associated with many of the parents in Sunny Lane School. In the literature on ethnography, the perspective from which concerns about research ethics are written from, such as that of the right to self-definition, appears most often to be that of those less privileged and powerful

in society (Blee quoted in Murphy & Dingwall, 2001, p. 346). Less discussed are the tensions and difficulties that emerge in studying those situated in positions of power. As Murphy and Dingwall observe, concerns have been iterated that the “preoccupation with the so-called under-dog has led to a neglect of the powerful and privileged” (p. 346; see also Hertz & Imber, 1995; Wasserfall, 1993). Studying the production of raced, nationed, classed and gendered privilege is not easy due to its “unmarked, unnamed status”, to quote Weis, Proweller and Centrie (2004, pp. 130–131). Herz and Imber (1995) identify three strategies or aims that have been articulated in studies of the elite. The first aim is that of exposing the “reach of power in the hope of clarifying it to those who are subject to it”; the second aims to increase understanding of the “form and function of elites” as the basis for restructuring social policy related to the workplace; and the third aims toward “link[ing] contemporary empirical work with major historical transformations” (p. viii–ix; see also Ostrander, 1995). As reflected by this list, while research on those representing the powerful and privileged may not identify emancipation directly as its goal, it is equally spurred toward social transformation and equally orientated towards open-ended, respectful interpretation that is cautious of appearances and common sense (Murphy & Dingwall, p. 346).

Accordingly, when writing fieldnotes, I made a point of keeping my paper and pen visible, putting them away in situations where what was discussed seemed inappropriate to write up, such as discussions over personal relationships. This was important, I felt, as over the time of my fieldwork, I spent a lot of informal time with teachers and sometimes with parents, sharing in many discussions, coffees in the staffroom, and a few informal get-togethers after school. During the school year, particularly during early autumn and late spring, there were playful jests, accompanied by laughter, commenting on my presence in school. This was often directed toward my work of writing, of “having nothing to do,” “using up taxpayers’ money,” being a “deserter,” or of participants having hidden agendas in discussing particular issues in my presence:

One of the teachers brought sweets to the staffroom. They had been put in a bowl on the table. Heta brought a couple of sweets to me. Sari, substituting for one of the teachers, sat on the sofa opposite me, talking animatedly to some of the teachers. I didn't have my notebook out. She looked at me and started to laugh and said: "Well, why doesn't the researcher have her pen out? This important thing I am trying to put across is going to be wasted, don't you know that I say these things so you can hear them!" (Fieldnotes: February 2004, in Finnish)

Humor, as Gouin (2004) writes, can serve many purposes. In my data the use of humor that related to my presence in the school often focused on elaborating both differences and commonalities between my work as a researcher and that of teachers in school with an ironic flair. At times, it seemed to reflect anxiety that I would present data or interpretations unfavorable to research participants. My writing was often interpreted, in the tradition of realistic writing (see Van Maanen, 1988), as a means to bear witness to the perceptions of teachers and parents, and to the events that unfolded during the school year. While at the beginning of the school year, there seemed to be a shortage of time to explain to teachers, parents and pupils at length what it was I was interested in beyond the "in a nutshell" -approach, as the school year turned into spring, questions and comments on my research became more frequent. A frequently posed question of which there were different variants, was that of "what have you made of us so far?"

My ethnography focuses on the bilingual Grades 1–3, and most classes I observed had female teachers. In part, this was due to the fact that all the teachers teaching Grades 1–3 were women at the time, but it was also due to these teachers being more willing to keep their doors open, although admitting on occasion to "having a bad hair day," or being "disorganized," for instance. Sometimes these teachers appreciated the possibility of another adult presence in the class, of someone helping with handing out scissors, threading needles, or listening to pupils read. Yet their quiet acceptance of my note-taking during lessons

and the seriousness with which they reflected on their lessons afterward differed markedly from the approach of several of their male colleagues. In interviewing teachers, having observed their lessons and had many “ethnographic conversations” (see Renold, 2006b) with them, I wanted to provide them a forum to reflect on their views of Sunny Lane School, their class and their history as a teacher, and to ask many of the broader questions that still begged asking, pursuing a conversational space outside classroom and staffroom. Ethnographic interviews, as Gordon and Lahelma (2003) write, are grounded in joint memories, in earlier discussions, which construct a joint frame of reference during the interview: “Although we were researchers (...) we were also personalized”, they observe (p. 249; see also Palmu, 2003; Sherman Heyl, 2001). Ethnographic interviews often include elements of life history research, such as the aim of contextualising participants’ stories within broader social and economic frames (Gordon & Lahelma, 2003).¹⁹ Thus I set out as planned, interviewing both teachers and parents in April and May 2004, adopting open-ended questioning and careful prompting, asking questions on the basis of what I had already learned in school.

I conducted interviews with altogether nine members of staff: two men and seven women; or five class teachers of the bilingual grades, two of Finnish grades, the Finnish as a Second Language teacher and the principal; and twenty-five parents, or three fathers and twenty-two mothers. These interviews lasted, on average, about one to one and a half hours. In addition, with permission, I recorded two discussions with small groups of teachers that took place spontaneously after school, and one discussion I had with a small group of teachers after finishing my fieldwork in the autumn of 2004. I also interviewed the language teachers in Sunny Lane School as a group, asking for their perspectives on the bilingual classes. As my focus was on Grades 1–3,

¹⁹ Life stories, Goodson and Sikes (2001) write, are partial, selective accounts of the past: they are a means of storying our lives, of making sense of and structuring our lives. As such, life stories are personal, based on perceptions and memories of reality and lived experience. Life histories, they write, add “a second layer and a further interpretation” to life stories, locating the life story within a wider cultural and socio-political context and interpreting life stories from a historical framework. (p. 107; see also Riessman, 2002.)

I decided to focus my interviews with parents who have children in these grades, sending invitations to interviews to the parents of my home class, expanding a little to include a few parents who I knew to be particularly active in school. In my interviews, I did not ask parents or teachers to explicate their subject positions in relation to class or race, for example. While not generalisable to all parents, many parents were described by teachers as having a white collar profile and as being influential people in the municipality, and I wanted to examine if, when and how they – as well as the teachers and pupils in my study – constituted themselves or others through reference to discourses of nationality, ethnicity, class, race and gender. Reading Goodson and Sikes' (2001) book on life history at the time of my interviews with teachers and parents, I decided to ask open-ended questions orientated toward the telling of life stories, such as “how did you come to teaching at Sunny Lane School?” and “how did your child come to be a pupil in Sunny Lane School?”

One of my purposes in my interviews with parents was to collect biographical data and trace pupils' transition from kindergarten to school, as described by parents. In my invitation to the interviews, I described them to parents as “semi-structured conversations that will progress from some topics and questions I have in mind,” opting for the use of the term “conversation” as a means to foreground also the possibility for parents to discuss issues of importance to them, as well as emphasise the possibility of exchange of thoughts. Our interviews covered the questions I have identified in advance, but seldom in the exact order in which I had identified them. As compared with my interviews with teachers, there were fewer shared memories of school (cf. Metso, 2004). Some parents asked questions, which often related to the kind of observations I had made of their children in school or of their children's class, my background, my children, what I planned to do with the data I generated through interviews and fieldwork, and what I was writing for. Accordingly, in the following section I move on to discuss my process of writing toward analysis.

2.3 Writing toward analysis

Originally, at the beginning of the school year, we planned to get together every so often with a group of teachers from Grades 1–3 who wanted to discuss their experiences, perceptions and ideas on teaching as a group. The school principal suggested we call these get-togethers “pedagogical cafés.” Prior to my arrival, some of the teachers had wanted to organise something of the sort, open discussions about their work over cups of coffee. However, like the meetings of the bilingual staff that were planned to take place once a month but only took place a couple of times during the school year, other meetings and pieces of work seemed to get in the way of organising these meetings. I was also hesitant to present my interpretations at this stage, still submerged as I was in fieldwork. It seemed to me on the basis of our discussion during my fieldwork that what many of these teachers expected was an analysis of good versus bad teaching practices, perhaps partly influenced by the kind of approaches adopted by studies on schools that they were familiar with. As Timo, a teacher of a bilingual class, recalled of his Master’s Thesis study in a conversation we had in the staffroom:

My supervisor told me to make a quantitative study, but when I showed it to him, he asked me “Why did you do a quantitative study?” And he asked me to! I remember I had to push the data into a mold, so that I’d get the kind of answers I needed. I think a really big challenge in research is to be open to different kinds of interpretations and to the results not perhaps being what you expected them to be. Reality is quite grey, in the end. It’s hardly ever black and white. (Recorded conversation: March 2004, in Finnish)

The nature of particularly the more informal discussions or “ethnographic conversations” (Renold, 2006b, p. 491) I had with teachers was reflective, porous, spoken in defense *and* critique of classroom practices and of the understandings teachers adopted of their relationships with pupils and parents. Teachers and parents were not naïve as to the kind

of images and identities that could be presented of them. I was often told “it will be interesting to see what you write.” Several times teachers or parents presented critical comments on popular images of schools with CLIL classes, and the teachers of these classes; as well as of parents who had selected CLIL classes for their children. The expectation of my study, as articulated by one bilingual mother, was that “this time, hopefully, we’ll see a more rounded picture.” During a conversation in May 2004 the principal commented that the “pedagogical cafés” had not taken place:

Principal: You’ve been here quite a lot and seen and heard all kinds of things [pause]. I’ve been thinking, you’ve heard us discuss the pupils, and as you’ve said, when you write you have that research ethics.

I: Yes, research ethics is something that needs to be present all the time in research, not just when I’m here, but also when I start writing my research. I need to think again what it means at that stage.

She comments that she had just been looking at the autumn’s work-plan and noticed that we didn’t have the pedagogical cafés.

I: It’s true, although we have discussed a lot about many things, although they have not been on the official agenda [of meetings].

She comments that I have been open to discussing my research and that “people seem to have talked quite a lot with you.” (Fieldnotes: May 2004, in Finnish)

Working with the notion of a “more rounded picture” has meant grasping both the hold of the “under-dog” to ethnographic inquiry, and the examination of the other side of the interface, of the ways in which school choice enables teachers and parents use their positioning in dominating ways. This has not been a simple task. While continuing with the process of interpretation soon after my fieldwork, reviewing and re-examining my fieldnotes, it has taken time and distance to locate myself *somehow* with the regard to the interpretational claims that I

make in my analysis. I have juggled with wanting to do justice to the complexity and precariousness of the lives of research participants, and on the other, to foreground differentiations or rifts produced between different subjects that the policy of school choice makes possible, the purpose of my inquiry being, to paraphrase Popkewitz (2003), to “disturb the groundwork that makes the present possible [as] a form of resistance that makes other alternatives possible” (p. 56).

In the autumn of 2004, I had a meeting with a small group of teachers in which they expressed interest in my findings, asking “what have you written,” and with a touch of humour, whether the bilingual classes were “a good thing or bad thing.” Coming to terms with the concerns of research participants – and my concern to do justice to their commitment and their effort while maintaining an analytical distance, was not a comfortable position to write from. This was a position, I felt, that I needed to examine carefully, analysing my own discomforts and response to their concerns. About this time in the summer of 2004, the Department of Education in Helsinki provided working space in a facility on Teollisuuskatu, “Industry Street,” outside the city centre for researchers. Together with other postgraduate researchers, I moved my things there from our office in “Arabia” to the east of Helsinki. At our Feminist Industry office, we often engaged in discussion with Pirkko Hynninen, Katariina Hakala and Sirpa Lappalainen on discursive practices in school, working on our understandings of poststructural feminist theorisations, “queering” the reading of daily news, discussing and examining the hold of particular ways of thinking and speaking, such as those related to gender and neo-liberalism. Without doubt, these discussions helped me move back to the task of interpretation. As McCoy (1997) suggests, a useful way to study discursive formations is to analyse “networks” or “climates of intelligibility” that configure the conditions for saying, understanding and doing. Such an approach, she suggests, made possible the positioning of those she researched, future teachers, “as inquirers and strategizers, rather than resisters to ‘liberatory pedagogies’” (p. 334). Similarly, Fine and Weis (2005) argue for a compositional approach to research, involving a movement between

“theory and life ‘on the ground’” (p. 68) as a means to interrogate the relation between “large-scale economic and social relations on individual and group identities” (p. 73). Thus at this stage of my research, I read my way back into writing by examining the broader policy context in which CLIL classes are situated, at the same time reading and analysing my ethnographic data.

With memories of teachers, pupils and parents lingering on my table in the form of fieldnotes, their words playing on my CD player, visual images of classroom lessons that took place in 2003 and 2004 on my desktop, I have continued the work of interpretation, of writing. St. Pierre (1999) uses the term “response” to analyse two kinds of response data: that of member checks, and that of imaginary response, which she defines as “the response we imagine our work will produce as well as others’ response to what they imagine we are doing” (p. 271). While during fieldwork there is the possibility of response, of member checks – between lessons, at the end of the day, the next day or on Monday – what ends with fieldwork is the possibility of such a response, and one turns instead to one’s fieldnotes, transcripts, pictures and memories.²⁰

While ethnographers are dependent on their participants in negotiating entry into particular sites and in generating data, and are sometimes placed into vulnerable positions in the field (cf. Coffey, 1999), the printed word is most often the final interpretation of the field. The researcher and the participants are not on an equal plane. As Van Maanen (1988, p. 137) notes, negotiation over truths most often privileges the researcher who writes about the informants who speak (see also Murphy & Dingwall, 2001). Participants may make themselves potentially vulnerable by sharing inside knowledge with outsiders. As detailed studies of particular people in particular localities (cf.

²⁰ Originally my intention was to share my text with teachers at Sunny Lane School, perhaps incorporating some of their thoughts on my analysis in the final text, this was an ideal that I was not able to maintain. By the time my analysis began to take form, the teachers who participated most actively in my research were no longer in Sunny Lane School. With one year of my participation in their lessons, ethnographic interviews and countless conversations behind us, and several of these teachers no longer present in Sunny Lane School, following-up on my analysis, I interpreted, would have been more a burden to these teachers who now waited for a final interpretation.

Clifford & Marcus, 1986) a crucial question in ethnography is that of how it influences the lives of those studied – in more and less positive and negative ways. While I was interested in teachers', parents' and pupils' take on nationality, gender and classed location, these were also often the means through which those that participated in my study identified themselves and through which they were identifiable to others, as articulated by one of the mothers whom I interviewed as follows:

Suvi: And what will you call us, what names will you give us? I mean, some of us have quite foreign names and if you just find a name that sounds alike, we'll still know who you're referring to.

Silja: Mm. True.

Suvi: So maybe you could give us regular Finnish names instead. Otherwise we'll read the text and we'll know that, "oh, that was her! That's what she thinks." I think my experience, for example, is probably quite different to the others'.

Silja: Mm. It's not easy, but I will try and write so that you won't be able to easily interpret who said what. (Interview: April 2004)

In my analysis, I have introduced pseudonyms for research participants. I have also changed some identifiers such as nationality in referring to some minority parents, maintaining the distinction between majority ethnic and minority ethnic parents. I also use generic classifiers such as "teacher" and "parent" in some excerpts where it might be obvious to participants who these excerpts refer to. While I provide identifiers such as the language spoken in some excerpts I include from my fieldnotes, I do not do so with excerpts from interviews in an effort to safeguard the identities of research participants.

A poststructural perspective on subjectivity, as Britzman (2000) writes, is one where "agency is the constitutive effect, not the originator, of situated practices and histories" (p. 30; see also Davies, 2000a, 55–68). As Davies argues, this moves research from a focus on the actuality of those researched to a focus on how they are invented or fash-

ioned, collectively and subjectively, through various discourses and institutional apparatuses (p. 31; see also Hoskins and Stoltz, 2005, p. 100). Pursuing this understanding, I draw attention to conflicts and paradoxes that emerge between the idealisation of particular identities and school practices in the context of school choice.

With helpful assistance from research assistants following my year of fieldwork, I transcribed my interviews, conducting one more interview and one discussion session with a group of teachers in the autumn of 2004. After all my interviews had been transcribed, I started to codify my interview transcripts as well as my fieldnotes using computer software.²¹ Eyes tired and head dizzy at reading off the computer screen, I returned to my fieldnotes, ink on paper, making notes on sticky paper – on consistencies, shifts and contradictions in meaning in the data I had generated – which I stuck to pages that seemed particularly relevant, writing brief synopses on the inside covers of notebooks. I used the software less and less, for the brief excerpts it identified from various sources, focused on “relevant” details that I had categorised as such, left few surprises. I made extra copies of my data, and starting from the ethnographic interviews and moving onto to my fieldnotes, I began to analyse within these documents, moving first between similar kinds of data (interviews or fieldnotes) toward documents that became draft chapters and sub-chapters, drafting and re-drafting these over and over. This is also reflected in the structure of my dissertation, which moves between different ethnographic moments and data, between understandings presented in interviews, and the discursive practices and repertoires of self put forward in school.

Originally, I set out to write a collection of articles, but discarded this idea later on for the want of attending more to the contexts in

²¹ While I had generated both audiovisual and visual data of lessons in addition to fieldnotes, I have not used this material very much. I have listened to and looked through this material several times, writing a brief sequence of events for each and transcribing some episodes in more detail. This data is present in the synthetical analysis of the empirical chapters that follow, but waits in a box for more detailed analysis. Interesting examples of the use of visual and audiovisual data in Finland include Katariina Hakala's (2007) study, where she uses pictures drawn by pupils to frame her analysis, and Tarja Kankkunen's study (2004), in which she uses multiple media and ICT to present an analysis of her data.

which things were said and done and to think and write in more porous ways while maintaining interest in particular issues. In attending to what participants were saying and doing, I was drawn to the similarities and differences across different narratives in how teachers and parents made sense of school selection and the effects this was presented as having – or not having – for the kinds of pupils, parents and teachers in bilingual grades. While some meanings and ideological standpoints were shared, and there are continuities in the obviousness of the categories that teachers, parents and pupils applied to themselves and to each other. One interpretation did not hold throughout, and the ways in which teachers, parents and pupils made sense of areas of interest in this study did not present a “linear, smooth surface which to interpret” (Palmu, 2003, p. 1), there were disruptions and transgressions in how discourses of nationality, ethnicity, gender and ability were made to mean.

In discussing the methodological framing of encounters as a starting point for how she has undergone her work of reading and writing, Ahmed (2000) introduces the concept “textual fetishism” to describe an approach to reading and writing “where one invests meaning in a text cutting it off from the history of its production and consumption” (p. 15). In her work, Ahmed works against this approach to writing, including autobiographical details of her encounters with texts, people and places, an approach that had been often applied in ethnography (cf. Hakala, 2007) and which is one that I work with in my ethnography. I include, at times, quite lengthily excerpts from interviews and my field-notes. In addition to relating the patterned nature of school life, these excerpts reflect some of the multiplicity and inconsistency of school life, and omissions and common threads across narratives as participants refer to and talk past each other. I do not, however, aim at thick description which seeks to uncover and represent research participants’ “authentic voices” (St. Pierre in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 969), pursuing instead an understanding of knowledge as partial and fragmented, overlapping and even controversial.

While early ethnographies were often lengthy affairs, written with the intent of thick description of entire cultures rather than analysis of

select aspects of a culture, current ethnographies are often written in the form of articles, focused on providing only just enough data support the ethnographer's arguments, Van Maanen (1988, pp. 53–54) observes. For me, the frame of the article left out what could be called, to use Cixous' term, "jouissance," the mental space of writing at risk, outside striated spaces.²² As part of this effort, throughout the different stages of my research, I have experimented with different ways of writing a performance experimental text, some of which are present in this study, in poems derived from empirical material from my fieldnotes and interviews, and in the staging of excerpts from various authors whose work has been influential to my research as statements in this chapter to introduce the reflection that follows. I pursue Alexander's understanding of ethnography as "observing and studying the performative nature of cultural practice" (2005, p. 414). As Markussen (2005, p. 329) notes, performativity in the work of Judith Butler refers to a theory of the ways in which discourses and discursive effects are effectuated, and taken into the context of empirical research performativity can be understood as referring to deconstructive practice, to attempts to reflect the results of the analysis back to the reader, opening up spaces to engage with the complexity in the experiences of research participants. Markussen argues for an understanding of performativity in this sense as a "mode of engaging in research" that is aimed toward transforming "the very terms in which the real is constituted," arguing for an openness on the part of the researcher to change (p. 330.) An understanding of performativity in research, he argues, can be expanded to include research methodology, to "what we actually do, and (...) the process of finding out how to do it" (p. 341).

In examining how teachers, parents and pupils as well as various official documents pose questions of inclusion and exclusion, I was

²² Recounting her experience of writing *Troubling the Angels* which she wrote with Chris Smithies, Lather (2001) writes: "I am interested in provoking a reading that finds out something about itself via a writing at the limit of taking any kind of reader into account" (p. 212). While conventions apply to writing a dissertation, as a mental space, the monograph, like Virginia Woolf's "room of her own," provided a sense of imagined space or freedom to write, *as if* I had no audience, to take time to experiment with different interpretations, revisiting and revising old ones.

drawn to the repeated, stylized, and shared ways of making meaning, as well as of possibilities for and limitations to subverting dominant narratives. The process of becoming a subject, as Butler posits, takes place through discursive practices, through the repetition of particular norms and the accumulation of meaning over time through the recitation of particular signs (1990, 2004). Performativity as a theory of the ways in which “the social world is made – and new possibilities emerge – at various levels of social action through a collaborative relation with power” (Butler 2000b, p. 14), offered a means to work with complexity, while maintaining a focus on what language does (cf. Rose 1999), and on the analysis of preferred, socially validated meanings, opening up spaces to engage with the heterogeneous and different experiences of participants. As Alexander (2005) argues, ethnography as performance “reinstates ethnographic bodies in the realm of process, of activity, of doing” pursuing a communicative, dialogical understanding of knowledge (p. 415). Performativity evokes an “us” as the site of dialogue and critical engagement, and foregrounds the question: Who am I writing for? (cf. Alexander, 2005; Conquerwood, 1991/2003).

After a one and a half year pause in my work (spent working as a volunteer in Cambodia), I began to reorganise my chapters, which proved a long, tedious process of rereading fieldnotes and transcripts, relistening to interviews and reorganising chapters. Having taken time and distance from writing, my analysis moved toward a less sentimental attachment to my data and toward a sharper awareness of the issues I write of: selection and differentiation in the context of comprehensive school. These are issues which I introduce in the next chapter which examines the emergence of Content Language Integrated Learning or CLIL in the context of public schooling in Finland.

3

National education: Language, identity and choice

Language, Anderson (1991) maintains, bears a significant bond to the myth of the nation and has been a central site for the making of imagined communities, for imagining and fabricating a sense of national belonging. In liberal democracies, as Anderson demonstrates, nationalism has been linguistic, the formula roughly being that of one state, one language. As Kraus (2008) claims, language use in nation states has both an expressive aspect that draws on the ideal of a transcendent collective identity, and an instrumental aspect which “always entails the possibility of activating the force of its symbolic expressivity” (pp. 84–85), of language as a manifestation of the “spirit of the peoples” (p. 79). Language has also become an important part of minority identity politics. As Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) writes of Chicano Spanish: “For some of us, language is a homeland closer than the Southwest” (p. 77), continuing that “if you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language.” (p. 81.)

In Finland, language learning has been positioned as a particularly significant to the goals of education, both as part of the nation-building project, of educating future citizens who, giving up other bonds, identify with the collective ideal of the nation (cf. Gordon et al., 2000b); and as

a means to respond to the demands of internationalism and globalisation (cf. National Board of Education [NBE], 1997, 2001, 2007; Nikula & Marsh, 1997; see also Palmu, 2002, 2003). These emphases reflect Phillipson's (1992) division of the motivations underpinning national language policies as roughly falling into two groups: those that reflect the state's wishes to maintain control over its population, and those that reflect the state's wish to build its educational capital to provide it with economic, political, and cultural advantages in the global arena.

Unsurprisingly, English is the most common foreign language choice in Finland as in the European Union at large (Eurydice, 2005). The dominant position of English in foreign language education has been linked to social, political and economic features that have gained ascendancy through globalisation (cf. Block & Cameron, 2002; Crystal, 2003; Pennycook, 2001; Phillipson, 1992). Analogously to Žižek's (2000) claims of globalisation, the growing spread of English – as a facet of globalisation – points to an opposition particularly between globalisation and universalism (not particularism), as particular languages are designated to particular identities and places.²³ In Nordic countries, English has increasingly become the shared language of science and business – a practice that the Finnish-speaking population has been in favour of as Finnish is not a Scandinavian language (unlike Swedish, Danish and Norwegian which share significant similarities in syntax and grammar), and the expectation that everyone from Nordic countries could more or less fluently understand each other's language thus often places Finnish people at a disadvantage.

²³ Yet as Brutt-Griffler (2003) observes, lack of knowledge of English in areas in the periphery of the global economic market “disadvantages the majority of the world” (p. 561). Pennycook (2001), however, argues against assuming too simple a relationship between language and social and economic advantage, claiming this would be both inadequate and naïve. He cautions against a simplistic celebration of English as a global means of communication which focuses on the themes of individual agency and choice (pp. 56–65). Such a view, he claims, overlooks the power differences between languages as it does the construction of local languages “as static markers of identity” (p. 57). Language is, he writes, intricately related to social justice, and is thus intertwined with questions of “access, power, disparity and difference” (p. 19). To add to this complexity, arguments in favour of the adoption of English as a shared language of communication are often put forth as a means to avoid internal contestation between national languages in politically fragile situations, as in the case of many postcolonial countries (cf. Phillipson; see also Canagarajah, 2002; Vaish, 2005).

In this chapter, my purpose is to unravel and contextualise the emergence of CLIL in Finland. I begin by briefly discussing the concept of citizenship, common conceptions of which have been troubled for their neutral and abstract nature (cf. Gordon et al., 2000b; Gordon, 2006a). I do so to provide a context for the discussion that follows on the emergence of comprehensive school as a collective nation-building project in Finland, the connection of language learning to this project, and recent discursive shifts in education towards competitive individualism and school choice on the one hand, and towards internationalisation and Europeanisation in education on the other. In the third part of this chapter, I ask who are represented as ideal pupils for CLIL classes, examining ways in which discourses of linguistic belonging, and of the free-standing neo-liberal individual promoted by the policy of school choice come together in the context of Content Language Integrated Learning. As Popkewitz (2000, 2001) argues, the curriculum embodies the hopes and fears of social reform, constructing particular children as at risk and in need of educational administration. Thus I look through the lense of how belonging is construed in official documents, such the national curricula (NBE, 1994, 2004), committee reports, assessments and policy statements. I ask what subject positions are produced for members of different language groups, pursuing the understanding that while change in education takes place in uneven ways and official documents are rarely translated in their entirety into practice, they represent important moves as “state educational discourse” (Simola, 1998, p. 340; see also Ball, 2006; Gordon et al., 2000b), making possible particular changes, even if they do not affect their smooth rolling out into educational practice.

3.1 Negotiating belonging

A central referent of childhood in modern nation states is that of citizenship, which as Gordon, Holland and Lahelma (2000b) posit, is articulated for pupils as future citizenship, placing emphasis on obliga-

tions and subservience to adult authority rather than on present rights and possibilities for participation in the public realm. They propose that “one aim of the school is the production of the ‘abstract pupil’, abstracted from social differences, on route to become the ‘abstract citizen’” (p. 5; see also Cohen, 2005; Gordon, 2006a). The ideal pupil, Gordon et al. claim, corresponds with notions of the ideal citizen, who is also figured as abstract and, in the words of Gordon (2006b), is “extracted from social relations” (p. 4). At the same time, education is guided by assumptions about the characteristics expected of citizens, signifying social differences in ways that produce divisions and differentiations between pupils, articulating different expectations regarding what girls and pupils from minoritised ethnic groups, for instance, should learn in school, and how they should behave, construing a different futurity for different pupils (cf. Gordon, 2006a, 2006b; Gordon et al., 2000b; Popkewitz & Lindblad, 2000; Popkewitz, 2001). Gendered, raced and classed signification persist in school, which are central sites for the reproduction of gendered, raced, classed and nationed identities, and this is intertwined with unequal educational opportunities through the association of ability as a quality of particular kinds of pupils (cf. Burns, 2004; Fine, 2004; Gilborn, 2004; Phoenix, 2002; Powell Pruitt, 2004; Shiner & Modood, 2002). While citizen production and cultural exclusion clearly extend beyond school to broader policies and questions of political community, public schools are an important site for the articulation of norms and expectations related to citizenship, and for the definition of identities, qualities, and dispositions that count. Keeping this in mind, I begin this chapter by introducing discussions on citizenship and difference that inform my work.

Citizenship with a difference

Citizenship is often defined as membership of a political community, and as Schachar (2003) posits, citizenship has “come to imply a unique, reciprocal, and unmediated relationship” (p. 21; see also Harinen 2000,

p. 25). Yet as a concept, citizenship has been problematicized for its abstractness and its individualistic nature, and for its inherent notions of homogeneity and universality of identity (cf. Gordon et al., 2000b; Gordon, 2006b; Lister, 1997; Young, 2000). As Arnot and Dillabough (2000) point out, constructions of citizenship frequently assume an “I” that is expected to identify with a collective “we” – yet, they write, “paradoxically, even though the people are thought to ‘speak’ as citizens, citizenship is not a position which can be spoken from; it is an abstract concept with no substantial identity, it is a ‘nameless, faceless, entity” (p. 3).

While in his classical theory of citizenship, T. H. Marshall defines citizenship terms of political, civil and social rights and responsibilities, women, as well as members of minority groups, have largely been excluded from theories and practices of citizenship. Gender, class, ethnicity, and culture have traditionally been considered largely irrelevant in universal ideals of citizenship, the assumption being that citizens are basically the same. (Cf. Gordon et al., 2000b; see also Ashcroft, 2004.) A central tension of citizenship has been argued as residing in the definition of citizenship in terms of *rights* and citizenship in terms of *membership* to a political community, with writers such as Young (2000) criticising the idea of unity invoked by notions of citizenship, claiming it is a patriarchal construct blind to the effects of the social. Conceptualised as a relational space or place, citizenship has been posited as being occupied by particular and privileged identities (Arnot & Dillabough, 2000; Hall, 1992; Young, 2000).

While citizenship has been formulated out of concern to produce democracy, its concern has also been to produce citizens with a singular, national identity (cf. Arnot & Dillabough, 2000; Gordon et al., 2000b; Popkewitz, 2000). In her book *Racism and Anti-Racism in Europe*, Lentin (2004) claims that the concept of citizenship has been an important means for the classification of particular people as “other” by the state, and for the consequent justification of hierarchical treatment of citizen subjects through this classification. Far from an aberration, she writes, racism evolved in the affinity of democratic European nation-

states as a means to legitimate their nationalist framework through the classification and rationalisation of difference (see also Fanon, 1952/1986; Hage, 1998; Goldberg, 1997). On a similar line, in her analysis of the relationship of citizenship and women Lister (1997) claims the exclusion of women “was integral to the theory and practice of citizenship in both the republican and liberal traditions” as both preclude the idea of state intervention in matters related to the private domain (p. 68). Relatedly, one of the first long-standing political objectives of feminist scholarship has been that of overcoming the construction of the public-private divide, of making the private public (cf. Hall, 1992; Lister, 1997; Siim, 2000). Just how to go about this task, however, has been the site of considerable debate between proponents of liberal and communitarian approaches to citizenship, which offer different views on the relation between the individual and the political community or state.²⁴

Although assumptions of national homogeneity have been challenged on many fronts, the association of citizenship with nationalism has been a consistent one (cf. Arnot & Dillabough, 2000a; Lister, 1997). While critical insights have informed political mobilization related to identity, and have drawn attention to areas of social life previously largely hidden and restricted to the private realm, categories such as “race,” Winant (2004) argues, continue to both “assign us and deny us our identity,” defining qualities and capacities that affect the ways in which individuals are included into citizenship (p.11). On a similar line, Lister (1997) argues that citizenship “is imbued with the stain of gendered assumptions” (p. 69; see also Siim, 2000; Mohanty, 2004a).

²⁴ As various proponents of critical multiculturalist and feminist identity politics such as Will Kymlicka, Nancy Fraser, bell hooks and Iris Young argue, abstract notions of citizenship pay insufficient attention to the ways in which political initiatives in liberal democracies are premised on representational politics which facilitate the ability of members of powerful groups in society to lay the rules for participation on majoritarian values and practices. Differences, they claim, should have salience in the public realm and not be confined to the private sphere. Efforts have been made to expand the concept of citizenship to include a new form of differentiated citizenship, cultural citizenship (following on the lines of the work of Raymond Williams), and multicultural citizenship (as propagated by Charles Taylor). These kinds of citizenship divide political theorists as to how they should be, or should they be, incorporated into legal conceptions of citizenship (cf. Benhabib, 2002).

In Finland, Gordon and Lahelma (1998) note that citizenship is often conflated with Finnishness, and is constructed through notions of nationality, language, “race,” health, and sexuality, for example (see also Gordon, 2006a, 2006b; Lahelma, 2005; Lappalainen, 2003, 2004; Lehtonen 2003a, 2003b). “Unmarked normality,” as Lahelma (p. 86) observes, is a resource that is discernable in relation to those who are marked as deviant and deficient.

Ideas of citizenship are further complicated by globalisation and migration, and citizenship has increasingly become a right acquired by virtue of residence, rather than a right acquired at birth (Lister 1997, p. 56; see also Delanty, 2000). Globalisation, while a process that works in uneven and unpredicted ways, has been identified as leading to international flows in capital and information in ways that often privilege those in positions of power (Anthias & Lazaridis, 2000; Walby, 2000). As for instance Lister proposes, in the face of global ecological threats and economic forces, citizenship should not be conceptualised in ways that confine it to nationality and the nation-state. Indeed, demands have been made to expand the politics of citizenship to encompass also rights and responsibilities at a global or transnational level, and have led to calls for global citizenship (see Desforges, Jones & Woods, 2005), and on a slightly different line, for cosmopolitan citizenship. The idea of cosmopolitanism incorporating a notion of “world community” dates back to the ancient Greeks’ idea of the cosmopolis as a “city of the universe,” Lister notes (p. 56). One potential danger of this cosmopolitan ideal, she notes, is that members of elite, cosmopolitan groups may “opt out of citizenship at the national level without contributing to its development at the global” (p. 57). Although global citizenship is sometimes used in place of or as a synonym for cosmopolitan citizenship, as Gordon (2005, p. 57) posits, cosmopolitan citizenship connotes a more elite tradition while global citizenship is more concerned with shared rights and responsibilities (see also Mohanty, 2004a).

Poststructural critique, difference and “democracy of the future”

In feminist research, difference has been approached from the perspective of identity – drawing attention to the relation between different aspects of women’s identity – and from the perspective of oppositions or dualisms through which subjectification takes place. The turn from an emphasis on structures to one on subjectification is often interpreted as complicating analyses of social divisions such as class, raising questions concerning identity, consciousness and materiality, and their relatedness to the reproduction of dis/advantage. Walkerdine (2003), for example, maintains the significance of social class, claiming:

the exploitation and oppression which class politics signals, though changed, has not ceased and no other political discourse has emerged to explain or mobilise around these issues, that is, the issue of inequalities associated with social and economic difference. (p. 239)

Class, Walkerdine et al. (2001) argue, is “written on the body and mind” (p. 24). Skeggs (1998) similarly posits that class operates both as an organising principle at a structural level, “enabling and limiting access” and as a “structure of feeling” at an individual level (p. 6). Reay (1998, 2002), also, maintains the centrality of a distinctly material realm, referring to material practices, for example. Such a perspective is also pursued by Gordon et al. (2000b) who write: “we therefore retain an element of materialism, in terms of the material base for both social class and other differences upon which human agency is built” (p. 4). Butler (1997) pursues a different stance, proposing “the reproduction of goods as well as the social reproduction of persons” are interconnected (p. 272), and asking whether it is “even analytically” possible to distinguish between “lack of cultural recognition and material oppression” (p. 273).

Difference is a central concept in poststructural thought, referring to the ways in which meaning is produced, with Derrida employing the

concept “différance” to capture the ways in which this takes place, “both by the interplay of different traces and by the necessary deferment of some possibilities not actualized or signified by the play of traces” (Howarth, 2002, p. 40). In the context of identity formation, Howarth writes, Derrida’s concept of différance “argues for the historicity and contingency of identity formation, as every affirmation of identity is also premised on the active deferring of certain possibilities” (p. 41). Poststructural interpretations of difference thus trouble the notion of stable, coherent identities articulated by representational politics. As Kenway and Willis (1998, with Blackmore and Rennie) observe in their analysis of the implementation of feminist policies in schooling, discourses of reform inadvertently “[fix] and [narrow] identity, meaning and reason in ways which [prevent] teachers and pupils from being and seeing otherwise” (p. 207). Butler (1990), similarly, in analysing the relation between feminist theory and politics contends that while political initiatives to represent women are important, there are also problems inherent in claiming identities as the site of political intervention:

The domains of political and linguistic “representation” set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject. (p. 1)

In effect, juridical systems of power such as the law both represent subjects and produce subjects, and political interventions that operate within such a representational discourse, Butler argues, inevitably fail to account for multiplicity (pp. 3–5). Strategies for change, she points out, “have meanings that exceed the purposes for which they are intended” (p. 4). This critique can be extended to liberal discourses of citizenship, multiculturalism, inclusion, and tolerance, which neglect the ways in which rules and structures of nation-states are constructed; how they exclude particular groups in society and how multiculturalism and tolerance have been initiated as a means to govern difference and

maintain the legitimacy of the majority culture (cf. Lentin, 2002; see also Goldberg, 2002; Hage, 1998).

Arendt (1998) traces the emergence of the idea of the modern citizen and the rationalisation of difference to the emergence of Romanticism, Enlightenment beliefs and humanistic thought. On a similar line, Rose (1999) claims that by the end of the twentieth century an understanding of the human being as “the autonomous subject of choice and self-realization” had emerged, writing over a previous emphasis on local community (p. xviii; see also Petersson, Olsson & Popkewitz, 2007). Rose relates this to a liberal approach to governance in which citizenship is “primarily realised through acts of free but responsabilized choice” rather than “primarily realised in relation with the State” (p. xxiii). Popkewitz (1998, 2003) pursues a similar perspective, analysing how the modern citizen, as a subject of modernity, is related to the modern nation-state and its wishes to exercise control over its population. One means through which this takes is through schooling which is designed to ensure the proper development of citizens. The systems of reason informing this planning, Popkewitz points out, is unplanned and largely unrecognized for the ways it normalises differences and functions to intern and enclose individual subjects. Popkewitz (1998) foregrounds the importance of examining the constitutive effects of reasoning about difference, pursuing a perspective informed by post-modern literature, which he writes:

suggested to me that in thinking about schools, culture, and power, I had assumed more than I should in a critical stance toward schooling. The literature “told” me that I should pay more attention to the knowledge by which we reason about the “self” as teachers and researchers. (p. 5)

Far from natural, categories such as nationality and ethnicity are constituted through a form of symbolic violence. Neither abstract nor neutral geographic entities, nation states, Lefebvre (1974/1991, pp. 111–112, p. 283) proposes, imply the existence of a market and violence – that is,

self-interest to accumulate capital and political unification. Following along such lines, Derrida (1998, 2004) suggests a non-programmatic protest against citizenship involving a radical openness to alliances and solidarities that extend beyond the concept of citizenship. Such argument is revolutionary, but what are the possibilities of a politics beyond citizenship and the possibility of claiming rights and entitlements? What of fears of annihilation, assimilation – and what are the limitations of citizenship to confronting these? Social democracy, as Walkerdine points out, has always been a fiction (quoted in Reay, 1998, p. 3; see also Back, 2003; Yuval-Davies, 1997b). Feminist interventions informed by poststructuralist thought underline local, particular responses as a way to destabilize fixed narratives and relations of power, making visible the ways in which categories function to exclude (cf. Kenway & Willis, 1998). Power, pursuing Foucault's thought, is understood not as inherently positive or negative, but as implemented in ways that can prohibit, repress or generate forms of social agency. The challenge, Kenway and Willis (1998) maintain, lies in challenging hegemonic discourses “with certainty and authority” while retaining “a certain uncertainty” (p. 207).²⁵ While the deconstruction of dominant narratives has been approached by post-foundational thinkers as an important means to promote change, in itself this is suggested as being insufficient. Reform is approached as a political project which needs to build on the agency of people in “environments characterised by respect and support,” encouraging them to create counter-narratives (p. 210). Donna Haraway (2003) argues that what is implied is an alternative to relativism that consists of “partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology” (p. 30).

Post-foundational thought is thus not without its political convictions. While democracy is claimed to be unrealised, Butler posits that this is an opening point rather than a closure to engaging with democ-

²⁵ As Howarth (2002) remarks on post-foundational perspective, it “does not give rise to a certain set of political and ethical positions, though it does rule some positions out – those based on essentialist presuppositions, for example” (p. 124).

racy (2004, pp. 1–16; see also Brown, 2001, p. 137). Butler proposes an approach to democracy that is always “futural”, that “defers realization permanently.” Accordingly, the value of democracy is understood to lie precisely in its engagement with its failures rather than with its successes.²⁶ As Butler (2000a) claims, “democracy is secured precisely through its resistance to realization” (p. 268.) Here, Butler adheres to a similar notion suggested by Derrida (2004) of “democracy to come” – a yet unthinkable, unimagined political model of solidarity beyond citizenship, an unconditioned hospitality located in a “New International” (Derrida, 1998, 2004).²⁷ The purpose of critique, then, is to facilitate the imagining of this futural democracy outside the confines of social reality as we have come to live and interpret it. Indeed, in the context of education, its established certainties and convictions, poststructural critique is often pursued as a means to draw attention to the limiting effects of normative assumptions regarding school. “[F]or education to avoid becoming propaganda or coercion,” as Ellsworth (2005) writes, “it must be open to difference, to the unthought” (p. 161; see also St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485).

3.2 School, nation and choice: Toward differentiation

Recent analyses of school choice have often focused on questions of equity, rights, and access to education, as well as questions related to the effects of marketisation vis-à-vis the reproduction of advantage and the importance of socioeconomic status. Attention has been drawn both to the influence of ideas that circulate internationally, and to contextual

²⁶ Interestingly, Freire (1998) also suggests an emphasis on futurity, writing “Citizenship is not obtained by chance: It is a construction that, never finished, demands we fight for it.” While Butler refrains from defining, in advance, what citizenship is to imply, Freire continues: “[Citizenship] demands commitment, political clarity, coherence, decision.” (p. 90.)

²⁷ Derrida, Vaughan-Williams (2005) suggests, locates “democracy to come” beyond law, public institutes and international bodies such as the UN, underlining the importance of undecidability “orientated towards opening rather than closing down the possibility of politics. This is precisely because it is the undecidable that allows decisions to be made and responsibility to be taken in the first place.” (p. 173.)

denominators, to the ways in which school choice policies gain meaning in local contexts. (Ball, 2006; Forsey et al., 2008; Phillips & Stanbach, 2008; Seppänen, 2006.) In this chapter I discuss three processes in education in Finland: the emergence of compulsory education as a national project, the turn towards marketisation and school choice, and the processes of Europeanisation and internationalisation, examining how language learning has been implicated in these processes. My purpose is to thus contextualise the emergence of Content and Language Integrated Learning or CLIL in Finland in the early 1990s, examining how these processes have converged in the context of CLIL in Finland.

Schooling as a national project

Nations, Walby (2000) argues, are projects, and relatedly, the task of schooling in modern nation states has been identified as connected to national interests, to maintaining order, containing risks, producing national citizens, and governing and policing borders (cf. Hage, 1998). In Europe, the introduction of national education systems coincided with growing industrialisation and capitalism, which provided a backdrop for the articulation of educational objectives, such as that schooling was to participate in the project of increasing economic capital through the education of appropriate kinds of subjects for the workforce. Mass education was thus devised in order to serve the self-interests of the modern nation-state, articulating the aspirations, norms and standards of those in positions of power. (Cf. Meyer, Ramirez & Soysal, 1992; Rose, 1999.)

The making of active, self-governing citizen-subjects has had a particular quality in modern republics rooted in democratic notions of the shared, public realm of politics, Popkewitz notes (1998, 2000). As the historicisation of mass education tells us, national education systems were in part made possible through claiming the ability of schooling to integrate pupils into society, aligning education with the modernisation project of the nation-state. The health, education and welfare of chil-

dren were linked “in thought and practice,” Rose (1999) claims, to “the destiny of the nation and the responsibilities of the state” (p. 123; see also Meyer, Ramirez & Soysal, 1992; Popkewitz, 2001; Tuomaala, 2004; Walkerdine, 1992). The purpose of mass education was to serve an instrument for the modern state to administer progress – ensuring pupils were equipped with the knowledge and capabilities deemed necessary to participate in society – but also to manage and regulate difference (Pettersson et al., 2007; see also Gordon & Lahelma, 1998; Popkewitz, 2003). Thus while schooling was to promote individual freedom and enhance greater equality in society, Rose (1999) writes, the enlightened, humanistic notions incorporated within of the idea of the “child” were intended to “buy off the discontented” (p. 125), and promoted the interests of those in positions of power, joining, as Popkewitz (2001, p. 180) notes, the registers of administration and freedom (see also Rose, 1999, p. 192). Planning society took place through planning mass education, conjoining “different discourses – liberalism, capitalism and Enlightenment ideas born in the Protestant Reformation²⁸ – into a single plane” (Popkewitz, 2000a, p. 20). Poverty and crime were perceived as national problems and particular norms and standards of achievement were devised, against which the undesirable and morally bereft were constituted (cf. Popkewitz, 2003; Ramirez & Boli, 1987; Rose, 1999; Walkerdine, 1992.) As Ahonen (2003, pp. 19–20) observes on a similar line of the Finnish context, the eradication of a culture of poverty was a central objective of education in the late 19th century, its purpose being to cement an understanding of “new times” and the need for change among poor people, construing the central mission of schooling as a civilising one.

The introduction of the modern nation state and mass education coincided with the positioning of language learning as a key vehicle for nation-building, for the transformation of pupils into national citizens (Anderson, 1998; see also Palmu, 2003). As Gordon et al. (2000a)

²⁸ As Ahonen (2003) observes, in Finland the first movements from a static, hierarchical conception of society towards an understanding of the idea of the equality of individuals originated in religious revival movements.

observe, schools are “expected to produce citizens in the nation state, familiar with common culture, common language, common history and a joint sense of culture” (p. 19). The dominant approach to language learning was a pragmatic one, underpinned by the belief that problematic or contentious issues related to language could be resolved through planning (Ricento, 2000). Interestingly, as Pennycook (2001) cites Luke, McHoul and Mey as observing, the rationalisation of language planning evolved at the same time as positivism, maintaining a similar “veneer of scientific objectivity” and a commitment to developing “scientific and technological models,” to facilitate language planning (p. 55). Language planning was seen as a largely neutral activity and its connections to power, discourse and ideology were largely unrecognised (Pennycook, pp. 55–56). Monolingualism was established as the norm. As Skuttnabb-Kangas (1988) notes, the strong belief in the merits of monolingualism has been propagated by nation states to establish a fear of multilingualism (see also Phillipson, 1992, p. 23). This propagation of monolingualism led to demands to standardise pupils’ linguistic behavior to conform to an ideal of linguistic homogeneity. Ricento (2000) notes that the ideal of monolingualism, first formulated in the 1820s in Europe, was associated with the modernisation project of the nation. She observes: “The formula, roughly, for successful nationhood entailed cultural/ethnic unity within a defined geographical boundary (state), and a common linguistic identity among citizens of a polity” (p. 198; see also Wellros, 1992). This idealisation informed the prohibition of using minority languages in schools, and the emphasis placed on the correct acquisition of the majority language. Linguistic diversity was largely ignored, sanctioned and penalised. Emphasis was placed on the acquisition of correct grammar and language that, as Gale and Densmore (2002) observe, “appeal[ed] to external and universal standards” (p. 33), governing language users through controlling how pupils were to speak and write. Language use that was defined as deviant or incorrect became commonly interpreted as caused by features in pupils’ cultural and social background (cf. Bernstein, 1975/1999).

Today, while the influence of globalisation in education has intensified (cf. Antunes, 2006; Rinne, 2000), national education systems continue to operate through prioritising majority or “core” languages in addition to international languages such as English as a means to respond to national interests, signifying these languages as a resource and institutionalising them as educational capital. Arguments in favour of multi- and bilingualism, particularly in relation to immigrants, are often put forth as a means to preserve immigrant languages in the private sphere of the home, with emphasis being placed on integration into society through the acquisition of the national language. (Cf. Furstenu, 2005; Gogolin, 2002; see also Findlow, 2006; Priven, 2008.)

Nation-building and comprehensive schooling in Finland: Egalitarian ideals

The impetus for nation-building in Finland draws on the history of Swedish rule in Finland from the 12th century up to 1809, and the period that followed when Finland came under Russian rule. During the Russian period, Swedish largely retained its position as the language of the cultural élite and of administration²⁹ and Finnish was considered a vernacular language of the common people, not as the language of education or culture. The history of mass education in Finland traces back to this period when as a Grand Duchy under Russia, a decree was passed on elementary schools in 1866.³⁰ This decree was largely driven by the Finnish-speaking intelligentsia, the “Fennomen,” as a means to ensure more high rank positions for Finnish-speaking Finns. While Finnish language was spoken by the majority, it was markedly the language of the common people.³¹ The momentum for establishing ele-

²⁹ In 1880, about 14.3 % of the population spoke Swedish as their first language. However, of this group, the majority spoke low-style dialects and fished or farmed for their living (Hansén 2004, pp. 646–647.)

³⁰ Before the decree passed in 1866, for about two hundred years, pre-primary education had been the task of the church, and for a long time, elementary schools retained a Christian ethos, maintaining a focus on Christian upbringing (Ahonen, 2003; Lipponen, 2006; Salo, 2005).

³¹ Finnish language played an important part in the move for independence. Interweaving with notions of Finnishness, written Finnish, also, was strongly and idealistically associated with the common people it

mentary education drew from tensions between the Finnish and Swedish speaking groups, (the latter composing about five percent of the population today), and from the impetus of positioning Finnish as the dominant official language.³² (Ahonen, 2003; Alapuro, 1998; Hansén, 2004; Rinne, 1986; Sjöholm, 2004.)

Rather than establishing one common system of schooling, two parallel systems were created: elementary schools³³ and middle schools, the former preceded by lower schools and ambulatory schools organised by homes or the Lutheran Church in rural areas³⁴, the latter existing in larger towns and preceded by preparatory schools and being a necessary step up until 1905 for participation in entrance tests for grammar schools. Emphasis was placed on the civilising mission of schooling, and this carried strong nationalistic connotations. Schools, as national institutions, were to ensure the inculcation of nationalistic sentiment, educating pupils to take up their place in society, and the introduction of Finnish as the language of schooling was posited as playing an important part in this process. While elementary schools aimed towards a uniform system of schooling, separate elementary schools were established for the Swedish- and Finnish-speaking language groups.³⁵ (Ahonen, 2003; Hansén, 2004; Seppänen, 2006; Sjöholm, 2004.)

was seen as reflecting: as being coarse, uncivilized – as fundamentally different to foreign languages and the cultures they were seen to represent, such as French and German used in the in the higher echelons of society (cf. Ahonen, 2003; Ruuska, 1998; see also Apo, 1998.)

³² As Hansén (2004) writes, “some Swedish circles saw behind the whole idea of a people’s school [i.e. elementary school] a potential threat to the position of the Swedish language” (p. 647).

³³ The elementary schools of the period are also sometimes translated as *people’s schools*, as a literal equivalent of the Finnish *kansakoulu*, *kansa* meaning *people* and *koulu* meaning *school* (e.g., Hansén, 2004).

³⁴ Despite the relatively broad geographical coverage of ambulatory schools, as Ahonen (2003, pp. 63–64) notes, lack of basic literacy skills continued to be a significant educational obstacle for children in rural areas as these were a prerequisite for acceptance into elementary school. In 1910 as much as half the population of elementary aged children in Finland remained outside school, and as late as 1921 before the law was passed on compulsory education, about a fifth of school-aged children did not enter elementary school. (p. 64, p. 68.)

³⁵ Hansén (2004) identifies two parallel processes, homogenisation and differentiation, as having characterised the development of the elementary school into two parts, Finnish- and Swedish-speaking schools. This principle of parallel unilingual schools was affirmed through legislation dating back to 1893, which, as Hansén notes, articulated the demand that “different languages should not be brought together in the same school whenever this could be avoided” (p. 653).

Education was deeply divided according to geographical location and socioeconomic resources. As Ahonen (2003) observes, “elementary school remained to a large extent the peasantry’s school”³⁶ (p. 54). Participation in schooling was voluntary and consequently in 1890, as about eighty percent of nine to twelve year olds remained outside schooling (Heporauta cited in Ahonen, p. 55). Access to schools was particularly weak in rural areas where the majority of the population lived. A decree on school districts was consequently passed in 1898, its purpose being to provide a uniform education throughout the country, increasing the availability of education through scaling up the geographical coverage of schools particularly in remote rural areas³⁷ (Ahonen, 2003; Lipponen, 2006; Seppänen, 2006.) However, participation in private preparatory schools continued to be the privilege of the upper echelons of society in larger towns, whereas elementary schools remained the reserve of mainly the working class in urban areas and of the peasantry in the countryside (Ahonen, 2003; Jauhiainen, 2002). This hierarchy was compounded by a static view of society. Koski and Nummenmaa (1995), for example, describe the task of education at the turn of the 20th century as being that of educating children to “take up their own place as a member of the nation as well as they could”³⁸ (p. 342). The place children were to take up in society was construed as guided by divine fate: “Every child is indispensable in their place, so long as they do their work to the best of their ability”³⁹, Koski and Nummenmaa describe the thinking of the time (p. 342). Competition and competitive fervour amongst pupils were to be avoided. Instead, a Christian ethos of each pupil striving to overcome and improve themselves to better serve the higher aims of the Fatherland and God, prevailed (pp. 342–343; see also Koski, 2001).

³⁶ *kansakoulu oli paljolti vielä rahvaan koulu*

³⁷ Finland was an agricultural society until relatively late. In the mid 19th century, eighty percent of the population lived off agriculture, and as late as the 1920s, about eighty percent of the population lived in rural areas (Ahonen, 2003, p. 20; see also Tuomaala, 2004).

³⁸ *kunkin lapsen tuli täyttää oma paikkansa kansakunnan jäsenenä niin hyvin kuin taitaa*

³⁹ *Kukin lapsi on tarpeellinen paikallaan, mikäli hän tekee työnsä parhaansa kyvyn mukaan*

In response to a period of political Russification, Finland announced its independence on the 6th of December 1917, which was acknowledged shortly afterwards by Russia. A civil war erupted between the political right and left wings in 1918. Already before this, the political changes of the early 20th century, such as the parliamentary reform and the labour movement, had fragmented the idealistic image of the common people. This image had framed the emphasis placed on Finnish language as reflecting common sentiment and common values, and as therefore pivotal to the task of nation building. With the disintegration of this idealistic picture, particular emphasis before and after the Finnish Civil War was placed on education as a national project, as a vehicle for bringing about national stability through emphasizing common origins, common virtue and common purpose to overcome previous social divisions. (Ahonen, 2003; Koski & Nummenmaa, 1995; Komulainen, 2001; Rinne, 1986; Tuomaala, 2004.) The emphasis placed on Finnishness and on “one home, religion, and fatherland” was also reflected by the reading programme of this time, identical in both Swedish- and Finnish-speaking schools, which used *The Book about Our Country* written by Zacharias Topelius as the primary reader up until World War II. Through this book, all pupils in Finland were expected to learn about Finnish history and learn to appreciate the value of Finnish nature and culture. (Ahonen, 2003, pp. 100–101; Hansén, 2004, pp. 650–651; Koski, 2001; Tuomaala, 2004.)

Moral decency and morality, articulated within concerns to educate future citizens with the appropriate values, skills and knowledge, were important aims in school. Saara Tuomaala (2004) introduces the concept “national pedagogy” to capture the ways in which compulsory education, as an institution of the nation state, was to instill in students an ideology and awareness of nationalism. The purpose of schooling, Tuomaala writes, was to transform students into national citizen subjects who would contribute to upholding the “unity, health and purity of the Finnish nation” (p. 410). Through education, pupils were to become God-fearing, diligent, orderly, cleanly girls and boys, and emphasis was placed on learning manners. Education was to produce

pupils who would readily take up positions as men and women in society, educating girls in skills necessary to housekeeping and child rearing, and boys in handyman's skills. (Tuomaala; see also Koski, 2001.)

The law on compulsory education, previously stalled by the perception of differential educational needs and abilities, concerns regarding its economic costs and by the Russian-minded senate⁴⁰, was passed in 1921, influencing children's school attendance particularly in rural areas where the number of schools rapidly increased. Education was identified as a personal right and individual duty towards society. Pupils continued to be defined through responsibilities: differences in educational outcomes did not arrest similar attention. Education, propagated as a universal right, was divided: in larger towns private two to four year preparatory schools attended mainly by pupils from upper classes existed alongside elementary schools⁴¹; and at the age of eleven, pupils were divided into two cohorts: those who would finish their basic education at elementary school – some participating in various extension training courses – and those who would move on from upper elementary schools or middle schools to grammar schools which prepared them for upper secondary school. (Ahonen, 2003; Seppänen, 2006; Tuomaala, 2004.)

Following World War II, in place of a rural, agrarian society, Finland rapidly became an urban society, and the industrial and service sectors expanded at unprecedented pace (Ahonen, 2003; Simola, 2001). The number of pupils applying for grammar schools grew rapidly, and competition for placements in grammar schools was severe (Seppänen, 2006, p. 57). School reform, which had been hampered by parliamentary lack of consensus and mistrust in the peasantry who had not lived up to the idealistic expectations of the ruling elite, gained momentum. Calls were made to abolish grammar schools and to restructure educa-

⁴⁰ As Ahonen (2003, pp. 79–80, p. 107) notes, the Finnish senate voted in favour of a law on compulsory education already in 1910, but this law was not ratified by the Russian Tsar.

⁴¹ Private preparatory schools were established from the 1870s, following the decree on elementary schools passed in 1866. These, as well as elementary schools, were to prepare pupils for secondary schools and were commonly called "schools of the gentry". (Seppänen, 2006, p. 53; see also Ahonen, 2003.)

tion (Ahonen, 2003; Rinne, 1986; Seppänen, 2006.) Consequently comprehensive schooling was established in 1968 in Finland, with the key task of promoting equality. Schooling was restructured into one, common comprehensive school in place of the dual system that existed before. The task of education became conceived as that of incorporating pupils into society, towards citizenship with a continuing emphasis on national belonging (cf. Gordon et al., 2000b).

The Finnish curriculum of 1970 that followed consequently marked a transition from a previous civic to an individualist intent, positioning individual pupils as “the main reason and legitimation for the existence of the school” (Carlgren, Klette, Mýrdal, Schnack & Simola, 2006, p. 312). Pupils’ right⁴² to attend school in their catchment area was ensured through legislation, and in principle all schools were to teach the same things, the goal being, as Rinne (2000) argues, for all pupils to learn “the same minimum knowledge and skills in all the subjects of the curriculum” (p. 136). The period that followed, until the late 1980s, is generally presented as having been strongly influenced by an egalitarian ethos which promoted equality as a central principle in education. Education was largely viewed as a social good, with a focus on social dependency. As Simola, Rinne and Kivirauma (1999), observe, the streaming of pupils was abolished in 1984, and “opportunities for educational distinction” thereon until the 1990s were limited to classes specialised in music, and to the few foreign language and alternative schools that existed mainly in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (p. 51).

Neo-liberalism and consumerisation of education

The end of the 1980s witnessed a discursive shift in many countries to a market-liberalist approach to education. This discursive shift has been

⁴² As Seppänen (2006, p. 59) notes, the legislation on compulsory education passed in 1970 did not demand that pupils’ enrol in their local school, but nevertheless took a more strict stance on school districts through the demand for a justified reason for participation in a school other than the one of one’s catchment area.

identified as marking a move to a discourse of education as a vehicle for self-enhancement and self-actualisation, and a focus on the individual as an autonomous, self-responsible agent in a liberal society, a singular personhood free of attachments, posing the individual as the source of both success and failure (cf. Gordon et al., 2003; Davies, 2003; Forsey et al., 2008; Rinne et al., 2002). This move to neo-liberalist discourse has been identified as reflecting the globalising tendencies of educational reform as a “world movement” (Lindblad & Popkewitz, 2003, p. 10). While educational reform takes place in different ways in different places, processes such as globalisation and, in Europe, Europeanisation, affect the convergence of similar kinds of changes or characteristics on a global scale, Lindblad and Popkewitz write (see also Boli & Ramirez, 1986; Walford, 2008).

Globalisation, as a homogenising process linked to corporate capitalism, has been connected to the commodification of education as nation states compete with each other within a global market (cf. Ball, 2006; Gordon, Lahelma & Beach, 2003). In the context of educational reform in Britain, for example, Ball (1998/2006) points out: “The core/periphery structure of the global economy and global and international labour markets appears to be closely paralleled in the merging ‘star/sink’ school polarizations within ‘market reformed’ education systems” (p. 68). Relatedly, there has been broad consent that social policies in many western as well as in developing countries have moved to increasingly view education, as well as other public services, from the perspectives of competition, cost-effectiveness and choice, introducing a policy of school choice in many countries, which has been identified as having enforced market discipline on educational service providers (cf. Ball, 2006; Kipnis, 2008; see also Fenwick, 2003). Neo-liberalist policy has been identified as having affected the roles assumed by the state and its relationship to citizens, and as having entailed a set of political and economic practices which, Martin and Vincent (1999) write, have “sought to turn the public domain into a market in which an atomised public exercise competitive consumer choice” (p. 134; see also Tomlinson, 2005, pp. 5–6). On a similar line, Ball (1997/2006) writes:

“Consumer democracy” is (...) both the means and end in social and economic change. “Active” choice will ensure a more responsive, efficient public sector and “release” the “neutral” enterprising and competitive tendencies of citizens, destroying a so-called “dependency culture” in the process. (p. 14)

Competition is not, of course, a new phenomenon in capitalist societies but has always been an element of schooling and of society. As Hartmann (1981) claims, “capital creates an ideology, which grows up alongside it, of individualism, competitiveness, domination, and in our time, consumption of a particular kind” (p. 10).⁴³ However, as for instance Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) argue, the consequences of neo-liberalist thinking are far-reaching and thoroughgoing. Referring to Baudillard’s work, they describe neo-liberalism as having “profoundly affected our sense of self and place, causing considerable confusion and what has been widely referred to as loss of meaning” (p. 3).

In politics, neo-liberalism has been connected to marketisation and privatisation, (cf. Cooper, 1998), which is translated in educational practice into an emphasis on the individual who is to “embody an entrepreneurial logic” (Lindblad & Popkewitz, 2003, p. 19). Self-government and minimalist state intervention, coupled with the promotion of market-driven development, are construed as the means to effect change in society. While pupils are approached as individuals, the vision is not one of addressing diversity in education, but of individual choice and competition, and the focus is on excellence over equity (Gordon et al., 2000a; see also Beach, 2003; Edwards & Whitty, 1997; Glatter, Woods & Bagley, 1997). Teachers, as “service providers,” are positioned as a “technical workforce to be managed” to ensure standards and accountability (Tomlinson, 2005, p. 66; see also Davies, 2003; Fenwick, 2003). This move toward decreasing state intervention and increasing possibilities for choice has been presented as a response to

⁴³ Hartmann (1981, p. 18) goes on to take this argument further, claiming the centrality of hierarchial social divisions, such as those based on class, gender and ethnicity are, in part, kept in place and made plausible by capitalist ideology that affects a distancing from relationships based on solidarity.

people's lack of trust concerning the ability of public institutions such as schools to ensure a good life for all (cf. Forsey, 2008; Walkerdine et al., 2001). However, as Halpin, Power and Fitz (1997) note, the marketisation of education has created increased uncertainties regarding school, so that "what was previously regarded as a relatively stable and enduring service is now experienced as fallible and obdurately imperfectable" (p. 66).

Principles for educational restructuring under neo-liberalist policy are informed by new managerialism, and are derived from economics and organisational studies, suggesting the needs for decentralisation and deregulation and emphasising cost-effectiveness. The move is toward "governing by goals and results" rather than "rules and directives" (Lindblad & Popkewitz, 2003, p. 10; Rose, 1993). Over the past two decades, school choice policy has become firmly entrenched in educational practice – so much so that that some researchers suggest that school choice has now become something of an orthodoxy, something parents are expected to pursue (cf. Forsey, 2008; see also Phillips & Stanback, 2008; Walford, 2008). As Ball, Reay and David (2003/2006) note of school choice, "Choice is both inappropriate but useful as a conceptualisation of the decision-making processes"; not everyone is positioned equally to apply for the schools of their choice (p. 233). Far from promoting individual freedom and self-expression, the marketisation of education with its emphasis on efficiency, is claimed to have led to conservatism in pedagogics and a renewed focus on basic skills in education (cf. Forsey et al., 2008). Relatedly, Davies (2000a) describes new managerialist restructuring of education through a huskies metaphor. Under new managerialism, Davies asserts:

The huskies [people] will work towards end-point for any number of reasons: because they actually perceive themselves as having no choice; out of blind devotion to the driver; because that is the way the team is going; maybe there might be some food at the end; or maybe the end of the whip. (p. 13)

In new managerialist thinking, individuals are positioned as key to guaranteeing the efficiency of the markets. As Barry (2002) has noted, this is related to the perception that the markets in themselves are fair and just, and thus minimal state intervention is the best way to guarantee success. In the context of the collective project of comprehensive education, it is the individual pupil who is positioned as responsible for the future of the nation-state, for bringing economic profit to the nation state, and hope is placed in the belief that individual profit will trickle down to other members of society.

The promise of new managerialist practices for teachers, pupils and schools, is related to the task of achieving a desirable place in the educational market. As many studies point out, a shift has taken place in education from a meritocratic ideology to one of increased parental influence and power, parentocracy, whereby a pupil's options and abilities to participate within schooling are increasingly dependent her parents' educational background and income, and to neo-conservative ideas of selection and natural differences in pupils' ability (e.g., Ball, Bowe & Gewirtz, 1996; Connell, 2002; Davies & Aurini, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005; Vincent & Ball, 1998). In the context of education in Britain, for instance Kenway and Bullen (2001, pp. 121–150) note that specialised classes and “designer schools” in Britain have evolved as a means to tap into the hopes and anxieties of pupils and attract particular kinds of pupils and families to particular schools, approaching pupils and their parents from the perspective of whether they add positive or negative value to a school (see also Glatter et. al., 1997; Tomlinson, 2001; see also Järvinen, 2003). Relatedly, “the child of school advertising,” they write, “is compliant and serious – attending constantly to the needs of the school and implicitly to those of adults” (p. 140). Rather than promoting diversity – of different kinds of schools and pupils – school choice policy has been demonstrated to idealise particular kinds of pedagogies, schools and pupils, and to result in greater choice for a select few, favouring children from white, middle-class backgrounds. (Cf. Ball, 2006; Conley & Albright, 2004; Kenway & Bullen, 2001; Reay, 1998; Walkerdine et al., 2001.)

Toward choice and competition in Finland

The marketisation of education in the Nordic countries that have by tradition been considered strongholds of social democracy, has led to processes of decentralisation, to the branching out and specialisation of schools, marking a discursive shift from a social democratic ethos of educational equality and education as a social good to an emphasis on competition and differentiated educational opportunities (Beach et al., 2003; Gordon et al., 2000b; Gordon et al., 2003; Jauhiainen, Rinne & Tähtinen, 2001; Seppänen, 2006). Thus while for example a central objective of comprehensive school reform of the late 1960s in Finland was that of attaining equality of outcome, the Basic Education Act (628/1998) states “The aim of education shall further be to secure *adequate* [emphasis added] equity in education throughout the country” (2 §; see Hakala, 2007, p. 52). This represents a move away from the values and goals of earlier reformist thinking designed with the whole population in mind (Gordon et al., 2003; Rinne, 2000; Seppänen, 2006). The purpose and moral obligation of schooling became construed within an imaginary in which education was to direct its gaze towards each individual pupil, attentive to their individual strengths and weaknesses, with particular concern for responding to the needs of “gifted” pupils (Räty & Snellman, 1998; Simola, 1998). Educational success and failure have become construed as matters of self-regulation and individual choice, and problems in school achievement have become translated as problems posed by pupils’ lack of ability and commitment (Kasanen, 2003).

Increasing emphasis has been placed on monitoring progress, with schools needing to conduct self-evaluations and submit to regular external reviews (Rinne, 2000; Simola, 2002, 2003). Thus the curriculum of 1994 asserts that pupils’ school achievement is to be closely monitored through “continuous assessment” (p. 25; see also Basic Education Decree, 852/1998, 10 §; NBE, 2004). In Finland, as in many countries, performance indicators have been introduced to ensure the accountability of schools and teachers, and efforts to define and stand-

ardise what counts as good performance in school have been undertaken by the National Board of Education (cf. Rinne, 2000; Simola et al., 1999). Discussion of performance based salaries, as a means to ensure the quality of education, have also been tabled in discussion on teacher salaries (Räty & Snellman, 1998). The tenuity of such a focus on performance, as Lahelma (2005) notes, is that it is formed within a rationale according to which some schools inevitably *will* fail and as Rinne (2000) remarks, “in Finland we are seeing the birth of clearly distinguishable good and bad schools” (p. 137).

While neo-liberal discourse entered educational discourse in Finland from the late 1980s, decentralisation and the specialisation in schools took hold in the 1990s (Carlgren et al., 2006; Rinne, 2000; Seppänen, 2006). This was a time marked by an economic recession and increased levels of unemployment, and Finland’s joining the European Union, which influenced the shift in educational policy towards the more market-driven policies of Central and Western Europe (Rinne, 2000, p. 136). However, contrary to educational reform in England and Wales, for example, where the marketisation of schools has been accompanied by the standardisation of the curriculum, in Finland the marketisation of education has signified a move away from a centrally planned system, with municipal education officials and teachers in schools, as “education providers”, having to develop local curricula on the basis of the national core curriculum (NBE, 2004, p. 8). At the same time, national budget allocations for education have decreased, and the task of defining budget allocations for schools has been allocated to municipalities. In addition to the practice of allocating pupils to schools on the basis of catchment areas, a policy of school choice has been introduced, offering parents and pupils the right to apply for any school of their preference (on condition it is not enrolled to full capacity), or for specialised classes or programmes within their municipality. This change was formalised in the Basic Education Act (628/1998), with the right of pupils to attend their local school in Finland being changed to the right to attend the school assigned by the local authority, “a neighbourhood school or some other appropriate place” (6 §). Provisions for school transportation are

limited, in principle, to the local schools pupils are assigned to by the authorities, with parents or carers needing to cover the costs of transportation to other schools (6 §, 32 §; see also Seppänen, 2006, p. 76). However, as Seppänen (p. 67) notes, local authorities can, in principle, make exemptions to this rule, and notably Sunny Lane School as well as the two schools I visited for interviews provided free transportation to pupils attending CLIL classes.

The profilisation and specialisation of schools in Finland in the 1990s was rarely the site of political debate or concern that it would lead to increasing inequality (cf. Seppänen, 2003, 2006; Simola, Rinne & Kivirauma, 1999). In fact, teachers, who have by tradition been more aligned with the political right in Finland, have been identified as generally favourable towards the specialisation of schools, differentiated educational routes and school choice policy, more so than parents (Räty, Snellman, Kontio & Kähkönen, 1997; Räty, Snellman, Mäntysaari-Hetekorpi & Vornanen, 1995, 1996; see also Simola & Hakala, 2001). Thus equality, while still a central value in education, has been in part replaced by the concept of diversity – or equality through diversity – and a corresponding emphasis on the need to respond to the specific learning needs of gifted pupils (Räty & Snellman, 1998; Rinne et al., 2002). As member of parliament Tuija Brax (1998) wrote on her web pages on the 23rd of February 1998, a central idea in the specialisation of schools was that “schools can be different, but not of different value”⁴⁴. As Seppänen (2006, pp. 62–68) has noted, school choice and the right of schools to select their pupils was the site of more contention. In the Basic Education Act (628/1998) this right was restricted to schools with special areas of curriculum emphasis as follows:

If education is given according to a curriculum with special emphasis on one or several subjects, the admission of pupils may also be based on a test showing aptitude for the said education. The selec-

⁴⁴ *Minusta sen keskeinen ajatus oli alun perin se, että koulut voivat olla erilaisia, muttei eriarvoisia.*

tion criteria and the aptitude test shall be made known in advance. However, the local authority may decide to give precedence to children residing in its area in admission to education provided by it.⁴⁵ (28 §)

While school choice has been construed as enhancing pupils' opportunities, discussion on the aspirations and ideas pupils may have of good schooling are markedly missing from the discussion on school choice in Finland. Freedom for pupils is limited to the right to apply for a school, yet in official documents parents, rather than pupils, are presented as making decisions on school choice, and school choice appears as a synonym for parental involvement (cf. Committee Report, 1996; Basic Education Act, 628/1998). Education is construed as a service and while emphasis is still on providing a common education, private schools are seen as playing an important part in diversifying the possibilities available to parents:

The starting point for the organisation of basic education is a unified comprehensive school and the basic education provided by municipalities, that is supplemented by private schools. The role of diverse municipal and private schools is to provide families the possibility to choose the appropriate teaching for their child. The role of private schools is, on their own part, to strengthen the pluralism of the Finnish educational system as well as to make parents' active role in school choice possible.⁴⁶ (NBE, 2007, p. 31)

⁴⁵ While the document restricts entrance tests to classes with special curricular focus, the intention being to ensure the number of pupils attending specialised "magnet" classes does not overdo the school's capacity to provide for local pupils, how these tests are to take place is less clear. In practice, the definition of this task is delegated to local authorities and teachers with little guidance as to how these are to take place. The comment of one of the teachers at Sunny Lane School is elucidatory, "We were told 'you wanted these classes, you plan the tests,'" she expressed.

⁴⁶ *Perusopetuksen järjestämisen lähtökohtana on yhtenäinen peruskoulu ja kuntien järjestämä perusopetus, jota yksityiset koulut täydentävät. Monipuoliset kunnalliset ja yksityiset koulut tarjoavat perheille mahdollisuuden valita lapselleen sopiva opetus. Yksityisten koulujen roolina on omalta osaltaan vahvistaa suomalaisen koulutusjärjestelmän moniarvoisuutta sekä mahdollistaa vanhempien aktiivinen rooli kouluvalinnassa.*

The number of private schools is, however, limited in Finland. In 2008, the Ministry of Education's web site identified in its announcement of recently approved permits for the provision of private education that less than three percent of pupils in basic education attended private schools in altogether sixty-eight private schools. While in many countries emphasis on free markets has led to a quasi-market model in education, involving government funding on the one hand and private education provision, parental choice and increased local autonomy on the other (cf. Edwards & Whitty, 1997; Hirsch, 1997), in Finland, despite moves away from a centralised system, comprehensive school continues to be relatively standardised, steered from the center, and possibilities for school choice exist mainly within public schools (Seppänen, 2003, 2006; Simola, 2005). For instance the curriculum of 2004 (NBE, 2004), marks a move back to a more standardised system as compared to the curriculum of 1994, providing detailed lists of objectives and expected performance corresponding to different grade levels in school. Teacher training is also relatively standardised in Finland, and while teachers have a range of textbooks to choose from, these, also, are standardised to correspond to the national curriculum. Teacher manuals include standardised tests and lesson models, and standardised, national tests are conducted periodically in core subjects. Educational rhetoric, in spite of and alongside this standardised system, places emphasis on different kinds of children benefitting from different kinds of education (Räty & Snellman, 1998; see also Kasanen, 2003). As Seppänen (2003) observes, "there is a market-like situation inside the publicly maintained schools" in Finland, with public schools having branched out and specialised into different aspects of the curriculum, and some schools having introduced specialised classes or programmes in music, in P.E., Art and foreign languages, for example (p. 514).

In recent years, school choice has become an increasingly common practice in Finland, and particularly in urban areas choice systems are well established today (Seppänen, 2006). School choice preferences have been connected to the educational level and socioeconomic status of mothers in particular, and pupils' choices have been identified as

influenced by gendered and classed differences (cf. Gordon, 2006b; Järvinen, 2003; Metso, 2004; Seppänen, 2006). For instance Järvinen (2003) notes in his study on upper secondary school choices that the majority of pupils in upper secondary schools with special focus in the Arts or with international IB classes were girls. Seppänen (2006), likewise, notes that there are more girls than boys in schools with strict admission criteria related to school success. It is important to note, however, that this has not translated into better wages for women, or to increased opportunities in the labour market which remains highly segregated in Finland (Korkeamäki & Kyyrä, 2002). Moreover, not much is known of the influence of ethnic or raced positionings in regard to school preferences in Finland, but as Gordon (2006b) notes, while the marketisation of schools celebrates choice, choice is inevitably more restricted for some pupils:

for some middle class girls and boys their future seems to be fairly clearly mapped out, and for some working class girls and boys the option of not thinking further than tomorrow is way of coping with uncertainties. (p. 3)

3.3 Europeanisation and internationalisation: Challenges for education

As a supra-state polity, the goals of the European Union have, from their initial articulation in post-WWII Europe, inextricably linked the political with the economic (cf. Walby, 1999). The 1990s, a time of economic recession in Europe, witnessed the dissemination of various European programmes and initiatives in the field of education that were to address the social and political demands of Europeanisation, ensuring Europe's position as a central political and economic force in the world (cf. European Commission [EC], 1995, p. 1). Education in the European Union was depicted as an obstacle or hurdle needing to be overcome to address the perceived demands of the European economy

and the impact of recent technological advances. The notions of lifelong learning, the learning-, information- and knowledge society were adopted at this stage, and informed the identification of educational priorities for the European Union (Antunes, 2006, p. 41.) While education continued to be the responsibility of national member states, it was, as Livingston (2003) writes, “regularly cited as central to the development of the EU” (p. 588). While the European Union at present has no overarching policy on education, it has actively adopted various benchmarks and indicators for education which have been used to measure and regulate the outcome of national education policies, thus comprising a form of supranational governance of national education systems within the European Union (Antunes, 2006; Nóvoa, 1996).

One specific aim articulated for education within the European Union, Novóa (1996) notes, has been that of instilling a sense of European citizenship which is embedded in “a conflictual reality in which local identities, regional loyalties, national sentiments, and European ideologies coexist” (p. 35; see also Treaty on European Union, 1992, Article 126). “Unity in diversity” has become the slogan of the European Union, articulated against concerns to produce common sentiment and to ensure economic prosperity against the perceived threat of globalisation. Thus, for example, while the commitment to cultural and linguistic diversity is ratified under Article 6 of the Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union, 1992), Article 3 of the Treaty includes the objective of “strengthening of economic and social cohesion”, and Article B states the European Union aims for “economic and social progress”. In the European Commission’s *New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism*, emphasis is placed on Europeanness being tolerant and appreciative of diversity:

The European Union is founded on “unity in diversity”: diversity of cultures, customs and beliefs – and of languages. It is this diversity that makes the European Union what it is: not a “melting pot” in which differences are rendered down, but a common home in which diversity is celebrated, and where our many

mother tongues are a source of wealth and a bridge to greater solidarity and mutual understanding. (EC, 2005, p. 2)

The vision is one of a multilingual environment in which proficiency in languages contributes to a “feeling of being European with all its cultural wealth and diversity and of understanding between the citizens of Europe” (EC, 1995, p. 47). While the EU has no official, clearly defined language policy, official European Commission and European Union discourse is, Kraus (2008) notes, characterised by “an insistent plea for multilingualism” (p. 117). Frequent references are made to multilingualism in reference to education and culture. Multilingualism is described as “the gift of tongues” on the European Union’s website on cultural activities as “a part and parcel of both European identity/citizenship and the learning society” (Europa>Policy Areas>Culture, n.d.), as also in official documents such as the *White Paper on Teaching and Learning* (EC, 1995, p. 57). Language is construed as an element of cultural identity on the one hand, and a valuable form of capital to be accumulated on the other (EC, 1995, 2005).

A central domain on which European interests have been implemented is that of curriculum planning, and one area of particular interest in curriculum planning has been that of language learning, which has been positioned as central to the project of citizenship in the European Union over the past decades (Kraus, 2008; Novóa, 1996). The objectives of language learning laid out in the White Paper on Education and Training and by the New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism (EC, 1995, 2005) correspond to the notion of European citizenship. Language learning is articulated as a means to promote belonging and participation in a linguistically diverse Union. Thus in the Preface to the Eurydice (2001) report *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools in Europe*, Viviane Reding, the European Commissioner for Education and Culture of the time, states the “issue of languages is unquestionably at the heart of the development of a Europe synonymous with culture and citizenship” (p. 3). However, while minorities and questions related to cultural recognition have been closely con-

nected to human rights within the European Union from the 1990s onwards, its language policies have not sought to protect dialects of official languages or immigrant languages, nor are these afforded status in the *European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages* finalised in 1992 (Council of Europe, 1992; see also Kraus, 2008, pp. 105–110).

Recent objectives of language learning in Finland: Negotiating individualism and community

Finland is officially a bilingual state with Finnish and Swedish as the two state languages. All pupils need to learn Finnish and Swedish in school. From its initial stages, education has been provided separately in both languages from pre-primary to university levels for both language groups. As Kraus (2008 p. 109) notes, the ratification of the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages did not confront significant opposition in Finland as comparatively significant concessions had already been made related to cultural and linguistic rights. However, the 1990s marked a period of increasing discourse of cultural diversification on the one hand, and calls for the clarification of national identity on the other.

The 1990s have often been described as a stage when Finland opened up to Europe and when educating pupils toward internationalism became construed as a central task in education in Finland (cf. Alasuutari & Ruuska, 1998; Harinen, 2000; Rinne, 2000). Globalisation and internationalism were interpreted as requiring changes to educational policy, such as a new emphasis on gifted pupils (Rinne et al., 2002, p. 647). Relatedly, the slogan of the development plan for educational policy for 1991–1996 in Finland, conjoining the neo-liberal with the international emphases, was that of “quality, flexibility, internationalisation, life-long learning, individuality, efficiency and accountability” (quoted in Simola et al., 1999, p. 55). As Gordon et al. (2000b, 41) suggest in their analysis of the 1994 curriculum: “the ‘pairing’ of national with multicultural and international values may be a

compromise between conservative values which stress nationality, liberal values with a multicultural emphasis, and neo-liberalism which stresses internationalism” (p. 41). Indeed, as expressed in the curriculum of 1994, education was to respond to internationalisation by raising the standards of education to maintain the comparative advantage of the nation in the face of a global economy:

Internationalisation and population movements – neo-migration – bring new ingredients to our cultural and value-related foundation and require us to check our view-points. At the same time, internationalisation is a challenge to Finnish know-how, which in education means developing the quality of education or raising its level. (p. 9)

The narrative of the 1994 curriculum introduces a distinction between two kinds of internationalisation: that which is characterised by global competition and the accumulation of economic profits, and that which is related to neo-migration and is described as the “multicultural aspects that have to do with internationalisation” (p. 10). Linguistic diversity is pinned to multiculturalism: “more and more students with different linguistic backgrounds are flocking into our schools making our school more multicultural than heretofore” (p. 16). The image is one in which Finland is presented as having a previously monocultural past and has gradually become more diversified in recent years with the incoming traffic of new ethnic groups (cf. Alasuutari, 1998; Kurki, 2008; Lahelma, 2004; Rajander, 1997). As a practical solution to these changes, the 1994 curriculum suggests:

as our functional environment becomes more and more international, as more cultures are introduced into Finland, and as Europe becomes more integrated, our schools must focus on new contents, on increasing interaction between different areas of culture, on creating a more diversified language program, and on making our internationalism education more effective. (p. 16)

On a similar line with the official discourse propagated by the European Union and in line with its slogan of unity in diversity, the past decade has marked a transition from the mere recognition of diversity reflected by the curriculum of 1994 towards increasing emphasis on the value of diversity to society (NBE, 2004; see also Lampinen & Melén-Paaso, 2009). Diversity, in the curriculum documents, is contained to a large degree in linguistic diversity.⁴⁷ Language is pinned to cultural identity, and one of the missions of education is defined as that of “support[ing] the pupil’s own cultural identity, and his or her part in Finnish society and a globalising world” (NBE, 2004, p. 12). Throughout the document, identity is mentioned altogether fifty-three times, most times with cultural inflections. The task of education is construed as being an enabling one: “to support each pupil’s linguistic and cultural identity and the development of his or her mother tongue” (p. 12).

In Finland, national identity has by tradition been produced through the notion of being a sovereign nation state (Ruuska, 1998). As a response to opposition to Europeanisation and to the claim that by joining the European Union Finland would lose its independence and national identity, specific emphasis, Ruuska notes, was placed on the Finnish language in the 1990s (p. 289). This emphasis is also present in the current curriculum (NBE, 2004). Fluency in the national languages, Finnish or Swedish, is construed as the means to acquire belonging to the community, with the subtle suggestion this is a means to avoid exclusion in Finnish society (see p. 44, p. 56). In a similar vein, the objectives of Finnish as a Second Language include that of educating pupils to “understand and know how to relate the values of Finnish culture to their own values” (p. 98). The acquisition of proficient Finnish or Swedish is posed as a means to become involved in knowledge in the curriculum of 2004. Some pupils, the curriculum suggests, need to be guided toward life-

⁴⁷ This recognition of linguistic diversity is also reflected by the Basic Education Act passed in 1998 (628/1998), which established the right of pupils to be taught in Sami, Roma or sign language, also stating that “in a separate teaching group or in a separate school, teaching may be given primarily in [other] language[s]” (10 §). To receive state subsidies, the number of pupils per class in a school with Sami as its language of instruction needs to be at least three. The Basic Education Act (628/1998) also broadened the sphere of compulsory education to include migrant children and all children with mental disabilities.

time investment to achieve the proposed standard of fluency:

in the instruction, an effort is made to guide the pupil toward lifelong learning so that he or she can gradually achieve a Finnish language proficiency comparable to that of native speakers, and thus gain equal opportunities to function and exert influence Finnish society.⁴⁸ (NBE, 2004, p. 95)

The argument of needing Finnish is a very powerful one: lack of Finnish has been demonstrated as being a disadvantage in Finnish society (cf. Paananen, 2005). However, the emphasis placed on language skills in the excerpt above purports to a monolingual ideal which virtually transforms Finnish language skills into a referent for belonging to the national community (Lappalainen & Rajander, 2005). The excerpt above suggests that poor language is the reason for marginalisation, which with the emphasis on lifelong learning, a recurrent objective in the curriculum, positions non-fluency as a referent for unfavorable dispositions and inadequate commitment to participate in the Finnish society, reproducing culturalist connotations of the pathological nature of immigrant pupils, naturalising the body of the immigrant as deviant and deficient.

As expressed by the current objectives for Finnish mother tongue education, language skills are suggested as being key to the personal growth of pupils and as being the basis of all learning:

It needs to be taken into consideration that a pupil's mother tongue is the foundation of learning; language is both an object of learning and an instrument. (NBE, 2004, p. 44)

Following a computational psychology, linguistic fluency is construed as translatable into learning and acquiring other skills, opening a whole new panorama of possibilities to pupils:

⁴⁸ *Opetuksessa pyritään ohjaamaan oppilasta elinikäiseen oppimiseen niin, että hän voi vähitellen saavuttaa äidinkielisten veroisen suomen kielen taidon ja saa siten tasavertaiset mahdollisuudet toimia ja vaikuttaa suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa.*

In instruction in mother tongue and literature, the pupils learn concepts with which to approach the world and their own thought in linguistic terms; they acquire not simply means of analysing reality but also possibilities to break loose from reality, to construct new worlds and connect to new contexts. (Mother Tongue and Literature: Finnish as the mother tongue, NBE, 2004, p. 44)

Further, the curriculum of 2004 identifies learning as an “individual and communal process of building knowledge and skills” through which “cultural involvement is created” (p. 16). Education, it states, is to make pupils who are equipped with the skills to contribute to society, “furnish[ing] society with a tool for developing educational capital” (p. 12). Emphasis is placed on ensuring social cohesion and at the same time the task of education is identified as being that of making pupils who have and are appreciative of their own distinctive linguistic and national identities, foregrounding the value of linguistic diversity and the rights of all pupils to mother tongue education. The instrumental value attached to language in the curriculum documents reflects Heller’s (2002) claim that language learning is increasingly approached as a means to accrue social and economic capital, and is a means to establish whether someone belongs, or not, to a community.

While increased attention is given to minority languages in the curriculum of 2004, and the right to mother tongue education is formulated as a moral right and is identified as important and valuable, the focus on language learning as a means to establish community membership and the objective of learning to “use language as the community does” mentioned under the objectives of Finnish as a mother tongue (NBE, 2004, p. 44), underscore the importance attributed to national belonging.

In the current curriculum (NBE, 2004), the rights of Sami, Romany, Sign Language and Immigrants are addressed under the section “Instruction on cultural and language groups.” The image of diversity, however, is a homely one of long-time indigenous cultures. Immigrant languages are not afforded similar status to other languages in the curriculum.

A distinction is drawn between national minority languages and the immigrant languages, for unlike Finnish, Swedish, Sami, Romany and sign language, which are included within the main text of the curriculum, the objectives, core content and assessment guidelines for the “Instruction of native languages of immigrant pupils” are included in an appendix to the curriculum. Their study areas are not described in detail, and the assessment for this subject is to be provided on a separate certificate (pp. 303–308). This contrasts remarkably with the emphasis placed on language learning in general in the national curricula (NBE, 1994, 2004), for language learning is depicted as having instrumental value to both individual pupils speaking different first languages, and to society as a whole. This division follows Lentin’s (2004) observation of majoritarian anti-racist discourse in Europe where the invocation of national racialised minorities as “Our own familiar Others” is often evoked by governments wanting to police their borders from unauthorised immigration at the same time maintaining peace with existing “race relations” (p. 312).

While in the curriculum of 1994 suggests pupils must “accept the fact that people are different” (p. 38), the 2004 curriculum defines the “endorsement of multiculturalism” as one of the basic values of education, and identifies the need for education to “promote tolerance and intercultural understanding” (p. 12). The rhetoric is one in which multiculturalism is presented as needing to be accepted, and the rights of minority groups to belong to their separate cultural groups and to “our” society are to be ensured. This perspective also underpinned the objectives of the 1994 curriculum, which states that “Children of minority groups have the right to grown up to be active members of their own cultural community as well as of the Finnish society” (p. 10).

However, an unprompted negative underpins this discourse of cultural identity and pluralism, for emphasis is placed on common culture and common sentiment. The curriculum of 1994 identifies appreciation for “our national heritage and multicultural aspects to do with internationalism” as requiring a revision of national heritage, which it suggests will lead to “a new type of clarification of our identity” (NBE,

1994, p. 16.) Explicit references to common European culture appear for the first time in the 2004 curriculum, with the suggestion that the “the basis of instruction is Finnish culture, which has developed in interaction with indigenous, Nordic and European culture” (p. 12). Interestingly, no mention is made of Russian or Slavic influences in the curriculum documents. Identity is bound to the west, and indigenous people are also recognised as having influenced the development of Finnish culture. Education is identified as providing a means for society to generate understanding and appreciation for national cultural traditions, which all pupils are expected to absorb:

In order to ensure social continuity and build the future, basic education assumes the tasks of transferring cultural tradition from one generation to the next, augmenting knowledge and skills, and increasing awareness of the values and ways of acting that form the foundation of society. (NBE, 2004, p. 12)

Enhancing a “sense of community” is defined as a basic mission of education (NBE, 2004, p. 12). Such emphasis placed on shared Finnish culture and society can be interpreted as a response to the demands of Europeanisation and multiculturalism, that is, as a perceived need to underline a common Finnish culture (Gordon et al., 2000b, pp. 40–44; Lappalainen & Rajander, 2005). This underpins the multicultural rhetoric of the curriculum. Thus the section *Immigrants* in the chapter *Instruction of Cultural and Language Groups*, envisions education as needing to ensure “active and balanced membership” in the Finnish community (p. 34). Likewise the new cross-curricular theme in the curriculum of 2004, *Cultural Identity and Internationalism* states as its aim to “help the pupil to understand the essence of the Finnish and European cultural identities, discover his or her own cultural identity, and develop capabilities for cross-cultural interaction and internationalism” (p. 37; see also Lampinen & Melén-Paaso, 2009). The curriculum does not provide a definition of what the “essence” of Finnish culture is. Education, the curriculum (p. 12) notes, must take into consideration

“special national and local attributes, the national languages, the two national churches, the Sami as an indigenous people and national minorities” (see also NBE, 1994). In a similar vein to the 1994 curriculum, immigrants are recognisable as “the diversification of Finnish culture through the arrival of people from other cultures” in the current curriculum (NBE, 2004), underscoring the extent to which otherness defines the concept “immigrant,” positioning immigrants in opposition to a national core to which they are inassimilable (cf. Lappalainen, 2006). Immigrant, as a category, is applied to pupils who “have moved to, or been born in, Finland, and have immigrant backgrounds” (p. 34).

The language of both curriculum documents is declarative; it does not identify structural problems or persistent inequalities (cf. Hakala, 2007; Lahelma, 2004; Mietola, 2001). As Lahelma (2004) notes, “the words ‘racism’, ‘sexism’, and ‘bullying’ do not appear” in the 1994 curriculum (p. 7; see also Gordon et al., 2000b), nor do they appear in the curriculum of 2004. Learning more about oneself, supporting “individuality and healthy self-esteem” is on par with the development “of a sense of community based on equality and tolerance” (NBE, 2004, p. 36). The focus on individuality acquires different inflections in the context of “cultural and language groups”, however. While all mother tongue education includes the building of pupils’ self-esteem within their objectives, the objectives of Romany language, for example, state that instruction “must motivate and support pupils in their current studies and in pursuing further studies” (p. 84).

In recent years, increasing emphasis has been placed on fostering global and cross-cultural commitments in education, as reflected by the *Global Education 2010* -programme and the *Education Towards Global Responsibility* -project of the Ministry of Education. The language adopted by these programmes is similar to that of the curriculum documents. Emphasis continues to be placed on self-esteem, tolerance, intercultural awareness and cultural authenticity, with the inflection that pupils are to be educated towards global responsibility, which is perceived as important to global peace, prosperity and a sustainable global future. (NBE, 2007; Lampinen & Melén-Paaso, 2009.)

The introduction of CLIL and the European Union project

A key objective identified in the White Paper on Education and Training (EC 1995) and in the New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism (EC 2005) is that of instilling a sense of European citizenship, which is in part defined as needing to take place through educating European citizens in foreign languages. The White Paper on Education and Training identifies the objective of developing the proficiency of European citizens in two European languages other than their first language as a priority objective in education. This “MT+2 formula,” as Marsh (2002a, p. 9) defines it, draws on recognition of the “importance of linguistic diversity in education and training in making Europe the most competitive and knowledge-based economy in the world, means that existing language barriers need to be lifted” (p. 9). Foreign language learning is articulated as being of crucial importance for the European Union for various reasons: it is to promote the competitive ability of the European economy, instill a sense of Europeanness in European Union citizens, and provide citizens with the linguistic and cultural skills required in a multilingual working environment, ensuring that *all* Euro citizens have equal opportunities for mobility within the European Union. “It is no longer possible to reserve proficiency in foreign languages for an elite or for those who acquire it on account of their geographical mobility”, learning “MT + 2” is a priority for everyone, “irrespective of training and education routes chosen”, the White Paper reads. (EC, 1995, p. 47; see also EC, 2005; Marsh 2002b.)

In the European Union, Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been presented as a European means to a European ends, as providing a solution to achieving the objectives promoted by European declarations related to foreign language learning, and specifically, to achieving the “MT + 2” objective. Unlike its articulation in national contexts, CLIL is presented by the Commission as also being a means to enhance linguistic diversity within the European Union. (EC, 1995.) The 2004 curriculum in Finland defines CLIL as follows:

In instruction in the different subjects, it is also possible to use a language other than the school's language of instruction, in which case the language is also an instrument for learning the contents of the different subjects, as opposed to being simply the object of the instruction and learning. (NBE, 2004, p. 270)

In contrast with immersion classes that draw from particular theoreticalisations of language development and political commitments to sustaining linguistic diversity, CLIL does not imply a particular pedagogical approach or method to foreign language learning. CLIL, Marsh (2002a) writes, combines “function and form, action and knowledge” neatly together in the minds of pupils, the future cognoscenti, “convert[ing] the vision and rhetoric on linguistic and cultural diversity into practical action” (p. 52). Following a Chomskyan theory of universal grammar, a form of human nativism that views grammar as innate, the rhetoric of CLIL builds parallels with the ways children learn language in their early childhood and with foreign language learning. “The whole process is relaxed and natural”, Marsh (2002a, p. 69) claims, construing language learning through CLIL as a natural process, as an invisible evolution to fluency. Education is viewed as a transparent process “in a real world”, a passing on of authentic skills and knowledge in contrast to the “pseudoreal and fictitious contents of the traditional language classroom” (p. 48). Depicted as a natural process, language learning through CLIL is described as an intrinsically purposeful, authentic experience:

An excellent way of making progress in a foreign language is to use it for a purpose, so that the language becomes a tool rather than an end in itself. After all, that is the way we use our own language. (Eurydice, 1995, p. 188)

The promise of CLIL is linked to that of having a dual focus – as being about education *and* language learning – administering the goals of education through language learning and vice versa, providing “greater overall economic return on investment in language” (Marsh, 2002a, p.

11). CLIL is suggested as having the potential to transform the learning experiences, self-perceptions and self-actualization of many, not few, pupils. It is construed as a medium for individual self-improvement and is discussed within an individualistic rhetoric as being an “educational innovation that *suits the times, needs and aspirations of learners [sic]*” as well as their “specific [learning] styles” (p. 11). Unlike the striated, repetitious learning that is presented as having marked foreign language learning in its earlier stages, (producing subjects with adequate knowledge but incapable of action), CLIL is presented as providing a means to acquire pragmatic competence. As Marsh (2002b) describes, “Put simply, knowledge of a language has given way to pragmatic competence whereby a person has both knowledge and skills for actively using the given language.” Marsh traces the emergence of CLIL to changes in foreign language learning pedagogies “from an emphasis on grammar and translation in the 1950s, behaviourist forms of rote learning in the 1960s and the communicative approach of the 1970s, to those which emphasise form and function in the present day.” A functionalist understanding of language learning underpins CLIL which proposes second language learning to flow from teaching non-language subjects through the medium of the selected language. CLIL is presented as being *simple* – no particular methodology is involved; *inclusive* – particular comment is made that suitable for diverse learners including “those who have not responded well to formal language instruction in general education”; *flexible* – the general guideline being that a minimum five percent of lesson time was to be taught in the foreign language; *cost effective* – local interest and teachers’ commitment and good language skills are seen as key to its successful implementation (Marsh, 2002a, p. 20; see also Jäppinen, 2005; Merisuo-Storm, 2002; Nikula & Marsh, 2002.) The perception is, the earlier children learn a language, the better the results. Thus the White Paper on Education and Training (EC 1995) suggests that learning different languages “starting at nursery school, should become part of basic knowledge” (p. 13; see also EC, 2005, p. 6). Learning languages at an early stage is connected to enhanced intellectual capacity and new cultural horizons:

Learning languages also has another important effect: experience shows that when undertaken from a very early age, it is an important factor in doing well at school. Contact with another language is not only compatible with becoming proficient in one's mother tongue, it also makes it easier. It opens the mind, stimulates intellectual agility and, of course, expands people's cultural horizon. (EC, 1995, p. 47)

CLIL is sited as enhancing social inclusion, gender mainstreaming in language education, increased opportunities to study abroad, as well as general improvement in school environments (EC, 1995; Marsh, 2002a, 2000b). Gender appears as a central dividing category: boys and girls are assumed to have different learning styles, as evident in the suggestion that CLIL will "suit specific styles, particularly with regard to (...) gender mainstreaming in terms of male and female performance in language learning" (Marsh, 2002a, p. 11). With emphasis on pragmatic language and CLIL as a pedagogy of "learning by doing," the demand to respond to different learning styles, in this context, reinforces essentialist notions of girls and boys as having fundamentally different learning styles which disadvantage boys in school.⁴⁹

The playful, unpurposeful, silent uses of language, the difference between language codes used at school and at home, and the home languages of immigrants do not enter into this discourse – neither do the ongoing struggles or insecurities involved in learning a language and in asserting voice (cf. Anzaldúa, 1999; Bernstein, 1975/1999; Cameron, 1998; Hermes & Uran, 2006). Similarly, no mention is made of postcolonial contexts, where teaching through foreign language has been part and parcel of schooling for quite some time. While CLIL, as foreign language learning in general, is seen as a medium for enhancing intercultural knowledge and understanding (EC, 1995; Marsh, 2002a),

⁴⁹ Similar views have been put forward in Finland, where for example, new technology has been suggested as a means to engage boys more in foreign language learning (NBE, 1997) – an interesting objective given that at the same time, efforts have been made to engage girls more in IT education (cf. Hynninen & Juutilainen, 2006).

how it is to translate into greater appreciation for cultural or linguistic diversity and understanding between citizens is not clear – the formula roughly following the assumption that the acquisition of “functional competence” in a foreign language, made possible through self-motivated pupils and meaningful learning experiences, enables interaction between citizens from different countries, leading to greater appreciation of diversity.

Foreign language learning and CLIL in Finland

In Finland, foreign language learning has been given particular emphasis for quite some time, which has often been connected to Finland’s geopolitical location (cf. Nikula & Marsh, 1999; Nuolijärvi, 1997). From the beginning of the comprehensive school in 1970, pupils have been able to choose to study English, German, French or Russian in school in addition to studying either Finnish or Swedish as a compulsory foreign language (MOE, 1989; NBE, 2001). From the end of the 1980s, increasing emphasis has been placed on foreign language learning as a means to respond to internationalisation. Emphasis has been placed on the task of education to raise citizens with the necessary language skills to ensure national interests on an international forum. Relatedly, in 1989, the Education Ministry in Finland conducted and published an assessment, *The Working Group Memoir on Diversifying the Language Programme and Assessing Foreign Language Instruction to Pupils*⁵⁰ (MOE, 1989) to identify possibilities for diversifying foreign language choices and scaling up foreign language programs. This Memoir identified the demand to respond to the demands of the future, to europeanisation and internationalisation, through foreign language learning:

⁵⁰ *Kielihojelman manipuolistamista ja oppilaille vieraalla kielellä annettavaa opetusta selvittäneen työryhmän muistio*

Internationalisation and the European integration place new challenges to our country's economy and the whole society. In the future we need increasingly better foreign language skills in increasingly more languages.⁵¹ (p. 1)

While English has been and is the most popular choice in Finland⁵² (Eurydice, 2005), already before the National Board of Education defined the diversification of foreign language choices as an official target, some the municipalities, at their own cost, had taken measures to diversify their foreign language options (see MOE, 1989, p. 22). From the Comprehensive School Act (176/1983), it has also been possible to “use another language than the comprehensive school's language of instruction temporarily in teaching other subjects”⁵³ (25 §). Relatedly, the Working Group suggested in its Memoir that measures be taken to increase the number of foreign language schools and expand foreign language schooling in English to upper secondary school, where there was interest, a sufficient numbers of pupils, and teachers with the necessary skills for this (pp. 32–37), specifying: “In order to develop language learning, the Working Group sees it necessary that a comprehensive network of classes with instruction in foreign languages be created in our country”⁵⁴ (p. 3). The Working Group suggested that these classes be established in English and Swedish, as it was assumed it would be easiest to find teachers and instructional materials for these languages. Classes with French, German and Russian were also to be encouraged (p. 34). The approach to foreign language learning adopted in the Memoir was instrumental one, its focus being on developing foreign

⁵¹ *Kansainvälistyminen ja Euroopan yhdentymiskehitys asettavat maamme elinkeinoelämän ja koko yhteiskunnan uusien haasteiden eteen. Tulevaisuudessa tarvitsemme yhä parempaa ja yhä useimpien vieraiden kielten taitoa.*

⁵² Since the Basic Education Act (628/1998) came into force in 1999, in principle, schools have been free to offer any language to pupils, although in practice English has maintained its position as the most popular foreign language with over ninety percent of pupils in secondary school studying English (Eurydice, 2005).

⁵³ *Muiden aineiden opetuksessa saadaan tilapäisesti käyttää opetuskielenä. muuta kuin peruskoulun opetuskieltä*

⁵⁴ *Kielenopetuksen kehittämiseksi työryhmä pitää välttämättömänä, että maahamme luodaan kattava vieraskielisten luokkien verkosto.*

language skills rather than strengthening cultural or ethnic ties. However, the Memoir states the expectation that foreign language schooling would also “facilitate the position of foreign pupils moving to Finland”, and classes functioning in foreign languages were seen as “suitable for pupils who have opportunities for contacts in foreign languages outside school”⁵⁵ (p. 32).

The end of the 1980s through to the present day has been marked by various initiatives in foreign language learning in Finland that have picked up the suggestions made in the Memoir of 1989 and the objectives of various European declarations, such as the aim of achieving the “MT+2.” In the 2004 curriculum, foreign languages are included in the section *Learning objectives and core contents of education*⁵⁶, and CLIL is included separately under a section on *Instruction in a foreign language and language-immersion instruction in the national languages* in an Annex chapter *Instruction in accordance with a special educational task or special pedagogical system or principle* (pp. 269–273). Similarly to official European Commission documents, the 2004 curriculum defines the central objective of CLIL and immersion education⁵⁷ as being that “pupils be able to acquire a firmer language proficiency than in lessons reserved for the language in normal instruction” (p. 270).⁵⁸

Legislation passed in 1991 in Finland expanded possibilities of teaching non-language subjects in foreign languages to “when it is pur-

⁵⁵ *heltottavat myös Suomeen muuttavien ulkomaalaisten oppilaiden asemaa; sopivat sellaisille oppilaille, joilla on mahdollisuus vieraskielisiin kontakteihin kouluajan ulkopuolella; erityisen suurta kiinnostusta vieraisiin kieliin ja vaativaa työpanosta*

⁵⁶ The curriculum of 2004 distinguishes between so-called A-languages which start in grades 1–6, and B-languages, which are taught from secondary school grades 7–9. The objectives of foreign language learning are basically the same for all foreign languages, and include the development of language proficiency (grades 1–9), cultural skills (grades 1–9), and learning skills (grades 3–9). (NBE, 2004, pp. 138–156.)

⁵⁷ CLIL and immersion teaching are incorporated under the heading, “Foreign language learning and immersion learning in domestic languages” in the curriculum of 2004. Together with International language schools and Steiner Pedagogical Schools, this comes under the rubric of “Teaching of a particular educational task and teaching based on particular pedagogical system or principle” in the curriculum. (NBE, 2004, p. 172.)

⁵⁸ The language of Mother Tongue instruction, the 2004 curriculum suggests, is to be the same as the school’s language of instruction. The curriculum articulates the demand for pupils to have adequate proficiency in both languages used to attain the “objectives of the different subjects”. (p. 270.)

poseful in terms of the instruction”, with the clarification that comprehensive schools could include classes where “the teaching is organised in another language than the comprehensive school’s language of instruction” but that participation in such classes should be voluntary (261/1991, 25 §). Already before this, from 1881, instruction in German has been available for pupils living in Helsinki at the Deutsche Schule Helsinki, and in 1990, the first CLIL classes in English were established in Tampere and Turku with temporary authorization from the Council of State. Following the legislation passed in 1991, the number of pupils participating in CLIL classes has significantly increased. In 1996, of 1,439 primary schools that responded to their survey, Nikula and Marsh (1996) report that 121 primary schools identified having classes implementing varying degree of CLIL⁵⁹, and 137 primary schools indicated that they planned to introduce CLIL classes. During 1991–1996, 700 teachers teaching in CLIL classrooms in comprehensive schools or vocational training institutes participated in training financed through the state budget (see also Marsh, 2002a; NBE, 2001). In 2001, the National Board of Education, through provincial boards of education, collected indicative figures of numbers of pupils attending CLIL classes in 1999–2000. According to this rapid analysis, collecting information only of CLIL taking place in English and of classes where at least fifty percent of the instruction took place in English, 1,709 primary school pupils, 515 secondary school pupils and 846 upper secondary school pupils took part in such instruction. Notably, schools where English was used less than fifty percent of the time were not included in this analysis. (NBE, 2001, p. 34.) In 1996, Nikula and Marsh predicted a growth rate of twenty percent for CLIL classes. This figure is yet to be revisited and confirmed, but both in Finland as in Europe at large, the expectation is that the number of schools with CLIL classes is increasing (cf. Marsh, 2002a).

⁵⁹ The degree to which the foreign language is used thus varies considerably in Finland (e.g., Nikula & Marsh, 1996, 1997).

Linguistic diversity and cultural identity have not been key emphases in discussions on CLIL in Finland. Instead, the value of CLIL as a means to produce pupils with skills and capacities in a foreign language that are seen as necessary for their future has been emphasised. In the curriculum of 2004, CLIL is presented as a means to achieve the objectives of foreign language education. Accordingly, the curriculum defines the central objective of CLIL as enabling “pupils [to] acquire stronger language skills than during the lessons reserved for regular language teaching”⁶⁰ (p. 172). When pupils who speak the selected language as their Mother Tongue are mentioned, it is in passing, in a section on pupil assessment, stating: “If some of the pupils speak the foreign or immersion language as their mother tongue, they will be defined more demanding objectives than pupils speaking the school’s language of instruction”⁶¹ (p. 172).

Unlike the discourse of linguistic rights perpetuating mother tongue education, speakers of languages used in CLIL programmes have no formal right to participate in CLIL classes. Given the priority generally given to linguistic rights in educational discourse, this is a major omission in the discussion both at a national (and European level), particularly as in Finland many schools that have CLIL classes have introduced or plan to introduce entrance tests or other measures to select pupils (cf. Nikula & Marsh, 1997; CLIL Network). Although schools with CLIL classes are rapidly increasing in number, they are available to a minority of pupils within the comprehensive school system. Latomaa and Nuolijärvi (2002) articulate the concern that “bilingual programmes may generate bilingual elitism in Finland, thus increasing inequality within the population. In a school system that aims to create equal opportunities for all citizens, this problem should create a moral problem.” (p. 186.) In a similar vein, Nikula and Marsh (1997) caution there is a danger that participation in CLIL “will be regarded as a condi-

⁶⁰ *Keskeisenä tavoitteena on se, että oppilaat voivat saada vankemman kielitaidon kuin tavallisessa opetuksessa kielten opetukseen varatuilla tunneilla.*

⁶¹ *Jos osa oppilaista puhuu kyseistä vierasta tai kielikylpykieltä äidinkielenään, heille määritellään vaativimmat tavoitteet kuin koulun opetuskieltä äidinkielenään puhuville oppilaille*

tion for children's internationalisation and the development of their communication skills"⁶² (p. 39).

In Finland as in most of Europe the most popular language of CLIL classes is English (Eurydice, 2005), not Sami, Romani or Somali, for example, underlining the connection of CLIL to "the myth surrounding schools' role in upward mobility", as expressed by Gale and Densmore (2003, p. 154). Depending on how much English is used as the language in CLIL classes, these have been referred to as "bilingual," "English" or "international English" classes, for instance. While in the context of general foreign language learning in Finland concerns have been articulated regarding the dominance of English, and countermeasures such as the introduction of voluntary English for Grade 5 have been suggested as a means to encourage the choice of other languages in earlier grades (MOE, 1989; NBE, 1997), the language of CLIL classes has not been the subject of wide debate. While it has been suggested that efforts should be made to introduce classes in also French, German and Russian (MOE, 1989), English and Swedish are identified as being the most practical options "because there are the most teachers with the required skills for these and suitable learning materials"⁶³ (p. 34). Perceived national economic benefits spin the objectives of CLIL, for as Jäppinen (2005) observes of CLIL in Finland: "English is the most common CLIL language because it is used as the lingua franca in many Finnish enterprises and international contexts" (p. 150).

Similar to the rhetoric of various documents produced by the European Commission, the rhetoric writ on school websites in Finland and of the CLIL network is promotional, presenting CLIL as an appealing alternative to normal foreign language learning. The descriptions of CLIL programs provided on the CLIL network pages include views familiar from European Commission documents, such as CLIL

⁶² *aletaan pitää edellytyksenä lasten kansainvälistymiselle ja kommunikaatiovalmiuksien kehittymiselle.*

⁶³ *koska näihin kieliin on eniten saatavissa tehtävään soveltuvia opettajia ja tarkoituksenmukaista oppimateriaalia*

“encourag[ing] young people to actively use language”, as it being a “natural way to learn language” that “activate[s] pupils’ language skills in foreign languages” and “help[s] pupils develop a natural and unproblematic approach to the language and the culture of the language used”, making it “joyful learning English” and, of course, “the objective is to offer pupils practical language skills” (CLIL Network).

The position of education authorities has been more cautious. The Memoir of the Ministry of Education, for instance, identifies CLIL classes as demanding “particularly strong interest in foreign languages and strenuous input to work” from pupils (MOE, 1989, p. 32). The Basic Education Act (628/1998) is also suggestive that CLIL may not be equally suitable to all pupils, stating “part of teaching may be given in a language other than the pupils’ native language referred to above, *provided* that this does not risk the pupils’ ability to follow teaching” (10 §, *emphasis added*). The curriculum does not define what proportion of the instruction is to be in the foreign language and what proportion in Finnish, maintaining, however, that regardless of the degree to which the foreign language is used and of the number of lessons in Finnish or Swedish mother tongue and literature are provided⁶⁴, pupils are to “achieve such a language proficiency” in both the foreign language and the school’s language of instruction “that the objectives of the different subjects can be attained”, further specifying that “the same objectives are to be met in mother tongue and literature instruction (...) as in those schools in which all the instruction is provided in the school’s language of instruction.” The curriculum suggests that some “degree of transfer” may take place in pupils’ skills and provides a list of about two pages of areas where transfer is to be expected and where “special care must be taken”. (NBE, 2004, pp. 270–273.)

As Merisuo-Storm (2002) observes, the “National Board of Education encourages [teachers] to consider carefully whether CLIL learning is suited for pupils that have learning difficulties related to language or disorders of the nervous system or whose learning to read is laborious

⁶⁴ Schools in Finland are able, within degree, able to decide on lesson allotments.

or whose Mother Tongue skills are weak”⁶⁵ (p. 25; see also Jäppinen, 2005; Nikula & Marsh, 1997). CLIL programs, Merisuo-Storm writes, are often interpreted by schools as being best well suited for pupils with “good study habits, who are talented and whose parents take responsibility for their schooling”⁶⁶ (p. 25). Pupils who normally do not succeed as well in school have benefited from such programs, too, she observes, and boys’ language acquisition in particular is often seen as benefiting from participation in such classes. It is perhaps illustrative, however, that Merisuo-Storm observes that determining who these classes do *not* suit is less clear, which she suggests is complicated by the fact that entrance tests do not always predict pupils’ school success (p. 25).

3.4 “Like a language to work in”

I have framed this chapter within discourses of belonging, examining first different questions posed principally by feminist practitioners of citizenship, moving on to discuss the task of education in raising future citizens, then exploring recent shifts that have taken place in education, examining how these have affected the constitution of the task of education and *who* counts as a pupil in school. Citizenship has been an important frame of reference in education in Finland, where the main tasks of education have historically included that of making pupils with strong cultural identities, maintaining the importance of cultural belonging and social cohesion, placing emphasis on integration into mainstream society. Similarly, questions of identity and belonging have long been central to language learning in Finland, particularly in relation to the official status of the country as bilingual. More recently, influenced by the European Union project and its discourse of linguis-

⁶⁵ Suomen opetushallitus kehoittaa harkitsemaan tarkoin, sopiiko vienaskielinen opetus sellaiselle oppilaalle, jolla on kielellisiä, oppimisvaikeuksia tai hämmätyshäiriöitä, jonka lukemaan oppiminen on työlästä tai äidinkielen taito heikko.

⁶⁶ joilla on hyvät opiskelutottumukset, jotka ovat lahjakkaita ja joiden perheet ottavat vastuuta lasten koulukäynnistä

tic diversity, official documents such as the curricula of 1994 and 2004 have underscored culture and linguistic belonging as issues to be addressed in education, attributing differences amongst pupils largely to culture, which is contained in linguistic belonging. The perspective that education is to make pupils who are appreciative of Finnish culture also underpins the objectives of the national curricula.

In addition to discourses of Europeanness and multiculturalism, recent shifts in education policy in Finland have been influenced by discourses of internationalism. Foreign language learning in Finland has been a key site for responding to demands related to internationalisation, and as neo-liberal and market-liberal reform gained presence in educational policy discourse in the late 1980s, this shift was reflected in the emphasis placed on expanding opportunities to study foreign languages in school. Relatedly, the number of schools in Finland specialising into CLIL programmes in English has rapidly increased since the early 1990s.

The emergence of CLIL was also connected to the demands of Europeanisation and internationalisation, in particular, to the “MT+2” demand put forward by the European Commission as a means to produce European citizens with the language and cultural skills required for active communication in a multilingual European community, increasing pupils’ future opportunities, national educational capital at home, and social cohesion within the European Union. CLIL has been suggested as having unique pedagogical and economic advantages: it is invested with the promise of presenting a more egalitarian approach to foreign language learning, as combining form with function, as representing a more natural approach to language learning that is seen as being more inclusive, meaningful and motivating than traditional approaches. These views were also elaborated by teachers in Sunny Lane School:

In principle it is our, English isn’t given any special attention, if you compare with immersion classes, for example, where the language level of pupils determines to a large extent, like, what

methodology is used for teaching, what pedagogical trick you will use now or whatever, it's the language that decides on that. For us, it's *just like a language to work in*: in the same way as Finnish, English is. (Interview: January 2003)

CLIL has been promoted as cost-effective means to increase time allotted to foreign language learning which is to take place simultaneously with learning different aspects of the curriculum. The rationale is that of a market orientated discourse, of doing more with less. In Finland the National curriculum of 2004 adopts a more skeptical view than the view presented by official documents of the European Commission, however. Participation in CLIL classes is construed as not equally opportune for all pupils. Furthermore, while the expansion of school choice coincided with Europeanisation and growing awareness of cultural pluralism in Finland, and the curricula of 1994 and 2004 draw from the recognition of the linguistic rights of all pupils, CLIL, despite its presentation as being a means to foster linguistic diversity in the European Union, has not been presented as a means to ensure pupils can exercise their linguistic rights in Finland.

4

Epilogue: Starting school

We sit and listen
on chairs organised in rows.

Welcome.

Soon your child will begin school.

Children need to know how to peel potatoes
and tie their shoelaces when they start school.

Somewhere a mobile phone rings
and is instantly turned off.

Some small adjustments
have been made to the lesson allotments,
but Math and Mother Tongue stay the same.

Despite all the changes,
the most important objective stays the same:
to look after Finland's children
and children in our city.

Parents,
we are told,
need to be open about
any problems children may have

when they start school.
Children come to school
with skills and knowledge
of differing levels.
That is normal.
Each in their own way is ready to start school.

The world is becoming more and more hectic.
Parents need to create a peaceful atmosphere
To reassure their children that
everything will be all right.

Homes need to
help children as they start out on their own road,
parents need to support their children
now.

Teachers,
worried,
children's language skills
and capacity for imagination
aren't what they used to be.

At home
parents should teach their children
to be less noisy
and to talk politely.
What children are allowed at home,
they also do at school.

We are told of
two parents
having a conversation.
Their child

stands a short distance away,
with her skis on.
Now she asks her parents to come.
They talk
and talk.
Now the child whispers:
you don't need to come anymore.

Questions?
Will this teacher take them for second grade, too?
When and where do we bring our bus card application?
What kind of homework do they get?
How much homework?
What about the children who can read already?
What time does school start?
Eight o'clock seems dreadfully early.
It would be nice if native speakers
taught also other subjects than English.

This poem re-presents in condensed form some of the expectations and idealisations of school, pupils and parents as presented by teachers and mothers attending the Parents' Evening (for notably, all the questions were posed by mothers). I have named this opening poem an epilogue rather than a prologue to foreground how interpretations of school – and the position of teachers, parents and pupils in school – establish a beginning or a starting point to how pupils and parents are identified in school, but also mark an end or a returning point to which discourses in and of school often return. In doing so, my purpose is to underline the contradictory and ambiguous nature of the kind of discourses parents are subjected to in school: discourses which set the scene for parental involvement in school, establishing the position of authority that adults are expected to assume over children, and the position of teachers as professionals who know and see and parents and pupils. The latter was also apparent in how the seating had been arranged for the event.

The seating arrangement of the school hall for the Parents' Evening, as I write in my fieldnotes, was organised in a manner that separated teachers from parents and made it possible for the teachers to observe parents:

Two teachers stand at the front of the hall, preparing to speak to parents. On the left side of the hall is a bench. A couple of teachers sit there. From where they sit, directly in front of them are the rows of chairs organised for parents, giving them a sideview of the parents. They can watch parents, but to look at the teachers is more difficult, the parents and I have to turn to the left at a right angle. (Fieldnotes: May 2003)

Teachers discuss demands and expectations concerning prospective first grade pupils, outlining skills, knowledge and dispositions that parents should teach their children. The beginning of school is discussed as requiring no more (or less) of children than the ability to peel potatoes and tie shoelaces. Potatoes are presented as an important ingredient in school meals and emphasis is placed on the importance of parents teaching their children how to peel potatoes if they have not already done so, construing potato-peeling skills as a norm expected of all children starting school. From this perspective, children from families preferring rice, noodles or pasta in place of potatoes, for example, appear different and problematic, their diet as one which may pose potential obstacles for a smooth transition into school. No mention is made of the various cultural food weeks that are organised later during the school year, with food from Italian, Chinese and Mexican kitchens on the menu for school lunch. Potato is presented as the staple of Finnish diet, and the ability to peel potatoes is linked to polite table manners required in school. Potato peeling was also mentioned in the brochure distributed to parents by the municipality:

School lunch is part of teaching manners. Polite requesting and passing over of food are part of table manners. It is good for chil-

dren to know how to use a knife and fork and also how to peel potatoes.

(Beginning School-brochure distributed to all parents with children entering first grade)

Teachers' efforts to organise time, or help pupils to learn how to tie shoelaces or peel potatoes is not discussed, although later one of the teachers expresses "you parents take care of children at home and we teachers take care of them in school." However, later in the classroom one of the teachers reminds the parents of prospective bilingual first graders that "in school there is only one teacher and over twenty pupils." The suggestion is thus that parents need to take seriously the advice related to which skills and dispositions are required in school – including potato peeling, shoelacing, waiting for one's turn, and complying with rules regarding appropriate classroom behavior. Parents are signified as individually responsible for their children's schooling, and parents who fail to take this responsibility seriously are construed as problematic. Emphasis is placed on parents acting in the best interest of their children in partnership with teachers, although the terms of this partnership remain unclear (cf. Evans & Vincent, 1997, p. 105).

Parents are reminded of the differentiations and divisions that cut across the pupil body through which particular kinds of pupils are positioned as normal and others as deviant. This takes place through an inclusive rhetoric in which school is spoken of as a place dedicated to the wellbeing of all pupils, as expressed by the comforting phrase "each in their own way is ready to start school." An introductory leaflet handed out to parents at the event followed up on this line of thought, claiming "it is important for children to feel that they are accepted and valued." Parents are assured that teachers will address problems pupils face in school, but are told to inform teachers of "any problems" their children may have before the beginning of school. The discursive positioning of children as ready to start school "each in their own way" despite "skills and knowledge of differing levels," as not yet needing to be competent in school-based skills, is troubled by the teacher's empha-

sis on honest disclosure, on parents informing teachers of any problems their children may have. Not all children, this suggests, have similar abilities, nor do all families provide equal support for their children.

While parents are told that going to schooling is an enterprise that calls for parental support, they are reminded that it is their *child* who is starting school, who is starting out on their “own road.” This infers that parents are to be careful not to interfere in their child’s schooling or with the ways in which teachers, as professionals, plan and supervise classroom interaction. Children, parents are told, commence school as individuals and ideal parenthood is identified as premised on the idea of supporting the individual school paths of children, reassuring children that “everything will be all right.”

Teachers inform parents that while there have been “small adjustments,” these do not concern Math and Finnish, which as Rätty, Kasanen and Kärkkäinen (2006, p. 19) note, are school subjects that reflect the “dominant notion of intelligence” in school. Teachers express concerns for a perceived diminution of pupils’ language skills and capacity for imagination, the implication being that parents are to ensure their child’s development in these areas.

“The world,” parents are told, “is more and more hectic.” In contrast, school is produced as a national space marked by order, tradition and stability. Parents, likewise, are to ‘create a peaceful atmosphere’ in their homes. A collective identity is assumed at the level of the city and the nation and the common objective of schooling is defined as that of “looking after” children in Finland and in the city, suggesting that schooling is premised on similar practices and values across the country, placing emphasis on similarities and invoking a sentiment of common destiny. Teachers do not mention entrance tests nor the division of classes into Finnish, bilingual and special education classes. Mother tongue is used to refer to Finnish, positioning Finnish as the self-evident language of the school and its community of pupils and their families. Naming Finnish lessons Mother Tongue lessons, as Gordon and Lahelma (1998, pp. 261–262) argue, devalues minority languages in school, and as Palmu (2003, pp. 129–131) writes, naming pupils’

home language as ‘mother tongue’ contributes to idealising and normalising the heterosexual nuclear family and the mother within it as the primary caregiver.

The importance of appropriate conduct is highlighted, positioning teachers as able to identify dysfunctional families on the basis of pupils’ behavior in school. Parents are advised to give thought to how to discipline their child at home as any unfavorable behavior allowed in homes is suggested as being likely to be demonstrated by pupils in school. This subscribes to what Rose (1999) terms an “ethics of authenticity” associated to the “psy” sciences in which

the mode of judgement of conduct is not external but is internal – that is to say, it proceeds by comparing the public conduct with private secrets, public statements with private desires, the outer person with inner truth. (p. 267)

While parents are invited to be welcome, the positions made available to them by teachers hold little comfort. Parental failure, as reflected in the advice and warning stories, is seen to potentially lead to either emotional problems if parents are unable to reassure, support and listen to their children, or to the inability of their children to perform well in school: to peel potatoes, be creative, display good language skills, be quiet and polite. Problems are reduced to the level of individual pupils and their parents who are identified as sites for educational change (cf. Popkewitz, 2001). The position offered to parents is that of listening and asking questions (cf. Metso, 2004; Moqvist, 2003).

Some parents – all mothers – ask questions and make comments, both falling into and outside the discursive categories made available to them by teachers. The majority of parents sit quietly, without asking, without commenting. Those parents that speak voice differing concerns. While one mother expresses it would be nice if native English speakers taught more lessons to the pupils, another mother asks what children who know how to read will do during lessons, and yet another asks how much homework pupils will be expected to do. While teachers

do not comment on the organisation of time and space in school, such as on the time school days commence, a mother asks a question concerning the time school is to begin and expresses the view that eight o'clock is very early. Parents are told that the schedules will be put together later and that they depend on many things, suggesting the school's institutional arrangements are not open for discussion (cf. Ranson, Martin & Vincent, 2004).

5

Teachers discussing the introduction of CLIL classes: Demand, survival and impression management

In the previous chapters, I have discussed how it is that I come to my research: the commitments, epistemological assumptions and theorisations that inform my work; as well as analysing how CLIL is connected to intersecting discourses of internationalisation, Europeanisation and cultural belonging, and to a neo-liberalist focus on individual opportunity. I have also offered a brief glimpse into Sunny Lane School, drawing attention to meanings attached to being a teacher, parent and pupil – meanings that are repeated in different ways during the empirical chapters that follow. Rätty and Snellman (1998, p. 360) note that following the turn to school choice policy in Finland, schools have begun to market themselves, and in this chapter I ask how teachers make sense of the need to attract pupils and how they position themselves within such discussion. I interpret ethnographic interviews in Sunny Lane School, an interview with one employee of the local school office and two interviews with staff from schools who had likewise introduced CLIL classes, as well as ethnographic data generated through informal staffroom conversations and meetings of bilingual staff in Sunny Lane School.

5.1 Customer orientatedness and increased internationalism

In the local school office, Annikki, who I have come to interview, suggests the decision to specialise into CLIL classes was linked to the coming together of societal needs in Finland and in the municipality, and to the school's interest and motivation to specialise into CLIL:

Annikki: All in all, our starting point in this profilisation of schools has been that the school's own – two things, like, have needed to come together, the school's own enthusiasm, that they want to emphasise certain things and develop certain aspects in their practices, and then, like the town's, or the society's needs (...) and it's likely these two things met here, that it's been assessed that the society, that the development of society has brought up the need for this bilingual, in English, teaching, and on the other hand, the school has been opportune to this, that it's been interested in developing it. (Interview: March 2003)

Annikki hesitates as she tries to recall why, initially, the local school office chose to initiate bilingual classes in Finnish and English in the municipality, elaborating that she is not sure of the exact details. "I don't know the history of its origin very well, this whole field of language learning and also bilingual teaching used to belong to someone else," she explains. Reflecting a narrative that was common also among teachers and parents, Annikki posits that times have changed and that Finland has become more diverse, more marked by flows of Finnish people moving across national borders, and by the presence of people who are "completely other nationalities." She connects the growing numbers of such people to the demand for classes with English as a language of instruction:

Annikki: We have people, both those Finnish people who have, abroad, that have lived abroad for different reasons, then come

back to Finland and whose children already have some background in language, or then families who are completely other nationalities who move here because of work or [unclear] other reasons and then who have the need for schooling in English. (Interview: March 2003)

Ritva, Minna and the teachers at Sunny Lane School also connected the introduction for CLIL classes to increasing internationalism, identifying the impetus to respond to the needs of primarily Finnish parents wanting to maintain the English skills their children had acquired while living abroad or through participation in a private English kindergarten.⁶⁷ Anna from Sunny Lane School elaborates:

Anna: [The decision to introduce bilingual classes] came from, that we had, it seemed parents whose children had studied somewhere else kept popping up.

Silja: Yes.

Anna: These kinds (in a whisper). And the parents wanted to somehow be able to maintain the language (...) That in kindergarten some parents had wanted to have an English club and somebody had arranged it (...) But that the idea was, yes, that they could maintain the language they had acquired. (Interview: February 2003)

The migratory moves connected to CLIL classes were identified, in interviews and informal discussions with teachers in Sunny Lane School, primarily in terms of a new group of parents with specific demands and needs: Finnish parents who had lived and worked abroad, and whose children had attended English-speaking kindergartens or schools there. As teachers (and some bilingual parents in Sunny Lane School) remarked, bilingual classes were characterised more by emigra-

⁶⁷ Most of the children applying for the bilingual first grade in Sunny Lane School in 2003 and 2004 had attended a private English language kindergarten.

tion than immigration, with pupils coming to the bilingual classes from particularly English-speaking countries:

Anna: England and the US and Australia, and then there are these European countries, Central European countries also that they've come from. And then there are these, Singapore, and some countries in Africa. And nowadays big companies toss their workers all around the world. (Interview: February 2003)

Patrik: Most of them are Finnish, Finnish families that have been abroad, doing research or have participated in projects in the IT sector, or whatever, and the children have gone to school there and learned English, which is what we try and [pause] carry forwards, develop [their English skills]. (Interview: May 2004)

Staff in all three schools described their school as receiving numerous contacts over the school year from parents interested in their CLIL classes. Many of these parents, I was told, were Finnish parents in the process of moving back to Finland from abroad. Suensaari School, Ritva elaborated, received lots of questions "every day" from parents concerning the bilingual classes, both through emails and by phone, and many of these queries were made by parents living abroad:

This whole bilingual side, we get a lot of, well, I've said that these queries employ me a lot, that we get these, from abroad, many of them, mm. Continually, every day, we get questions concerning these [classes]. (Interview: May 2003)

In all three schools, teachers related the challenge of needing to attract pupils. CLIL classes were interpreted as bringing positive value to the schools and as attracting more pupils. Here the introduction of CLIL classes *in English* was connected to the perception that parents placed high value on English skills and that this influenced their decisions regarding school choice. For parents looking around for a school for

their children, the possibility of acquiring two languages was interpreted as an attractive opportunity, “certainly, [for parents] a kind of interestingness,” as Ritva expressed. The impression was one of teachers and schools responding to the consumerist demands presented by parents. The introduction of CLIL classes in English was presented as a means to respond to the school’s need to accrue a positive status in the competitive education market. As the principal of Sunny Lane School asserted, the bilingual classes had brought “some customer-orientatedness” to the school. Teachers maintained it had been fairly easy to gain permission from the local school office to start the CLIL classes. Ritva connected this to the merit that she identified CLIL classes as bringing to the school and to the local school office:

Silja: What kind of a process was it to start [these classes], or how easy was it to gain permission, for example?

Ritva: Yes, now I’m not good, I came after this had been started, but I think that (...) for the school and the school office this brings merit, you know, that we set out to experiment with something new. (Interview: May 2003)

In a contradictory move, some teachers suggested the profilisation of their school into bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School simply “reflected the thinking of the time” or “had been in the air,” suggesting the decision to branch out into bilingual classes had been more of an impulse made possible by the general changes that took place in schooling in the 1990s. As Ritva expressed on a similar line, “whose initiative this was, and I’m not able to, or it must have been the city’s. But it was a kind of fashion-movement, in a way, back then. So people sought something different like this and schools wanted to profilise.” However, that parents are keen to find a school with good academic standards and cherish the instrumental value of education for their children was constructed as a *de facto* truth. The absence of school fees for parents moving in from abroad, the high level of teaching and adherence to the national curriculum were, Ritva suggested, prime reasons for parents’ interest in

Suensaari School. “Many parents think this free education, its standards, too, are, you know we follow this curriculum, we hold on to national standards,” as she elaborated. Teachers recognised that parents often had particular aspirations regarding their children’s participation in CLIL classes, and were on the look out for education that they identified, in Ritva’s words, as being a “kind of status symbol.” It was not just the opportunity to learn English that some parents found attractive, teachers suggested, but the possibility of participating in a class that is slightly different, distinctive and not available to all pupils:

Pirjo: And then there’s these more questionable reasons, that for some reason, they aren’t interested in the neighbourhood school, that like they’re like (...) and they have been here and met with our principal and felt that, like really humane and nice person and then, like, the image is attractive, too, that they come in search of something that isn’t like the normal thing. There are at least a few who travel from quite far, and I’ve been thinking, that they really come from quite far after this, like this is somehow really nice. (Interview: February 2003)

5.2 Specialisation and differentiation

In their survey on teacher perceptions of educational reforms, Rätty et al. (1997) observe that teachers held conflicting views of the reforms that took place in the 1990s: on the one hand, they were generally appreciative of the possibility of specialisation, but on the other, they were often critical of the market-centered ethos of reform. In Sunny Lane School, the teachers whose classrooms I regularly participated in adopted a pragmatic view on the specialisation of the school into bilingual classes, presenting this as having been a practical means to ensure the survival of the school. Some teachers adopted a more celebratory view of their school’s specialisation into bilingual classes. Their perception was that given the instrumental value of English, offering bilingual

classes in English was the sensible thing to do: it provided the school with a means to ensure pupil numbers, parents with opportunities for choice, and pupils with enhanced future opportunities. As Mikko argued, bilingual classes also presented a means to produce future citizens with knowledge and skills of particular value to the nation state in a global economy. “The system is really good, that we can offer a program like this (...) that we have people who master foreign languages,” he expressed. Mikko identified and lamented a lack of recognition as to how bilingual classes – and specifically, raising pupils who speak English fluently – ensures the competitive edge of not just individuals, but of society:

Mikko: There’s a lack of recognition on the part of the town as to how beneficial and good this bilingual, bilingual program

Silja: Mm.

Mikko: is, and how far into the future it already builds us, builds us into a stronger and better society, that we have these [people] with language skills. (Interview: May 2004)

The specialisation of schools and the enhanced English skills of a select group of pupils, Mikko suggests, is an important means for securing social and economic benefits for “the whole society.” Here, the emphasis is on individualising educational practices (cf. Simola, 1995, 1998). On a similar line, Anton contrasted the specialisation of schools with social democratic policies which he perceives as limiting individualism and plurality. An individualist ethos and consumerist ethic underpinned Anton’s comments:

Anton: I think our whole society is based on *tasapäistämiselle*⁶⁸ and social democratic hysteria.

Silja: Ye-es.

⁶⁸ *Tasapäistää* derives from the word *tasainen* which means *even*, or *level*. *Pää* means *head*. *Tasapäistää* suggests evening out differences, figuratively speaking, making sure no-one’s head is any higher than that of anybody else.

Anton: I don't think it's bad at all that we have special schools and special programs (...) I think it is, it really is important that different programs are offered to pupils so that everyone finds their own kind of thing and everybody's not compressed into the same mold.

Silja: Mm.

Anton: And so I think that it's really important that different programs are offered, that there are music classes and language classes and emphases on art and on science and all kinds of things. (Interview: May 2004)

Anton presents bilingual classes as enhancing diversity, constructing the absence of school choice as repressing diversity, as moulding pupils and schools into an alikeness (cf. Rätty & Snellman, 1998; Rinne et al., 2002). By comparison, he suggested that bilingual classes, as specialised classes, offered a means for parents to select not just a school or program, but the social environment for their children:

Anton: At least if you think about the parents, I think these kinds of special classes, whatever kind of special class they may be, are good because almost without exception you know that your children are in good company, because it requires a notch more awareness that you even come to put your child in a special class.

Silja: Mm.

Anton: And then they are kind of [pause] (breathes out heavily) kind of [pause] There's a greater chance that they're in better company that if you just put your child into a school where all your classmates have been shoved just *päiväsäilöön*⁶⁹ (...) and because of compulsory education. (Interview: May 2004)

⁶⁹ *Päiväsäilöön* comes from the words *päivä* or *day*, and *säilöä* or *to preserve*, like jam in a jar. To put your child *päiväsäilöön* thus suggests taking them to a place where they'll be kept for the day, without particular thought to the quality of this experience.

In Anton's narrative, successful schools and children with potential are conjoined with ambitious, assertive parents. A school environment that enhances learning, he proposes, is dependent on having parents with a "knotch more awareness." Special classes such as bilingual classes, Anton maintains, ensures that dedicated parents are able to ensure a profitable learning environment for their children.

5.3 Financial concerns and "Not just multicultural"

In Finland, funds for schools operate on the principle that the more pupils schools attract from within and outside their catchment area, the more financial resources they are allotted by the local education department (Seppänen, 2006, pp. 63–67; Simola, Rinne & Kivirauma, 1999, p. 59). In practice this principle means that teachers cannot finalise their school's operational plans and time schedules until they know the precise number of pupils for the next school year. During my fieldwork in Sunny Lane School, due to the unpredictable nature of pupil arrivals and departures, it was not until the week before school began that teachers were able to finalise their plans, with the principal announcing jubilantly that "*at last* we have enough pupils!" and the vice principal confirming "we received *just* enough pupils to be able to carry out our plans and time schedules." Financial cut-backs in public expenditure often figured in informal staffroom discussion. In a similar vein, Minna from Pudas School claimed the effects of ongoing and future financial cut-backs in schooling, (which did not figure in the interview I have with Annikki from the education department), are "catastrophic":

Minna: School activities are going to be the target of really tough saving, lessons are going to be cut back *roppakaupalla*⁷⁰ and the situation, places are going to be left empty and all plans are going to be put off, and it's like, catastrophic... We'll have to lay people

⁷⁰ *roppakaupalla* refers to large quantities of something

off. People are going to have to leave here. So we can't implement these other visions that the town has, or the curriculum reform or things like that, that how can you, and they have particular criteria. And *new* criteria. (Interview: May 2003)

Despite the cuts in budget allocations for schools, Minna, like many teachers in Sunny Lane School, draws attention to the expectation for teachers to participate in new “visions” and adopt the “new criteria” of curricular reform. This expectation was articulated also by some teachers of regular Finnish grades. As Tuija, the class teacher of a Finnish class in Sunny Lane School commented on similar terms: “Although there's no money, we have to develop things.” While Syrjäläinen (as cited in Hakala, 2007, p. 96) observes that the development of local school curriculae has increased collaboration among staff, in Sunny Lane School teachers observed that there was less time for discussing classroom practices and planning joint events such as theme days. “We didn't write the curriculum before,” Anna observed, “we planned things, like going on outings together.” Teachers identified their work as incorporating more “paper work,” “planning work,” and “team work” than before – at the cost of “co-operational work,” “a more relaxed atmosphere,” and “less hurry.” The traditional image, which was spoken of as having been more quiet and intimate by teachers who had taught at the school for a long time, was described as having changed. Merja, a teacher of a Finnish grade, recalled:

We sat there [in the staffroom], like all the breaks, all nine of us, and it was very peaceful. Of course we sit there now, too, but that kind of peaceful atmosphere isn't there anymore. (Interview: May 2003)

A common perception among teachers was that teaching had become monitored towards achieving more in less time. This, Timo suggested, had altered the relationships of teachers with pupils. “Before you did things together, thought about things together,” he described, contend-

ing that there was no longer time for this and that “all the teachers (...) are tired of not being able to focus (...) the culture has become more short-sighted.” Anton observed on a similar line, “nowadays, even if we invent something good, it’s forgotten in a couple of years.” On the other hand, pupils – their ability to succeed or fail, to demonstrate responsibility or not – were not suggested as having significantly changed:

Silja: Do you think that school has changed, has it become more demanding or has it stayed about the same [as regards demands placed on students]?

Anna: Well, if I think of students, I think they’re only students once. [laughs]. No-o. Probably there are different things, like you don’t memorize lists of rivers anymore,

Silja: Mm.

Anna: or other things like that, but that [pause] that’s not what it’s about. I somehow, I believe that there have always been students who have worked hard and there have always been students who *go where the fence is its lowest*⁷¹. (Interview: February 2005)

Pirjo suggested the provision of specialised bilingual classes was to some extent imposed on Sunny Lane School as a means to guarantee survival. “I think what a lot of people here don’t realise is that without the bilingual classes the whole school might have been closed down already,” she claimed, underscoring the importance of asserting positive value in a competitive school market (cf. Gorard & Fitz, 1998; Forster, 1999; Kenway & Willis, 1998; Vincent & Ball, 1998). The decision to introduce bilingual classes was, teachers emphasised, intertwined with the concern to maintain their school’s attractiveness as an alternative to other schools in the municipality. “I don’t know what the reasons were why in they started organising classes in English in this school,” Anton stated in my interview with him, continuing “maybe the number of

⁷¹ *Menevät siitä mistä aita on matalin*, meaning to do something with minimal effort. *Aita* means *fence*, *matalin* means *lowest*.

pupils was descending and they wanted to make a magnet school out of this school.” Despite this suggestion and others like it, the rationale underpinning teachers’ descriptions of the decision to introduce bilingual classes was not simply one of ensuring the flow of more pupils into the school, but also one of controlling the kinds of pupils in their school. This reflects Kenway and Bullen’s (2001) observation that the commodification of schools takes place against the backdrop of conceptions of students and their parents that bring negative value to schools and hence, in the struggle to achieve a good reputation, schools need to pay attention to the kinds of students they invite. Minna, from Pudas School, suggested the introduction of CLIL classes was implicated in the school’s concerted effort to distance itself from its multicultural image:

Minna: [Introducing CLIL classes] brought a kind of, cause we had these many of these special ed classes, that now we had something else. Our starting point was that this school was multifaceted and not just multicultural, that we have all kinds of things. And we’ve emphasised this information to parents quite a lot, like, that we want to have *all* kinds of things here. (Interview: May 2003)

Minna described the decision to branch out into CLIL classes in Pudas School as having been connected to concerns to “raise the school’s profile,” which she posited had for a long time been low due to the proportion of immigrants living in the school area. The presence of pupils from many ethnic groups, she suggested, was unfavourable to the school’s reputation. Thus the introduction of CLIL classes, she claims, was a means for the school to ensure a more favorable composition where multiculturalism was one ingredient among many, construing multiculturalism as a presence that needs to be managed and controlled.

In Sunny Lane School, teachers did not make similar references to multiculturalism in discussing the school’s decision to branch out into bilingual classes. Other schools in the city, teachers commented, were

more international and multicultural than their school. As Patrik, a bilingual teacher commented in a staffroom conversation, “you know, our school isn’t particularly multicultural, other schools have a much more international pupil body.” However, a similar view that caution needed to be administered in deciding how many special education pupils and classes the school could have without this upsetting the balance of the pupil populace, underpinned the views of some teachers in Sunny Lane School. This was also implied by perceptions such as “I think we could have more special education classes,” as one of the teachers expressed. Bilingual classes, rather than special education classes, were identified as fitting in with the school’s focus on disciplined work (see Chapter 8).

5.4 Being a bilingual teacher: “This is what we aim for”

The marketisation of education has been identified as having deprofessionalised and demoralised teachers in many countries, limiting teacher autonomy and measuring the worth of teachers in terms of the value they bring to their school. Hey and Bradford (2004), for instance, describe current conditions of teaching in the UK as that of “punitive desires, excessive demands and ceaseless efficiency” (p. 708; see also Fenwick, 2003; Whitty, 1999; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002). In Sunny Lane School, teaching in general, in interviews and in informal discussions, was described as having changed. Teachers identified the bilingual classes as having contributed to this change in atmosphere and to heavier workload. The bilingual classes had brought more pupils – “I don’t know everyone by name anymore,” as the principal remarked – more parents, and more teachers. The shift from more relaxed, simpler approach to work to a heavily time-constrained, demanding work that was orientated toward short-term targets was presented as having influenced particularly teachers working in bilingual classes. “We had to (...) learn to set objectives when all schools weren’t asked to do that yet,” as Anna pointed out.

Fenwick (2003) points to the ways in which teachers construct professional identities at a time of neo-liberal reform, observing the “risks are both exciting and threatening; limitless possibility co-exists with the potential for disaster for which individuals must take personal responsibility” (p. 337; see also Hill, 2004). In a similar vein, the time when bilingual classes were first introduced were described by teachers as moments of change and turbulence, as marked by uncertainty and the demand to manage on their own with many unpredictable and unexpected difficulties:

Often the difficulties are the kind that you don't expect, like the time when I gave the boys P.E. lessons from several classes to a native speaker, and I didn't come to think that he may not be able to ice-skate. (Interview: May 2004)

Mikko likened the initial stages of the bilingual classes to that of “plunging into the water to swim without a life-ring.” Ritva asserted on a similar line that “the problem” was not securing support for branching out into bilingual classes, “the problem was the everyday.” “*Me lähdetiin niinku umpihankeen,*”⁷² Anna expressed, and Ritva from Suensaari School recalled “*me mentiin soittaen sotaan.*”⁷³ “We got our books [in English] as gifts, and made photocopies in black and white for pupils,” one bilingual teacher remembered the hectic time when the first bilingual grades were introduced.

As Simola (2005) observes, whereas before, it had “been believed that the goals of education could be reached by sticking to strict norms, the conviction in the 1990s was that their attainment required the setting of national core targets and the evaluation of achievements in the light of subsequent results” (p. 464). However, as Simola observes, “Despite the rhetoric, there has been virtually no formal control system

⁷² *Umpihanki* refers to deep drifts of snow. The phrase above can be translated as *we plunged into deep drifts of snow.*

⁷³ *We went to war playing the drums,* in other words, not prepared for the onslaught of what lied ahead.

governing the work of schools (...) All traditional forms of control over the teacher's work had, for all practical purposes, disappeared by the beginning of the 1990s" (p. 464). Reflecting this thematic, the process of introducing the bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School was presented by bilingual teachers as having signalled unprecedented freedom for teachers. "Our hands were totally free to carry out, like experiment with this bilingual teaching," as Mikko expressed. In what could be termed a celebratory discourse, teaching a bilingual class was suggested as being less confined by expectations regarding class work than Finnish grades, the class work of which was identified by bilingual teachers in terms of rigid page-to-page textbook adherence in which the curriculum was about "turning pages in a text book." By contrast, bilingual teachers were described as having more freedom to experiment, to plan and organise their work in different ways, and as one of the bilingual teachers contended, "I would probably not last in a normal class." At the same time, being a bilingual teacher was identified as requiring considerable dedication, time and effort. Teachers of bilingual classes, Anna, like many teachers, suggested, needed to be target-orientated, flexible, and willing to take risks and put up with uncertainty:

Anna: And we had to have some kind of vision, that *this is what we aim for*. That they will become – that although, of course, life rocks you that, mm. I should imagine that it's brought tolerance.

Silja: Mm.

Anna: It's possibly been difficult at times and that's why some people have opposed, complained about it (...) I think that it has brought a kind of [pause] mm, goal-directedness and then, on the other hand a little bit of, kind of, flexibility, that we're not in a pipe, that you have to, mm [pause] that not all boundaries are the kind that there's a cement wall in front of you, but that you have to live according to what new things bring with them.

Silja: Do you mean as regards teaching?

Anna: I mean, really I was probably thinking about – yes, as regards teaching. And that also the staff has to know where we're

going. And[pause] But that it has also brought uncertainty and (...) that sometimes I sense that because there is no ready, kind of ready *uoma*⁷⁴ to follow, some people can get a little anxious and stressed.

Silja: Mm.

Anna: That, because this point has not been written anywhere and it hasn't been acted anywhere. But that the kind of things that find their [pause] own path, that you can't, you can't write everything [in advance].

Silja: Mm.

Anna: And you can't [pause] You can think that that's where we'll get and set your objectives, but that's what it's like. (Interview: February 2005)

CLIL teachers are defined by Merisuo-Storm (2002) as needing to have good language skills, to be motivated, enthusiastic, committed to self-development, prepared to collaborate with other teachers, skilled in selecting and developing instructional materials, and have good pedagogical skills, being, and being (pp. 28–29). Indeed, terms such as “dedicated,” “motivated,” and “hard working” were applied by the principal at Sunny Lane School to describe bilingual teachers. Bilingual teachers were a common sight in the staffroom in late afternoons and early mornings, working long hours preparing materials for lessons, searching for and developing instructional materials⁷⁵, planning lessons, correcting homework, and responding to parents' emails, for example.

⁷⁴ *Uoma* here literally refers to a *river bottom*. What the metaphor *path* loses in contrast to river bottom is the idea of flow, of being carried forward or drifting to an eventual destination.

⁷⁵ Instructional materials have been the subject of much discussion in the context of CLIL, raising questions about whether teaching in a foreign language using the available resources is enough, or whether additional resources should be channeled to CLIL classes for the purchase of instructional materials. The Working Group Memoir (NBE 1989, 35) suggests school textbooks include lists of core concepts, or present side-by-side some parts of the text in both languages. The first suggestion has been adopted by some publishers, and in Sunny Lane School, some Science books had such lists. As Merisuo-Storm (2002, pp. 29–30) writes, publishers have been reluctant to develop materials for CLIL classes as the number of pupils is still relatively low. In Sunny Lane, Pudas and Suensaari School no formal assessment had been made of the financial resources required to introduce CLIL classes.

Some bilingual teachers brought their own books to school, and often bilingual teachers purchased instructional materials for the school during their holidays abroad. Teachers often repeated their commitment to better plan and organise their teaching, and expressed their wish for opportunities for self-development, such as to improve their English skills. Yet some teachers' narratives reflected a feeling of being appropriated, with several bilingual teachers expressing their efforts often went unnoticed and unrecognised in school. All teachers in Sunny Lane School were required to take part in annual self-assessments, but these were described by some teachers as a signatory move that failed to provide substantial feedback or appreciation for "what happens in our class," for "what we do." Pirjo elaborates:

Pirjo: I don't know, I have had a bit of a problem with lack of feedback (...) I'd like to hear, like, what it looks like in class, was it good or bad. But somehow now it feels like it *makes no difference*, quite often. (Recorded from a conversation among a group of teachers: April 2004, in Finnish)

Bilingual teaching was signified as demanding self-reliance. In classrooms, teachers observed, they are on their own with pupils, "behind, like, our own doors," as Niki described. As teachers contended, there were few provisions or additional resources for bilingual teachers to draw on, and the expectation was for the teachers to manage on their own, to "reach" as Fenwick (2003) observes in her analysis of norms regulating what it means to be a good teacher under neo-liberalist public policy, "further into private time and funds" (p. 349). Educational standards and the need for self-improvement weaved their way through teacher's informal discussion during breaks and in the Grades 1–3 team meetings⁷⁶ I attended, but were particularly often cited by bilingual teachers. As the bilingual teachers I worked with repeatedly

⁷⁶ In Sunny Lane School, regular staff meetings during my ethnographic year included weekly meetings on Mondays and team meetings on Wednesdays. In addition, bilingual staff had several separate meetings to prepare for entrance tests, discuss aspects of the curriculum, share experiences and materials, for instance.

articulated, there were no clear guidelines for the bilingual programme. While the bilingual classes had existed for some time in Sunny Lane School with some pupils having moved on to secondary school by the time of my ethnographic fieldwork, significant challenges, these teachers suggested, still continued. Teachers identified challenges ranging from the need to synchronise and present in simple form specific objectives for bilingual classes for the school's curriculum, to the collation of instructional materials in English for common use. These challenges, teachers suggested, were likely to continue for a long time.

All three schools, Pudas-, Sunny Lane- and Suensaari School employed so-called “native speakers” in their CLIL classes. These teachers were spoken of as bringing added value to the CLIL programs⁷⁷, but as teachers observed, the position of CLIL teachers with limited Finnish was often particularly demanding. This was also the perception of one of the native teachers in Sunny Lane School:

So the curriculum [pause] my first year was really (...) I didn't know, like a (...) it's bilingual, half of it had to be in English, the other half had to be in Finnish. So I was marking tests[pause] that[pause] maybe my friend wrote out in Finnish and then I had to get her to mark them in Finnish, and me sitting beside her and her saying, like her repeating the same question to me (...) These

⁷⁷ Competencies required of teachers involved in CLIL have raised a lot of discussion since CLIL was first introduced in Finland, and these discussions have focused principally on language skills. The initial position articulated in *The Working Group Memoir on Diversifying the Language Programme and Assessing Foreign Language Instruction to Pupils* is that introducing CLIL classes “is probably be possible with current teacher forces,” and that in addition to Finnish teachers, “it is possible to use native speakers who are not required proficiency in the school's official language” (p. 37). Since then, discussion has taken place as to how teachers' language skills should be qualified, the recommendation now being that native Finnish teachers should have demonstrable skills in the foreign language. It is not altogether clear what the expectations of native English speakers are, nor how native English is defined. The Memoir suggests that schools can “use” native speakers, construing their language skills as “authentic” and hence as bringing valuable added value to CLIL programs (p. 39). On a similar line, Merisuo-Storm (2002), for example, suggests that native speakers are “desirable” as they guarantee the authenticity of the foreign language and culture (p. 27). At the moment, it would seem that “native English” refers to coming from an English speaking country from the western part of the world. Liberia, Uganda or India, for example, do not figure in this constellation. Native speakers need to have their certificate acknowledged by the Board of Education, covering the costs accrued through its translation and processing themselves.

were taking like the age, these were taking forever (...) Every teacher's busy, you know, you can't go and say to them 'I have [this] number of tests here, can you mark them?' Many of them probably would. (Interview: May 2004)

Bilingual teachers identified the demand to work constantly and to put up with uncertainty as drawbacks of their work. Teacher retention rates in the bilingual classes of Sunny Lane School were low, and each year the principal had to recruit new personnel for the bilingual classes. As she expressed, "finding bilingual staff is a stress each year, it's an adventure." Minna, similarly, observed "it's been horrible amount of work and pain" to find teachers for their CLIL classes in Pudas School. Ritva from Suensaari suggested that while "young teachers are eager to join. (...) then especially when they have families, this is really laborious." Similarly, one of the female bilingual teachers reflected, "this is why, if you look at us, none of us have children, we all work really long days. All of us want to do the best and there's no limit to our work." Despite signifying the introduction of bilingual classes as a means to ensure futurity, teachers often reflected on the uncertainties of the future. "You never know," Anna observed, "you never know whether we'll keep having [new] applicants."

5.5 Survival and impression management

In this chapter, I have examined reasons provided by teachers for specialising into CLIL classes. Many of the excerpts from the interviews with Ritva and Minna, and the ethnographic interviews with teachers in Sunny Lane School were preceded by my question "what kind of pupils are these CLIL classes for?" in its different variants, including "how did you decide to introduce these classes?" and "where do your pupils come from?" The answers to these questions took many directions. Teachers' justifications for specialising in CLIL were embedded in notions of the past and anxieties related to the future, which was

connected to increasing heterogeneity and uncertainty. The introduction of CLIL classes was linked to changes in education policy and a changed demography with increasing numbers of pupils coming to Finland and to the municipality from abroad. Often repeated themes included those of competition and rivalry between schools over pupil numbers, connecting the introduction of CLIL classes to economic concerns.

While its intention may be to promote individual choice, Apple (2004) argues that school choice policy often functions to exclude, benefitting a select few, producing rather than challenging educational inequality. Relatedly, an understanding of particular kinds of pupils and families as providing schools with positive value underpinned teachers' explanations for the introduction of CLIL classes. Teachers identified the choice to branch out into bilingual classes as having been a pragmatic strategy to ensure adequate resources and sufficient numbers of pupils for the school, and there was a common understanding that schools wishing to attract more pupils needed to secure a balanced diversity of their populace. A good school reputation was presented as centred on having favourable kinds of parents and pupils. While teachers recognised that for some of their pupils English is a home language, the "clientele" of CLIL classes was presented primarily in terms of a new group of pupils: Finnish pupils who had learned English while living abroad. Participation in CLIL classes was not approached as a right of pupils for whom English is a home language. Adopting what could be termed an "entrepreneurial logic," teachers emphasised the importance of ensuring sufficient numbers of pupils and adequate financial resources for their school.

Questions of origin, Visweswaran (1994) notes, are not innocent and are not always easy to answer (pp. 114–115), and silence can be taken to mean "what goes without saying," "what cannot be said," and "refusal to say" (p. 51). A step behind and before the scenes of school enrollment and the entrance tests demonstrates the extent to which preparations for the testing had, indeed, begun well before the entrance tests. In May 2003, I visited an English-language kindergarten that

many of the pupils in the bilingual classes had attended. Sandy, the teacher I had come to interview, took me around the kindergarten with its colorful displays of children's artwork covering the walls. She brewed us some tea, and mugs of tea in hand, we went to sit by a table in a small room designed for quiet, reading activities. She started our interview by commenting on the entrance tests "I hate it, parents put a lot of stress on the kids and on themselves and when the results come, it is terrible for the kids if they can see that their friends have been accepted and they haven't." Sandy claimed there was "a huge amount of stress and pressure" on the children, and that parents were well aware of the needs to demonstrate good language skills *and* appropriate behaviour, describing how some parents "promise all sorts" to their children if they are accepted. She told me how only recently, one of the children in the kindergarten had told them that her parents had promised a bike if s/he would make it into the bilingual class. The entrance tests were stressful for both parents and children, Sandy pointed out, describing "sometimes we have parents crying, they are so nervous" and "you just help them emotionally." She observed that the children did not normally show signs of stress until after the tests and that in her experience, it was important for the children to behave appropriately during the tests. After the tests, she told me, "if a child shows any signs of mischievousness or shyness you think *oh no!*" Sometimes, she observed, children came back from the test jubilant, claiming "they were easy!" and telling the teachers at the playschool how they ran around in the school hall or had play-fights with their friends. She described thinking "you think *oh no!* they'll not be accepted if that's what they were up to!" in response to such stories.

As told by Sandy, the entrance tests exert a powerful influence on parents and pupils, and in the next chapter I move on to examine the kind of repertoires of self put forward by teachers, parents and pupils during the initial stages of the bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School.

“No name”

And somebody's child cries,
looking into the school
through the doors.
She makes no sound.
Her parents scan the list of those accepted,
over and over.
“No name,”
I hear them say.

6

Claiming and naming: Applying for school

In Finland, all children who reach the age of compulsory education (7 years) must enroll in school and all children who have reached this age are automatically assigned a place in their local school by the municipal education department. Alongside this arrangement, the admission of children into specialised classes and schools, where these exist, takes place through applying directly to these schools. Nikula and Marsh (1997) note that one out of every fourth school with CLIL classes they studied had introduced entrance tests for their CLIL classes to establish pupil intakes and reduce the number of pupils (see also Merisuo-Storm, 2002). In Sunny Lane School, the process for applying for bilingual classes consisted of two stages: enrolling in school and participating in the entrance tests, and in this chapter, I explore these initial stages.

In one of the interviews I had with a bilingual parent, Sanna, she recalled of the entrance tests: “I don’t know what (...) that maybe she understood the situation then [after the entrance tests], that it was a [pause] like an achievement, if you were accepted.” Picking up this reflection, this coming to “understand then,” I approach the initial encounters between teachers, parents and prospective pupils of bilingual first grades as constitutive moments in the formation of an identity

or self recognised as having legitimacy in a bilingual class. As a point of transfer in the school careers of children, moving to a new school is, Rudduck and Urquhart (2003) write, a moment when mobility and the possibility of succeeding or failing to claim particular positions in school are particularly present. Drawing from their ethnographic data, Gordon et al. (1999, p. 691) posit that the construction of what it means to be a “professional pupil” is particularly pronounced during the initial stages of school. Expectations are more emphasised, more clear, and pupils actively engage in processes of self-definition (see also Lahelma & Gordon, 1997; Gordon et al., 2000b; Salo, 1999, 2003). Gordon et al. draw attention to the multiple and particular ways in which “differentiation takes place,” that is, “how abstract ‘pupils’ become particular embodied girls and boys, differentially located in social relations, and how such differences are manifested in school” (p. 691). They note:

It is easier for some pupils to acquire competence as a professional pupil. This grants them with a subject position where they can negotiate with ease. These pupils are well prepared to exercise their rights as citizens. They develop a degree of spatial and embodied autonomy that matches ideals of citizenship. (p. 703)

In her book *Places of Learning* Ellsworth (2005) approaches learning as a process of emergence, claiming learning is about transition and about motion. It is, she writes, an engaged and relational process that takes place both consciously and unconsciously, and in which pupils are addressed in ways that are “not coincident with herself, but only with her change” (p. 7). Learning, Ellsworth suggests, denotes a certain in-betweenness, a simultaneous relatedness and separateness between self and other. In school, tests are an essential part of processes of learning, they are an “individuating practice” (Danziger quoted in Kasanen et al., 2003b, p. 44) that establish a sense of who one is in relation to other pupils, introducing, introducing, as Kasanen et al. observe, pupils with

“a key feature of the school’s dominant conception of ability, in which academic performance is defined as individual performance in relation to the performances of others and to the standards of the school” (p. 44). In the context of the selection of pupils for a bilingual class, the entrance tests delineated between which subjects counted and which didn’t, and thus were, I argue, an important moment in the emergence of the an understanding of what it means to be a bilingual pupil. Thus in this chapter, I ask what are presented as the desirable properties of bilingual pupils, and examine what kind of “repertoires of self” (Rose 1999, p. 270) are performed by parents and children at the time of school application and during the entrance tests. I draw attention to how categories such as language, ethnicity, religion and gender gain meaning in the initial encounters between teachers, parents and pupils. I pursue Foucault’s theorizing on the disciplinary effects of power (1975/1995) as a means to interrogate the kinds of subjectivities brought into play as parents and their children apply for and are tested for a place in the bilingual first grade. Foucault writes:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (pp. 202–203)

What is of particular interest to me in this chapter, is the ways in which institutional practices produce individuals, and the ways in which becoming a subject involves a double movement of agency and subordination. Foucault’s model of power, as Sawicki (1986) writes, suggests that power is exercised and not possessed, and that power and discourse are productive. Gallagher and Fusco (2006), pursuing Foucauldian analysis of the disciplinary effects of the organisation of space, draw attention to the ways in which discourses aimed toward regulating the body participate in constituting “self-regulating individuals who take up governmental imperatives” (p. 307). In the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault

(1978/1990) refers to a grid of intelligibility, a kind of matrix through which subjects make sense of themselves. Similarly the heterosexual matrix, Butler's formulation, underscores the ways in which norms related to sex and gender condition how subjectification takes place and how gender is performed as a reiteration of cultural norms, through assuming coherence between sex – gender – sexuality, obscuring the operation of heterosexual norms. Similar to sex and gender, "race" and ethnicity are naturalised in ways that obscure the operation of whiteness, maleness, middle-classness, western-ness (cf. Fanon, 1952/1986; Fine et al., 2005; hooks, 1994; Skeggs, 2004). "Race," gender and sex are not analogies, but as categories, they share the similarity of all being fashioned as oppositional and coherent, as flowing in particular ways from a "core essence." As Davies (2000b) observes:

Bodies and landscapes are not impervious to language and are shaped through our acts of reading and writing them (...) The capacity for change is written into the body – though it is also true that some (in)scriptions make deep and knotty folds that may make the body less fluid, less amenable to change. (p. 16)

The concept "matrix" has also been applied to language. Myers-Scotton (cited in Finlayson, Calteaux & Myers-Scotton, 1998; see also Meek & Messing, 2007) introduces the concepts "matrix language" versus "embedded language" to analyse how languages assume either an unmarked or marked, dominant or subordinate position in encounters between people speaking different languages, the matrix language conditioning the use of the embedded language. Myers-Scotton applies the concept to analyse accommodation of language use to local contexts, analysing shifts that take place in grammar and syntax in particular social and cultural contexts. Finlayson et al. (1998) observe that "The motivation for switching is to be seen as a cooperative person, someone who can recognise that everyone does not have the same background" (p. 417). Differences are thus not overcome, but are implicated or accommodated in communication.

The introduction of the concept Matrix Language is an interesting one, underscoring how in bi- or multilingual encounters one language frames the use of other languages. It is a concept that has been used to analyse how value and legitimacy are unequally attributed to different languages in society. Meek and Messing (2007), for example, draw attention to the ways in which, in instructional materials, minority languages are framed by a matrix language and “attempt[s] at valorization [are] interrupted by the fact that the framing reasserts the unequal power relationships between the languages and their speakers” (p. 114). Extending the concept of a matrix language to the context of language and education, studies in language learning have demonstrated how different languages are positioned in hierarchical ways in education, assigning particular value to languages such as English (e.g., Block & Cameron, 2002; Pennycook, 2001; Phillipson, 1992).

This chapter is divided into two parts: the first part looks into school enrollment, examining understandings of belonging that are generated at the scriptural moment of filling in forms, drawing attention to what parents say and do not say, to their resistance and compliance. Language, Rose (1999) points out, is important for what it does, and in this section I explore the process of school enrollment as a subjectivating practice, a performative moment in which classed, nationed and religioned subjects are made (cf. Youdell, 2006), influenced by the past and present moments, by parents’ and teachers’ overlapping and different experiences. In the analysis, I have identified parents in terms of ethnicity where this information was available, and as black or white, Finnish-speaking or German-speaking, for example, to draw attention to the effectivity of ethnic and racial categorisations, present in some parents’ anxieties and self assertions that follow a “color line” (Du Bois 1903/1995). In the second part, I move on to discuss how the children accomplish themselves as applicants, submitting to and defying expectations regarding appropriate performance and conduct in school. During my ethnographic fieldwork I followed both the spring and autumn tests one time, and in this chapter, I concentrate on the entrance tests conducted in spring 2003, tracing the ways in which one

group of children – four ethnic Finnish children, two boys and two girls; one ethnic Pakistani boy; and one boy whose parents were ethnic Nigerians⁷⁸ – construct and negotiate understandings of what a good pupil is in the process of participating in the tests.

I move within different kinds of data, bringing together data generated through my ethnographic fieldnotes of school enrollment/application and of the entrance tests for bilingual first grade, drawing also from ethnographic interviews and informal discussions with bilingual teachers. I also interpret parents' responses to a brief questionnaire that I handed out to parents enrolling for both the Finnish and the bilingual classes (see Appendix 2). In my analysis, I focus on parents applying for placements for their children in the bilingual first grade. These different kinds of data offer different viewpoints into the selective processes at work during the initial stages of school and foreground the shared yet contested and divergent understandings and experiences of school that are negotiated locally, but within the parameters of wider discourse.

6.1 Applying for School

Forms and formality

First, the blank page: a space of its own delimits a place of production for the subject Certeau (1980/1984, p. 134)

All three schools, Sunny Lane, Pudas, and Suensaari School, employed entrance tests, as did several other schools these schools maintained contacts with. Each spring, these schools organised an information evening

⁷⁸ In the application forms, the parents write Finnish and English as home languages. When they came to school, they spoke English. I was not able to confirm whether either the mother or father actively spoke Finnish themselves or was Finnish defined as the home language because the child communicated mostly Finnish. Home language is often assumed to follow along parents' first language, but this is not, of course, always the case.

for parents which was advertised in advance in the local newspaper, to provide information on their school to interested parents, including on their CLIL classes. This was followed by the enrollment of children into the schools, and the testing of the applicants in early spring. Later on in spring, the schools sent letters to prospective pupils of the Finnish first grade, most of who lived in the schools' catchment area, and on the basis of children's test scores, to the homes of children who passed the entrance test for the CLIL classes, inviting prospective first graders and their parents to visit the schools. In Sunny Lane School this visit was organised so that the children followed and participated in lessons and the parents participated in an information event in the school hall during this visit, and met, when possible, with the prospective first grade teacher.

In Sunny Lane School, the enrollment for the bilingual and Finnish first grades took place in a classroom located near the school's main entrance. This classroom had been selected by and carefully arranged by teachers for the occasion. Pupils who normally had lessons in this class were reallocated elsewhere. Papers with arrows and posters were put up on the walls and doors, and a notice on the main entrance doors read "Welcome to enroll." Underneath this welcome was a picture, copied from a textbook, of seventeen children and a teacher, most of them smiling, and an arrow pointing in the direction of the classroom where the enrollment was to take place. In the classroom, particular places had been arranged for teachers, parents, and the forms that needed to be completed by parents. The seating arrangement had been transformed from its usual arrangement of pupils' desks facing the teacher's desk in rows to groups of desks organised for parents. Two desks had been moved to side by side with the teacher's table at the front of the class, and two chairs had been placed behind these desks. The forms that needed to be completed by parents enrolling their child into the Finnish first grade were neatly organised on these two desks, and the forms for the bilingual first grade were placed on the large teacher's desk in similar neat stacks. With the exception of the school's own application form in yellow for the bilingual first grade, all forms were in white. Pens were laid out on the table groups for parents.

I positioned myself on the end of the row of desks designated for teachers, pulling up a smaller desk on which I placed my questionnaires, in beige, to distinguish them from the forms distributed by the teachers, and took notes of the enrollment in my ethnographic diary. Most of the time during the enrollment I sat next to the teachers at the front of the class as this was where most exchanges between parents and teachers took place, taking notes and handing out my questionnaire to parents as they came to collect the school's forms from the front of the class.

In Sunny Lane School's municipality, the local education department had distributed all homes of six year olds a brief guide in advance of the application. This guide introduced all the schools in the municipality, and posted together with this guide was a booklet on compulsory education and an application form for the district school. This form needed to be submitted to the school of their preference on the enrollment day. In addition, parents had to fill in many other forms during the enrollment: an application form for "own mother tongue/home language" lessons, a form, written in the form of a request, for "redemption from general religious education," a form on the "pupil's attendance in the school's religious events," another for postponing first grade, a form requesting parents to detail their children's previous education experience and special learning needs, a form detailing pupils' allergies and "allowed and forbidden food," a form to be completed for participation in home language lessons, and a school health form asking parents to provide background details detailing the pupils' allergies, medication, sight and hearing, health problems and so on – but also background information on siblings, parents' or guardians' contact details, their profession and mother tongue. This form also requested parents to provide details of the pupil's home language, with Finnish presented as the first of two options – Finnish and Swedish – the third option being "Other" with a blank line next to it.

In addition to these forms, parents who wanted their children to apply for the bilingual first grade needed to fill in a form copied in yellow to distinguish it from the forms requested by the municipality.

This form also requested parents to provide basic details such as the child's name, place and date of birth, identifying their mother tongue, language skills, place of register ("Evangelical Lutheran, Orthodox, Other"), local school and home address, with a separate line for the father's and mother's address and the clarification "if different to the pupil's." In addition, the form had a section where parents could identify time they had spent living abroad, and some lines where they could list "additional information/hopes."

Where they appeared in the forms, mother tongue and home language were in the singular, and pupils could receive tuition for only one home language, as reflected by the text "one language only" included in parentheses on the form. Parents needed only to tick a box if they spoke Finnish or Swedish as a home language, and another box if they belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. On the other hand, parents wishing their children to participate in separate Ethics or Religion lessons, or in home language lessons, had to fill in yet another form. Notably, while Finnish (and English, in the case of the bilingual classes) were compulsory subjects, participating in home language lessons was a matter of choice. The unequal state of home language lessons was also implied by the text on the home language form, which read that these lessons "will not necessarily be organised at the pupil's own school; lessons can take place outside normal school hours," setting these lessons outside the usual perimeters of school regulations according to which lessons take place between eight o'clock and three o'clock in school.

The information collected through these forms was later coded into a computerised data management system, aimed toward monitoring the flow of pupils, producing knowledge required by the municipal school office on each pupil, and providing a calculus for calculating financial allocations for the school, the number of pupils requesting home language lessons, for example, and for measuring pupils' progress. As school commenced and during the time pupils spent in Sunny Lane School, this information database was updated to provide an account of the progression through school of each pupil. Each year, the school updated the information on each child; "new grades are added to the

rows,” keeping record of “what kind of pupil they’ve been,” the school secretary, Lina, explained. While in the form provided by the school and by the municipality parents could identify any language as their child’s mother tongue on an empty line, in submitting these details into the data management system, there was no possibility of naming languages outside the list provided in the system. Before, “when everything was recorded manually [it was possible to record] more rare languages,” Lina told me, continuing that now, “in the age of computers,” this was no longer possible with languages such as Kisoga. As Lina explained, the data management system only accepted one mother tongue, and when some parents identified more than one language on the line allocated for “mother tongue,” she had to select one of these languages in entering the data into the management system. This suggestion that pupils could have only one home language was described by Lina and some teachers as “rigid” and “difficult,” and was connected to technical demands to produce “simple data” which disregarded the complexity of “family situations today.” The information was disaggregated by sex, the form provided by the municipal school office requesting parents to identify whether their child is a man or woman, and to identify their marital status. These categories normally applied to adults arrested surprisingly little attention. I observed only one father laughingly comment as he returned the forms to the teacher: “I thought as it asked what the marital status it is, then I will go ahead and answer!”

Self-regulation and positive appearance

Gordon et al. (2000b) note that “Teaching official time-space paths for pupils entering a new school is a crucial part of the professionalisation of new pupils” (p. 149). Likewise, the brief exchanges that took place between parents and teachers – most of whom met each other for the first time – presented little tutorials in correct vocabulary and appropriate behavior. Parents, not unlike pupils, were expected to respect rules related to order, discipline and teacher authority. While parents were

greeted in friendly manner by teachers, they were expected to conform to the time-space paths of the school: to arrive on time, sit in the right places, complete the right forms in the right manner.

As announced in the newspaper, parents were to come and enroll their children between eight and ten in the morning, or five and seven in the afternoon. More mothers than fathers came to enroll their children, and while most parents came unaccompanied by children, mothers more often than fathers had their children with them. The teachers involved in the enrollment maintained a close eye on the clock, finishing at twelve. No exceptions were made to the rules, and one mother who arrived ten minutes late was instructed to come again in the afternoon. Exchanges between parents and teachers were brief, focused on attending to paperwork, with teachers providing parents with advice and on occasion, correcting parents' terminology. While parents referred variably to the bilingual classes as "international," "English," "English-Finnish" and "bilingual" classes, teachers remarked to several parents "you mean the bilingual classes."

Forsey, who has analysed the educational choices of parents who decided to change from government schools to public schools or vice versa in Australia, observes that school choice and parents' strategies to maximise their children's opportunities through school choice were normalised as a part of what normal parents are to do (2008). In a similar vein, Ball and Vincent (1998/2006) claim "Being a good parent means taking choice seriously" (p. 254). These expectations were also implicit in the exchanges between teachers and parents during the enrollment. Teachers expected parents to be aware of the two different classes, Finnish and bilingual, and of the admission requirements of the bilingual first grade:

Kirsti: What class is your child enrolling in?

Mother: Oh yes, you have those different classes, those international classes, don't you?

Kirsti: They are not any more international than the other classes.

Mother: Well, maybe in one of those Finnish – English classes.

Kirsti: What is your home language?

Mother: Finnish.

Kirsti: Does the child know English?

Mother: No.

Kirsti: Then I'll give this form to Sanna (who is responsible for the enrollment of pupils for the Finnish classes). (In Finnish⁷⁹)

School enrollment, as teachers had emphasised before the enrollment during an Introductory Parents Evenings, and as they repeated to parents during the enrollment, should be based on parents' careful assessment on whether their children had the skills required for participation in a bilingual class, problematising parents who had not familiarised with the options available to their children, or who teachers perceived as unable or unwilling to realistically assess their children's language skills. "Some parents haven't prepared at all, they just come and want to get things done as quickly as possible," one of the teachers observed.

Gallagher and Fusco (2006) draw attention to the effects of what they define as "neo-liberal processes of risk management, surveillance and identity control" in their ethnographic exploration of spatial organisation and surveillance in schools in New York and Toronto, examining the ways in which the organisation of space in school and the technologies of surveillance used, produce particular understandings of dangerous and unwanted bodies, and participate in the constitution of "self-regulating individuals who take up governmental imperatives" (p. 307). As has been pointed out in many studies, the practice of school choice is related to compliance and competition, rather than freedom and the consumerist principle of exercising the right to education (Forsey, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005, pp. 218–222; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Far from effortless, the formation of class and maintenance of classed advantage is a continuous project of self making through processes of re-signification, as Lareau's work points out.

⁷⁹ All the excerpts in this chapter are from my fieldnotes dating back to March 2003.

Rather than implying parents' partnership with teachers, classed advantage requires a balancing act between a strategic morality bent towards getting the most out of school and teachers, and mindful acknowledgement of the professional authority of teachers. (Ball 2003/2006, pp. 264–276; Lareau, 1989; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Reay, 1998.)

During the enrollment in Sunny Lane School, discipline and compliance characterised the ways in which parents moved in and through school spaces. This was reflected by the quietness with which parents completed the forms, and their observance of the physical layout of the classroom, with parents pushing chairs back under the desks or moving the desks into the original straight lines into which the teachers put them as they prepared to leave the class. Exchanges with the school staff were limited to brief, polite exchanges as the forms were passed from teachers to parents and then back again. Some of the parents asked teachers brief questions of the forms. The expressed these questions as requests, often beginning with “can I ask you,” “can I answer like this.” Several parents with children already in the school expressed positive appraisals of Sunny Lane School, directing comments such as “we were so satisfied with our first child’s experience, the same results!” to myself as they handed back their questionnaires to me. As I noted in my ethnographic diary, all the parents said “thank you” or “thank you so much” when they were given their pile of forms to fill in, and “thank you” again when they returned the forms. Parents treated me with much the same politeness as the teachers next to me, most thanking me as I handed them my questionnaire and briefly explained my purpose of being there. When parents discussed the entrance tests with teachers, this was to ask questions, not to raise objections, demands or concerns related to the tests. Parents were careful not to contradict teachers, as reflected by the excerpt below where the mother first expresses surprise at the speed with which the results of the tests are finalised, then quickly retaliates to confirm that the short time period is, in fact, a good thing:

Mum: When will the results come out?

Pirjo explains.

Mum: How's that possible, how can you tell the exact time? I mean, that's really quick, but good, good, it's good. (In Finnish)

Mietola and Lappalainen (2006) posit that in Finland the normal child is interpreted as an outcome of normal family life, placing the burden of blame on parents. Reflecting this thematic, the achievement of positive appearance, presenting themselves as good parents, was an interactive process in which what parents or their children said was clearly intended to be acknowledged positively by the teachers. Parents were careful that their children were quiet and non-disruptive. Children were instructed by their parents to sit or draw quietly, with one mother urging her son to "have a look around, maybe at the displays in the cabinets in the corridor." When one of the children who accompanied her father at the enrollment disrupted such expectations, her father whispered in her ear, then laughed, distracting attention from her impatience to leave:

Father comes to the teacher's desk with his daughter, returning the forms to Satu, the teacher.

Father: When are we going to know, when?

Satu explains about when the test results will be ready.

Daughter (tugging her father's hand): When are we going to leave?

Father: shh!

The father bends down to say something to her in a hushed tone in German, straightens up, looks at the teacher and laughs soft and short, shrugging his shoulders. (In Finnish)

The expectation was that the children want to start school, or at least maintain the appearance of looking forwards to starting school. This was also reflected by the questions teachers posed to the children accompanying their parents:

Satu (to a girl to whose mother she has just handed the forms to be filled): Is it nice to start school?

Girl: Sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't.

Satu: Are you in kindergarten now?

Girl: Yes.

Satu: Where do you go to kindergarten?

Girl: I can't remember, somewhere next to a park.

Satu: Well, tell me, what languages do you speak?

Girl: English and Finnish.

Satu: Wow, you know languages well, that's a fine thing! (In Finnish)

Typical questions asked by teachers of children accompanying their parents to Sunny Lane School to apply for the bilingual first grade included "how does it feel to start school?" "where is your playschool?" and "where have you learned English?" The children were expected to assume the position of being interested in schooling and by combination, to take an interest in abilities and dispositions associated with school achievement. For children starting in the bilingual class, added to such expectations was the demand to willingly participate in the testing. While passing the entrance tests was a prerequisite for admission to the bilingual classes, teachers' preference was to de-emphasise this aspect of the tests. As parents returned the forms, the teachers handed out "invitations" to the entrance tests, copied on bright orange paper. The top part of the paper had a picture of two sailing ships and the text read as follows:

Sunny Lane School
X.X.2003

Dear school beginner!⁸⁰

⁸⁰ *Hyvä koulutulokas!* *Koulutulokas* refers to someone who is about to start or has recently started school. *Tulokas* comes from the word *tulla*, to come, implying presence.

We are inviting you to school on Friday the 3.3. to do some small exercises in Finnish and in English!

You do not need to take anything with you, apart from a cheerful spirit!

Welcome!

Sincerely, the teachers (In Finnish)

“This is for you, and this beneath it is for mum or dad,” Kirsti instructed in matter-of-fact fashion, as she handed over the invitations to the parents or, when possible, to their children, opening the letter which had been creased in half, and pointing to the bottom half of the paper, repeating several times: “and here is some information for mum and dad.” The entrance tests, in the letter and in teachers’ discussion, were presented as a “little school day” to which the children were invited:

Kirsti hands over the letter to a father and says: Welcome to the testing!

Next in line is a couple with their son.

Kirsti (looking at the boy): Will you come to our little school day to do some exercises in English and Finnish?

A moment later she hands another invitation to a child accompanying her parents, saying: This is for you. It’s an invitation to the test. (In Finnish)

Kasanen et al. (2003a) note in their ethnographic investigation of class tests in Finland that the word “test” was avoided by the primary school teacher with her first grade pupils. Likewise, in handing children the information sheets, Kirsti made sure the picture side of the letter of invitation to the tests was upwards, the test information neatly concealed on the other side of the folded paper, and described these sheets as “invitations,” only on occasion referring explicitly to “tests.”

Limiting category positions: "Is it like you have to have fluent Finnish?"

The purpose of the enrollment, as identified by teachers, was that of collecting necessary background information on pupils enrolling in the Finnish first grade and on those applying for the bilingual first grade. The enrollment also had a regulatory function of ensuring parents were eligible to apply for Sunny Lane School, with staff maintaining a close eye on the home addresses identified by parents on the forms. The few parents from outside the catchment area who came to enroll their children into the Finnish first grade had to justify their reasons for doing so, identifying social grounds such as having siblings in the school or a strong likelihood of their child being bullied in their catchment school. After the enrollment, these reasons were considered by teachers as they decided which children outside the catchment area would be accepted.

Most children applying for the bilingual first grade came from other catchment areas in the municipality from within a seven kilometer diameter of the school. Parents enrolling their child for the bilingual first grade had to identify a second option, should their child not be accepted. Particular note was made by teachers that parents applying for the bilingual class did not identify the Finnish first grade in Sunny Lane School as their second option, unless they lived in the catchment area or had siblings in the school. Children living in other municipalities could not apply for the bilingual grades in Sunny Lane School. However, one Finnish couple applying for the bilingual first grade who lived in the neighboring municipality but had plans to move into Sunny Lane School's municipality before school started in August were, after negotiation, allowed to enroll their child for the entrance tests, with the reminder that that children living in other municipalities will not be accepted into the school.

An unprompted negative underpinned teachers' repeated representation of the information parents were requested to provide as "only formality" or "just information." Parents asked questions and expressed concerns that suggested a different interpretation, such as whether the

details parents needed to provide were “just formality” or whether they would influence the acceptance or non-acceptance of pupils into Sunny Lane School. A frequent question, particularly as the time wore on, was that of “how many children are there so far?” with several parents commenting “so many!” While this question was a common one, several immigrant parents expressed concerns related to the level of Finnish required of children in bilingual classes:

Father: So far how many children are you expecting?

Satu replies.

He: Is it like the child has to speak fluent Finnish?

Satu tells him that children need to have “common skills” in Finnish and be “pretty fluent.” (In Finnish)

In this extract, Satu maintains that children need only “common skills” and be “pretty fluent,” later iterating this to also two other immigrant parents in response to similar questions. Yet cultural inscription, the reduction of home language and religious affiliation, markers of minority identity, as inferior and other, were read by minority parents into the details required in the forms, and providing details regarding Religion and Mother Tongue often provoked uncertainty among these parents. While most ethnic majority parents filled in the forms relatively quickly, leaving within fifteen minutes of their arrival, immigrant parents spent considerably more time in the class. In the extract below, a Black father approaches the teacher for advice on how to fill the enrollment papers. The teacher starts by asking the father about home language, making available to him the position of being a minority language speaker who wants to preserve their home language:

A queue collects in front of the teacher’s table. One of the parents lining up, an immigrant father, when it is his turn, hands over the papers to Kirsti, the teacher. She reads through them quickly and then asks what their home language is. Apparently he has left that line empty.

Father, speaking with a heavy accent: Put Finnish, put Finnish!
Kirsti: Would you like home language lessons for your child?
Father: No need, no need! (In Finnish)

While Kirsti contrues participation in home language lessons as an entitlement, the father clearly draws on other meanings connected to minority languages (cf. Hruska, 2006). His suggestion of identifying Finnish as a home language and the emphasis he places on there being “no need” to arrange home language lessons for his child can be interpreted as a refusal to position his child as an ethnic minority language speaker in need or want of supportive measures. His refusal can be interpreted as produced by the demands of recognition (Goldberg 1997, pp. 86–88), as indicating the importance he assigns to the Finnish language as not *a* but *the* language used in school, and to fluency in Finnish as a way to position oneself as an unmarked, visible member of the school community, as unproblematic and as embodying dispositions and characteristics favourable to success in school and in the Finnish society. Conversely, pertaining to Fanon’s concept epidermization (1952/1986) which he introduces to analyse how the colonized internalize the gaze of the colonizer, non-fluency in Finnish and speaking minority languages are inscribed as signifying undesirable identities.

Similar refusals were enacted by also other minority parents. A father and mother applying for the bilingual first grade whom the school staff knew to speak German at home, chose to identify Finnish as their child’s home language. Similarly, one of the mothers enrolling her child for the Finnish first grade identified Finnish as the home language, providing a Finnish name for her child in place of the Arabic name the school staff were already familiar with as she had siblings in the school. These details were corrected by Lina as she documented the information on pupils into the data management system.

Interestingly, children’s English skills did not feature in the conversations between school staff and ethnic minority migrant parents – despite the fact that English, as apparent in these parents’ response to

the questionnaire I distributed during the enrollment, was often a home language in plurilingual families.⁸¹

Walkerdine et al. (2001) posit in their study on working class and middle class girls' transitions into adulthood that processes of subjectification work on both conscious and unconscious wishes, desires and anxieties, and this is rarely accounted for in education that assumes the choices individuals make to be autonomous and rational. The promotion of individual agency in decision making processes in school, they note, is unlikely to effect tangible change (see also Gordon 2006a, 2006b.) The procedure of identifying home language before commencing school, intended as a means to ensure pupils' right to access mother tongue education in minority languages, underlines the ways in which discourses of inclusion are embedded in ways of reasoning about difference, and how categories of "race," class and ethnicity function as a means to recognise who belongs. Despite increasing social mobility among migrant populations, minoritised ethnic groups continue to be identified through recourse to the "minority achievement gap," whereas whiteness is associated more commonly with giftedness (Burns, 2004; Fine, 2004; Gilborn, 2004; Powell Pruitt, 2004; Shiner & Modood, 2002). In Finland, racial inscription continues to be quite common, and dark skin is often interpreted as signifying migrant identity and is categorised as different and deviant (Juhila, 2004; Oikarinen-Jabai, 2008; Rastas, 2002, 2004). In the data I have generated, minority parents' narratives speak to fears of intolerance and of being positioned as deviant. Altogether six parents⁸² in their responses to my questionnaire expressed the hope that the bilingual classes would be a place where diversity is approached positively. Expectations such as "openness," "internationalism," "no bullying," "tolerant environment" were amongst

⁸¹ About one fifth applying for the bilingual classes in spring 2003 identified three home languages in their application forms. As articulated by the interviews and on the basis of my observations, English was often the shared language of communication in plurilingual families, or in some instances, it was a second language alongside Hindi or Swahili, for example.

⁸² Five of these parents belonged to ethnic minority groups and spoke another language than Finnish at home, and one parent belonged to the ethnic majority.

those mentioned by these parents. The extract below is from the response of one these parents to my questionnaire:

My hope related to the school is good teaching in Finnish and English. A safe and unprejudiced learning environment where my child will not feel different and will not be teased. (In Finnish: home languages Finnish and Swahili)

Similar concerns related to tolerance were not mentioned by parents applying for the Finnish first grade. In addition to fluency in Finnish, religious affiliation appeared as a site of concern for minority parents applying for the bilingual classes. During the enrollment, there was one incident where a mother expressed concern related to the institutional power of schools to inculcate religious norms, to “brainwash” pupils, as she expressed in response to the teacher’s question on her choice of either Evangelical Lutheran or Ethics lessons:

One mother who speaks Finnish quite fluently and who identifies her home language as Hungarian, says: I am a little afraid of, what is it[*pause*] brainwashing. We don’t belong to the church, but we still celebrate Christmas.

Kerttu: What about the child, does he belong to anything?

Mother: No he doesn’t.

Kerttu: If you are not Orthodox, you need to choose either Evangelical Lutheranism or Ethics. (In Finnish)

This mother, also, was careful not to place her family outside the expected social order in Finland that celebrates Christian festivals such as Christmas. Roughly eighty percent of the Finnish population belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Church Research Institute 2008), and over its history, the association of Finnish schools with the Evangelical Lutheran Church has been a strong one (cf. Ahonen, 2003; Rinne, 1986; Tuomaala, 2004). Religious Education is a compulsory subject for pupils belonging to religious communities in Finland. Inter-

estingly, while the Memoir pertaining to Religious Education and Ethics (NBE, 2003) states that pupils have the right to be educated according to their own religion, it is not possible for pupils belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran Church to choose Ethics or Islam, for example, although it is possible for any pupil to participate in Evangelical Lutheran Religion lessons, producing Evangelical Lutheran Religion as core to Finnish culture. Several parents of African and Asian origin, rather than opting for their own religion or Ethics, chose Evangelical Lutheran Religion lessons for their children without further questions as to what this subject was comprised of:

Father: do I really have to fill in all these places, some of them I don't understand!

Satu translates one of the questions to him.

Satu: How about religion? Do you belong to Lutheran, Orthodox or Ethics?

He: Anything goes. (In Finnish: home language Kisogo)

One Pakistani mother has not identified an option from the “Ev. Luth./Orthodox/Other”-section. Kirsti asks which religion they belong to. She says “Hindu.” Kirsti asks “do you want him to take part in the Evangelical Lutheran lessons, or something else?” The mother opts in favour of the Lutheran lessons saying “well it wouldn't do any harm.” (In Finnish)

Evangelical Lutheran Religion appears in these extracts as the religious subject of preference in school. For minority parents such as those cited above, the choice of Evangelical Lutheran Religion lessons appeared to be a means for them to express their willingness to conform to Finnish religious norms, as a tactic to achieve normalcy, suggesting the view that knowledge of Evangelical Lutheran traditions and beliefs is a key resource in school and in society.

Self-assertive parents: "Now she speaks complete sentences!"

In their analysis of processes of university choice among minority-ethnic students, Ball, Reay and David (2003/2006) identify two kinds of groups of students: contingent and embedded choosers. For contingent choosers, they write, moving into university "involves them becoming a different person", while for embedded choosers, this movement is one characterised by familiarity and comfort (p. 232). On a similar line, during the enrollment, while parents from minority communities often asked questions and expressed concerns related to language and religion, Finnish speaking, white parents often initiated very different kinds of discussions with teachers. These parents also expressed hopes and anxieties towards being accepted into the bilingual class, however, reflected by questions such as "how many applicants do you have so far?" and "can I ask what the entrance tests are like?" and comments such as "you have this elimination thing." The focus of these discussions was often on individual ability: anxieties related to linguistic and religious affiliation did not figure in these discussions. Several ethnic majority parents used their brief encounters with teachers to draw attention to the educational experience and abilities of their children:

A mother says to Kirsti she is not sure what to write for the item "Child's information before school age." "Was it normal, well it wasn't normal preschool. Yes, well, s/he⁸³ has drawn and written from age two every morning in kindergarten, but doesn't know how to read yet." (In Finnish)

A mother, father and daughter, who is half concealed herself behind her mother's long coat, come to fetch the enrollment papers. The mother tells Anna, the teacher, that "our child started English kindergarten one month before preschool and now she

⁸³ The Finnish language does not differentiate between a *he* or a *she*; there is one word, *hän*, that signifies the third person. In its place, I refer to *s/he* in instances when it is unclear which sex *hän* refers to.

speaks complete sentences! I was really surprised when I heard her talking complete sentences. Just think, what a richness! You don't learn languages like that at this age!"

Anna listens quietly, without commenting, smiling.

Awkward pause before Anna gives the forms to the mother. (In Finnish)

The unspoken expectation readable in the mother's description above of the speed and ease with which her daughter learned English, is that bilingual classes are reserved for particular kinds of pupils. This interpretation underpinned also other parents' comments and questions, as in the following exchange between a Finnish-speaking mother and Kirsti, the teacher:

Before leaving, one of the mothers turns back to the teachers' and asks: What are they going to test in the entrance tests?

Kirsti: Language skills – Finnish and English skills.

Mother: Nothing else?

Kirsti affirms this.

Mother: M-hmm. (In Finnish)

A similar understanding was present in the comments made by several ethnic majority children accompanying their parents, such as in the announcement of one child to the teacher that her kindergarten teacher had said she was "the best in [my kindergarten] group." Several parents presented the teachers at the enrollment with a letter of recommendation signed by their children's kindergarten teacher:

A (white ethnic majority) father shows a paper to Kirsti and asks "will this be of any help?" The answer is no. Kirsti tells him "they don't mean anything, you can keep them." The parents look bewildered. A mother standing behind in line comments "Oh! I wonder why they gave these to us then?"

Later one of the fathers comments to a couple where the mother

holds the letter, “oh, you got one, too!” They look at the letter and one of them says “I wonder what this is now?” (In Finnish)

Teachers did not accept these letters from parents⁸⁴, maintaining the forms the parents were requested to fill in provided sufficient information on the children, and that the acceptance of children into the bilingual first grade will be determined purely on the basis of the entrance tests. Parents expressed confusion, stressing they had been provided the letters of recommendation from their children’s kindergarten to give to the teachers at Sunny Lane School. Their belief was clearly that the letters might be important to the selection process, as reflected by the question “do you get any extra points for this?” asked by one of the fathers. However, ethnic majority parents, also, did not object or question the school’s policy of testing pupils, affirming teachers’ right to make such decisions. Particularly these parents engaged their children in conversation with teachers, orchestrating exchanges between their children and the teacher:

A white Finnish-speaking mother, before they leave, nudges her daughter, who is standing solemnly by her mother’s side, and say:
You could say thank you.

Daughter: Bye bye.

Mother to Kirsti: Thank you and bye bye! (In Finnish)

White Finnish-speaking Mother to her son: Is it nice to start school?

Son (emphatically): No!

The mother is quiet for a brief moment and then continues briskly: No? Well, you know, a whole new life is going to start then! (In Finnish)

⁸⁴ With the exception of one couple where one parent was from China and the other from Finland, I did not observe minority parents holding or offering these letters to the teachers, although many had children in the same kindergarten.

These exchanges took place in front of the teacher with the teacher as their intended audience, and carried reminders of the importance of signifying oneself as an appropriate, good pupil who accepts and respects teacher authority. Several ethnic majority parents also used these brief encounters to remind their children of the importance of performing well in the entrance tests. In the vignette below, a mother and father have come to fill in the enrollment forms for the bilingual first grade. Their child follows them quietly into the class, standing slightly behind the parents as they request for the forms for the bilingual first grade, looking at the teacher from behind his mother's long winter coat. His mother pushes him forward, toward the teacher's table. The following exchange took place:

Mother: If you're not successful, can you apply again in autumn?
 Satu says no, the tests in the autumn are for a new group of pupils.

The mother then turns toward her child and comments "did you hear this, Santeri, you can only try once." She continues, but I can't hear her well, something about "you have to succeed." The husband stands quietly looking on. He kneels down next to the boy, now standing at the corner of the table looking up at Satu, eyes wide open, quiet, and says, nodding toward Satu, "look, that's a teacher. She's not frightening, is she?" (In Finnish)

The mother having underlined the once only-nature of the tests, the father turns to the son and says that the teacher is not "frightening." In the moment that this takes place, this denial is not preceded by a claim that teachers *would* be frightening, but by the mother's comment to Santeri, "you can only try once," connecting the idea of the teacher to that of a gatekeeper in school, and signifying the teacher as a benevolent, but potentially frightening adult. Interestingly, teachers refrained from comment on such views presented by parents during the enrollment.

As Ellsworth (1989/1997) argues, silences are often moments embedded in resistance of the self to dangerous knowledge: they can be

moments of wilful ignorance. In Sunny Lane School, teachers maintained a discourse of school as being inclusive (see Chapter 7), and after the enrollment, as if to underline her distance to the competitive fervour expressed by parents during the enrollment, as I put on my coat and prepare to leave, Anna says to me “the language is secondary, it is like an additional good thing. The important thing is that they learn it a little bit.”

6.2 Entrance tests

Bilingual classes’ pupils are chosen on the basis of an entrance test. Entrance tests measure the applicant’s readiness to study in both English and Finnish.

(Sunny Lane School Curriculum)

In Sunny Lane School, entrance tests were organised twice a year: during spring term for prospective first graders and before the beginning of the autumn term for pupils applying principally for Grades 2 and upwards.⁸⁵ While the enrollment process functioned to restrict and deny entry into school on the basis of criteria defined at the administrative level, the testing established eligibility on the basis of individual performance, determining “which pupils count.” Since the introduction of bilingual classes, more pupils had applied for the bilingual classes each year than could be accepted. While the numbers varied each year, on average less than half of those applying the first grade were accepted. Some children had to wait until August for the final decision on their acceptance into school. Pirjo elaborates:

And then, those pupils who have kind of remained on the queue after the test in spring then they, kind of, they still have the pos-

⁸⁵ A few children applied for the bilingual first grade through these autumn tests, having moved to Finland during the summer.

sibility, we usually don't fill in all the places through these spring tests and so the others are left on the queue and then we look at who is coming to apply for first grade in August and if there aren't any applicants or we just take a few from there, then we add some from these spring tests. And then for them, it's a bit different, they don't take part in introductory visit but come when they have received the announcement in August when school starts. (Interview: February 2003)

The entrance tests in spring 2003 commenced at eight in the morning. When I arrived at the school at about ten to eight, a large table had been positioned inside the hall facing the main doors and Anna, a teacher, stood vigilantly behind the table, welcoming parents and children as they stepped into the school, instructing the children "now you can take your outdoor clothes off, the clothes pegs are there, take off your shoes and come in your socks or indoor shoes." Several teachers soon joined her in the entrance hall. The customary flipchart or sign on the wall indicating that parents should go into the school hall was missing, Anna explained, for the teacher responsible for putting these up had forgotten to do so. Parents and children gathered near the doors to the school hall, on alert for the teachers to open the doors to the hall. A few of the children played hide-and-seek, scampering among the people assembled near doors leading to the hall. Most children stood quietly by their parents (who were, with few exception, all mothers). Some parents were obviously familiar with each other and chatted together while they waited. I recognised some of the parents from the enrollment, and chatted briefly with one of the mothers who stood by the entrance doors smiling, clasping her handbag in one hand, swinging it back and forth by her side. Her daughter, Vera, looked nonplussed, and stood clasping her mother's hand as her mother explained to me that as they lived in the catchment area and should Vera not pass the tests she would still be able to start in the Finnish first grade, stating "for Vera it's OK, there's no stress."

As we stood waiting for the entrance tests to begin, the possibility of exclusion, of non-acceptance was present in parents' attempts at final

advice and reassurance, underlining the precariousness of the subject position of the children as applicants, and the need to demonstrate their ability to perform well in school. Some parents quietly imparted final advice to their children. I caught the word “scary” from the advice one father provided his son in a hushed tone. Similar to the father’s comment “she’s not frightening” presented during the enrollment, a smiling teacher was singled out reassuringly by one mother for her son:

A mother carrying a boy, with a younger child following close after, walks up to Anna. The boy’s hands are clasped around his mother’s neck, his face slightly hidden under her hair. The boy looks a bit shorter, smaller than the other children applying. [Later on I find out he is one year younger]. The mother is smiling. She says to Anna “everything is so new to Timi cause he doesn’t have any friends here yet.” She asks Anna “are you a teacher? He would like to see one teacher.” Anna answers in the affirmative, smiling. The mum says to Timi “look, she’s a teacher!” (In Finnish)

Parents’ exchanges with teachers before the entrance tests were brief. A few parents asked how many were being tested this year, and several checked what time the tests would end. Teachers responded to these questions in friendly fashion, and directed parents to where the children should hang up their outdoor clothes and leave their shoes. “We have to do these tests,” was Anna’s response to one of the mothers who asked how many children had applied. From the coat pegs, the teachers directed the children into the school hall with their parents. Bodily conformity, the orderly movement from one place to another was an order which children were expected to reproduce. Thus when two children walked in the direction of the school hall with their shoes on, they were promptly called back by a teacher to take off their shoes.

In the school hall, the teachers positioned themselves at the front of the hall in a line while parents and children gradually assembled in front of them in a U-form. A few children, mainly boys, ran around the hall,

but most stood silently by their parents. Similar to during the enrollment, the position of being like a pupil was made available to the children by Kaisa, the teacher who announced, smiling broadly to the parents and children gathered in the hall, “Welcome to our little school day!” Most of the information and instruction provided in the school hall was, however, directed to parents. Parents were told when the tests would end, when the results would be ready, and so on. Once the children had been led into classrooms to take part in the tests, Kaisa no longer referred to a “little school day”:

Kaisa: I think you parents are maybe more nervous than the children. Perhaps when they get into the classes they will forget they're being tested. The children are accepted on the basis of their results (...) I hope the children will have good memories of today. At the moment there are over fifty children in the classes and all can probably not be accepted (...) We would like to ask for your patience, should the schedule go overtime.

Finnish mother: Do we come to fetch them from the school hall?
Kaisa explains that the parents can wait in the corridor by their child's outdoor clothes, and then says: I wonder if there's still something that I haven't remembered to tell.

It is quiet in the school hall.

Kaisa: Well, if not, let's keep our thumbs up, everyone for their own child, of course!

Parents, collectively: Thank you! (In Finnish)

In a manner similar to establishing the rules for a fair game, Kaisa reminds parents of the basic principles of the tests: not all children will be accepted, but in the spirit of a fair game, hopefully all the children would later “have good memories of today,” and test results alone determine successful admission. A collective we is evoked as holding their thumbs up, acknowledging in its own subtle way the coimplication of teachers and parents in the testing, positioning parents *and* teachers and parents in the same space of hope and expectation. At the same time

Kaisa recognises that each parent naturally hopes their own child will be accepted, and supports parents' identification as contestants in the competition for placements in the bilingual class. Her comments can be interpreted as an effort to reassure parents and persuade parents to adopt the school's view of the entrance tests as a fair and reliable means to select pupils. As teachers discussed, each year there were parents who complained about the results, and each year teachers had to respond to the complaints of parents whose children had not been accepted. While Kaisa's statement "all can probably not be accepted" is an understatement, it may thus have been aimed as much at preparing parents for possible disappointment as it at maintaining peace between teachers and parents whose children would not be accepted. Notably, parents speak very little, the only question which is presented by an ethnic majority mother relates to the practical detail of when to come to fetch their children. When Kaisa finishes, parents collectively say "thank you," demonstrating their acceptance of Kaisa's construction of the tests and of the relationship between teachers and parents.

Self-regulation: The performance of being a good pupil

As explicit in the advice and reassurance parents offered their children before the tests begin, and reflected by concerns such as "how he would behave" and "how shy she'd be" recalled by parents in interviews, the entrance tests were interpreted by parents as requiring self-regulation, self-discipline and self-assertiveness, positioning the tests as key to the definition of the kinds of pupils who are more or less desirable. In their exchanges with parents, teachers, however, maintained the sole purpose of the tests as that of establishing which children have the necessary English and Finnish skills to participate in a bilingual class. All children with adequate skills in these two languages, as propagated by the official discourse of the school, should be able to participate in the tests without undue difficulty, and no special guidance was provided by teachers to the children before they commenced the tests.

After the brief introduction in the school hall, teachers called out the names of the children one by one, briskly dividing the children into smaller groups. Each group was then led into a classroom by a teacher in single line. This took place quietly. Some parents imparted advice such as “it will be OK,” “go along now,” “briskly now,” calling on their children to maintain positive appearance during the testing, with one mother advising her daughter to “remember to smile,” construing access to the bilingual first grade as connected to the ability to please.

The tests took place in different classrooms, and I moved with one group of children from one classroom to another. The classrooms had been arranged by the teachers in advance of the tests, with concern for detail, teaching about the importance of order, discipline and adult control over children in school. The places carved out for the children were clearly recognisable as such. In the excerpt below, the teacher sat at the front of the classroom from where she commanded view of the pupils’ desks which had been arranged to face the blackboard at the front of the class. Pencils and papers were neatly arranged on the desktops for the children. Continuing with the discursive construction of the tests being like a little school day, the children were reminded of expectations related to appropriate conduct and discipline in school without detailed or lengthily induction, but through brief recourse to and reminders of the importance of conforming to rules regarding appropriate conduct in school:

The children are sitting at the pupils’ desks, the teacher sits at the front behind a large desk almost three times the size of the pupils’ desks. Wide spaces have been left between the desks. One of the children, Peter, starts to say something in a loud voice. The teacher, Tanja, smiling, says “shh! No shouting! That’s the way the system works, no shouting in school!”

Peter finishes what he was saying in a quiet voice. It is quiet in the class. The teacher starts to explain what will happen next, smiling broadly at the children. (In English)

In addition to the rule that no shouting is allowed in school, the children are reminded to look only at their own work, underlining the purpose of the test to differentiate between pupils, which was reinforced by the seating arrangements which set pupils apart from each other during the testing. Spaces had been organised between the desks, and in one classroom, children were partitioned from each other by bookshelves, and in another by large cushions.

Teacher authority over the children was an important aspect of the testing. The testing was organised in a teacher-centered, task-orientated manner. Children were expected to follow instructions and respond to the questions posed by teachers. “I will ask you questions and write your answers down,” as one teacher instructed. The teachers praised the children for walking in straight lines in the corridors, for listening quietly and responding to the teachers’ questions, constructing the children as able to achieve the signifiers of a good pupil:

Tomas: Do you live in X ?

Miksu: Yes.

Tomas: Good boy! What’s the best thing about X ?

Miksu: Snow.

Tomas: Snow, that’s the best thing! Good boy! (In English)

I interpret Tomas’s repetitive response “good boy!” (and later to Salli “good girl!”) as not so much a reflection on how they answered, as an effort to demonstrate to the children that their efforts to respond are appropriate and positively valued by the teacher, hailing the children through categories they are assumed to be familiar with and which they are expected to perform, “boy” and “girl” (cf. Davies, 2000a, pp. 29–30; Gordon et al., 1999). While the teachers greeted the children most often through the collective category “children,” the category of the good pupil was signified in many of the individual encounters between teachers and the children as being gender specific, as suggested by the phrases “good boy” and “good girl.” These categories invoke childhood dependency on adults as they also signify the centrality of gender to

ways in which pupils, as subjects, are invited to know and interpret themselves in school as “good” and, conversely, “bad” or “naughty” girls or boys (Davies et al., 2001; Hakala, 2007; Lappalainen, 2006).

These were categories the children were clearly already familiar with: being identified as a good boy or good girl registered no surprise, and when the boys subverted the expectation of being good, the ways in which this naughtiness was performed brought into play hegemonic notions of masculinity (cf. Connolly, 2003; Lappalainen, 2006; Tolonen, 2001). All the children worked to maintain themselves as professional pupils (Gordon et al. 2000b), as able and good when they were with the teachers, under their direct gaze: walking in quiet, single lines through the corridors, speaking when spoken to, and following the directions of the teachers smoothly and without disruption.

When no longer under the teacher’s gaze, the children positioned themselves as rebellious, as powerful rather than submissive, and engaged in imaginative forms of talk and action (cf. Thorne, 1993). Separate spaces had been sectioned for the children to relax in, marked by cushions or a rug put out on the floors in some classrooms, and objects such as books, boxes of Math cubes, papers and wax colors put out for their use, suggesting the importance of keeping preoccupied, non-disruptive and in one place. The children decided to use these objects for a number of purposes, carving out their own space and abandoning, for brief moments, the repertoires required of being a good pupil:

Peter builds a gun out of the Math cubes. He takes aim at the ceiling and calls out: tush! tush! Now this guy killed Jesus!

Sanna, sitting opposite to Peter, looks at him sideways and smiles and builds something out of the cubes.

She is ready soon and says loudly: here are three guns in a row!

Davim: This is dynamit! (mispronouncing the word).

Peter: What “dynamit?”

The children continue building. The boys are more loud than the girls.

Peter: Heheh! This guy is a nude! (In Finnish)

It is hard to imagine using the Math cubes for anything more at odds with the expectation to conduct oneself appropriately in school. The children speak loudly, but the teachers do not interfere, maybe due to the expectation that I, as the adult sitting closest to them, will interfere if necessary, an interpretation which in the end I feel compelled enact, telling the children “it needs to be more quiet,” bringing into the moment the reminder of the need for appropriate conduct in school. The teachers did not instruct the children as to what to do with the materials laid out for their use, beyond the general suggestion “here are some crayons and cubes and things, for while you wait,” nor did they articulate clear expectations as to how children should conduct themselves in these small spaces carved out for more leisurely activities.

Despite the appearance of freedom in children’s “own spaces,” their “time space paths” (Gordon, et al., 2000b) were controlled by teachers who maintained authority throughout the testing, instructing the children when it was time to collect their things and where they needed to go. It was, however, interesting to note how clearly the children adjusted their behavior according to whether they were under the watchful gaze of teachers or in the spaces less clearly observed by teachers. When a teacher approached the children to tell them it is time to move on and has a brief look at their work, Peter’s description of his work was decidedly more bland, there were no suggestions of dynamite or Jesus, although his response was still vividly imaginative:

Tuuli (teacher) walks over to the table where the children have been building things out of Math cubes. She makes a general positive comment on them and asks what they are.

Peter: I have made a rocket that knows how to become a man.

Tuuli asks Alekski what his construction is.

Alekski: Maybe this is going to be a hand or something. I don’t know yet.

Tuuli nods at Davim’s and the girls constructions and, smiling, tells the children it is time to move on. (In English)

In the next class, the teachers had organised papers and crayons “so you can draw pictures if you like!” as one teacher expressed. The children were led to a table with papers and crayons organised by color into yoghurt pots, the pots assembled on the centre of the table. There were no books or Math cubes, and apart from drawing, the only other option appeared to be that of sitting quietly waiting for their turn to be tested. By now, the freedom of being able to choose – from a limited selection of activities – what to do, was greeted with less enthusiasm by the children. As the other children started to draw, Alekski wandered off on his own, announcing loudly “I have been here before.” He walked over to look at some posters and books at the back of the class, and was quickly instructed to seat himself back at the table. As she brought Alekski back to the table, the teacher commented: “I would like you not to be too loud.” Fed up with drawing, Alekski started to organise the crayons by color into boxes, but soon joined the others in drawing a picture of his own. With the exception of Alekski and Peter, the children worked quietly on their drawings:

Peter asks Salli what she is drawing.

She does not answer.

Alekski looks at Salli’s picture and says “probably the Earth.”

Alekski turns to his own picture and says “I’m using that as a model” nodding at a poster on the wall of the solar system.

Peter: “Mine is the Land of Fire!” Peter aims for the yoghurt pots with his crayons, missing. (In Finnish)

Gender is a key category position in school, and assumptions regarding gender can be a resource, or limitation, in processes of self-inscription and self-performance in school. Being a pupil is culturally configured through norms related to gender, as the work of Davies (1989, 1993) points out (see also Connolly, 2003; Gordon et al., 2000b; Keddie, 2006; Lappalainen, 2006; Lehtonen, 2003a, 2003b; Reay, 2002; Renold, 2006b). As Gordon et al. (2000b) write, “Ways of inhabiting time – space paths are related to differentiation and forms of enactment,

and this is particularly clear in the case of gender differentiation” (p. 152). This is particularly apparent in transitional moments in pupils’ school careers, Rudduck and Urquhart (2003) posit, claiming “young people tend to seek security from the turbulence of change by ordering their world around the relatively constant dimension of gender identity” (p. 182). Reflecting this thematic, as the tests continued, the boys, in particular Peter, continued with their masculine rhetoric. While at the beginning of the day, Sanna built three guns out of the Math cubes, as time progressed, the girls refused to engage in conversations with the boys, authoring instead a more disciplined social order in the classroom. In the excerpt above, Salli chooses to ignore Peter’s question, creating her own space for herself, sitting focused on drawing a picture next to Sanna. Her picture depicting, as Aleksí suggests, the planet Earth, signifies a move back toward more acceptable, appropriate modes of self conduct in school. This was a move which also Aleksí adopted by choosing to draw the solar system, which was also depicted on a poster on the classroom wall, construing himself through a more school-orientated version of masculinity than that which Peter continued to perform in drawing a picture of the “Land of Fire,” the scene of a children’s action cartoon figuring robot heroes.

While research on school settings has drawn attention to the normative framework of hegemonic masculinity which places academic orientation at odds with the ways in which particularly working-class and ethnic minority masculinities are normalised in school, feminising the academic achievement of boys (Kane, 2006; Keddie, 2006; Reay, 2002; Renold, 2004; Willis, 1977), all the boys in the group I observed accepted the need to comply by the rules of good behavior in the presence of teachers, and were observant of the rules that applied to the testing. Despite performances and acts of daring that transgressed such rules, they did not question the need to perform well, nor the importance of high achievement in school. Davim, Miksu, and in particular Peter, continued on a rebellious note in places not observed directly by teachers, but these performances were less exaggerated – until it was time to have a break and the children were led into a

classroom with books, papers, crayons, biscuits and juice – and no teachers:

Sixth grade pupil Liz: What have you done? Has it been difficult?

Peter: No, because I am seven!

The others quietly respond with “no” and “we have drawn pictures.”

Peter provides a brief, detailed account of some of the activities of the day.

A moment passes, the children quietly drawing.

Peter: Who knows how to make a gumball? It’s easy!

Aleksi: Particularly if the gum already is a ball!

Peter burps loudly and calls out “I am going to take at least a million cookies!”

Liz: Are you nervous of the next tests?

Peter: BURP!

Liz: Aren’t you nervous at all?

Peter laughs loud, then says: No!

The other children are eating their biscuits, making no comments.

The sixth grade pupils carry the biscuit basket away.

Peter: I want to play the computer!

Liz: You can’t play.

Aleksi to Peter, smiling and looking pleased: Did you know that in school you play the computer?

Aleksi, Peter, Miksu and Davim walk over to the table with Math cubes and start to build various objects out of them. Sanna and Salli sit quietly at the table. Liz walks over: “Do you want to draw? We have some red, blue, a bit of green paper, too, here.” Sanna and Salli nod their heads and once they have been given the materials, start drawing quietly, backs toward the boys, hunched over their work.

Peter finishes building something, which he raises above his head and calls out in a loud voice: This is a red ass baboon!

Another sixth grader, Alisa: Don't, maybe not like that.

Some more sixth graders come into the class. They all stand around the Math cubes table where the boys are laughing and building things out of the cubes. Peter and Miksu, in particular, repeat "red ass baboon" several times and laugh loud.

One of the sixth graders, Annika: I can tell you that if you want to get into this school, you should behave nicely, you're not accepted if you don't behave properly. Wouldn't it be nice to get into this school, this is a nice school! (In Finnish)

Sanna and Salli turn their backs to the boys, employing a strategy of ignoring the boys, quietly having their snacks and drawing pictures. They occupied themselves with drawing pictures, showing these to me, taking obvious pleasure in describing their pictures. The fact that there are no teachers present and that earlier in the day they participated actively in the imaginative talk, would, I suggest, place their quiet indifference to the boys more as frustration or irritation with the boys' loud demeanor and as a refusal to audience these performances, rather than merely exemplifying the girls' greater conformity to rules related to appropriate conduct in school nor simply a will to please.

While the teachers had refrained from comment on the children's behavior, at a moment when the boys display increasingly rowdy behavior, Annika, the sixth grader, articulates the view that uncontrollable behavior, rowdy or otherwise, does not go on par with being accepted into the school, implicitly equating acceptance into Sunny Lane School with expectations related to good behavior and linking the position of the good with that of the successful pupil. Sunny Lane School is, she suggests, a "nice school," and children wishing to be accepted need to demonstrate their compliance with rules related to good behavior. The position of the good pupil is signified as one characterised by the anxiety and will to please and to achieve well in school, as implied by Liz's question as to whether the children are "nervous" of the next test.

Peter chooses to break away from the normative categorisation of what constitutes a good pupil, claiming that he is not nervous ("because

I am seven”), burping loudly and building a “red ass baboon,” demonstrating resistance toward the expectation of having to be or wanting to be good. As the tests continue, Peter continues to challenge such expectations when he is not directly under the gaze of teachers, engaging in small acts of mischief, but at the same time, demonstrating confidence rather than anxiety or nervousness over his ability to perform. As they meet the next teacher and she directs them to sit down on a large rug, Peter says loudly in English “I know how to speak Finnish!” producing himself, in the presence of a teacher, as an appropriate, valuable pupil, not accepting the categorisation of being a misbehaving *and* incapable pupil. Indeed, while the boys often dominated the informal spaces provided for the applicants with acts of misdemeanor, they were also more vocal than the girls in articulating their skills and knowledge:

Marianne (teacher): What kind of exercizes have you had to do, sorry, have you been able to do?

Peter (calls out): One of them wasn’t an exercize.

Aleksi (calls out): It was one of those “breaks.”

Marianne: Does anybody have any siblings in school?

Aleksi says that he has a sibling. Marianne asks in which grade and he replies. (In Finnish)

Teachers continued to avoid the word test, preferring expressions such as “your turn to come and talk with me.” Thus when Marianne asks the children “what kind of exercizes have you had to do?” (above), she is quick to correct herself, saying “sorry, have you been able to do?” A similar avoidance was also present in questions such as “how are you?” and “have you had a nice day?” asked by several teachers (cf. Kasanen et al., 2003a, p. 48). While teachers were faithful to efforts to divert children’s attention from the testing and to construe the testing as a “little school day,” these efforts were undermined by the act of testing the children for the bilingual classes. Both the physical organisation of classrooms as well as the exchanges that took place between the teachers and children bore numerous reminders of being tested, and the children

were well aware of the nature of the event they were participating in, as exemplified by the excerpt below:

The teacher, Marianna, sits at the front of the class behind the teacher's table. The children, the "applicants," sit in two rows at the pupils' desks in front of her, some their feet do not reach the floor and are left dangling in the air.

"Have you had an exciting day? Anybody with butterflies in their tummy?" she asks them, smiling. Some of the children nod.

Marianna continues: Now listen up, let's have a look at what happens here.

Aleksi calls out: Yes, and you're not allowed to do whatever you like!

Marianna: Yes, and you're not allowed to look at anybody else's paper. And one more instruction, if you don't understand everything, you can stay seated. It doesn't matter if you don't understand everything. There are lots of difficult words here and maybe you can't understand them all, but never mind.

The children look up at her, quietly.

Aleksi continues: And this is the testing thing, that do you get into the school or not.

Marianna (brief pause followed by wide smile): Yes, but (...) it doesn't matter if you don't understand everything. Let's pretend we're in school, let's sit with our backs straight and look straight towards the teacher, like this!

She demonstrates with her hands how to look straight at the teacher, drawing straight, vertical lines in the air. (In Finnish)

Marianna, like several other teachers, emphasises to children that "it doesn't matter if you don't understand everything," suggesting that it is quite possible that the children will not understand everything. She instructs the children not to look at other children's papers, telling them that "you can stay seated," the conditional tense suggesting an order

that is not imposed on children, but which they willfully adopt. Aleksis disrupts this flow of commentary which reads as an attempt at comfort, commenting “this is the testing thing,” positioning himself as competent and observant of how the testing functions to qualify and disqualify children for participation. The possibility to succeed, Aleksis knows, coexists with the potential to fail, due to which it is important for the children to follow instructions carefully and *not* “do whatever you like.” Following Aleksis’s brief interruption, Marianna pauses briefly, smiles, and returns to the narrative of “playing school,” carving out an alternative space for children to perform, in its theatrical sense, the part of the good pupil who, while perhaps not understanding everything, behaves in a disciplined manner, sitting with their back straight and their eyes focused on the teacher. Good conduct and achieving well are both construed as legitimate positions. Yet the testing demanded that children play the part of the good pupil in both its dimensions. As Aleksis recognises and as confirmed by the efforts of all the children to adhere to the rules of a school day and to participate willingly in the testing activities, ultimately the test scores determine whether the children will be accepted.

6.3 “No name”

The blank page referred to by Certeau holds an expectation and a promise: give yourself a name. “The island of the page”, Certeau (1980/1984) writes, “is a transitional place (...) what comes in is something ‘received,’ what comes out is a ‘product’” (p. 135). The enrollment and entrance tests for the bilingual first grade was a particular, determinate time and space connected to the opportunity of being named among those accepted. The enrollment forms represented a means of identification: whether one lived in the immediate vicinity of the school or further afield, whether one spoke Finnish or Urdu as a home language, what parents’ professions were, and so on, identifying parents’ and pupils’ subject position in the social and economic order, delimiting, as the

quote from Certeau suggests, the kind of subjectivities available to parents at the moment of filling in the forms.

After the tests were over, teachers calculated the points and a list of selected pupils was put up on the school door. Letters were posted to successful applicants and to four children “in queue” for the bilingual class the following week. Most parents did not wait for the possible letter to arrive, but came to the school to check the list. I sat in the school lobby with my diary, taking notes of the parents as they come to check the list of those accepted. “Some parents,” I wrote, “look pleased and make phone calls. One father whisks his child high into the air and swirls her around.” However, the story ends with some children not being accepted, their name excluded from the list of those accepted, as illustrated by the poem at the beginning of this chapter, compiled from my fieldnotes from this afternoon. I had met the child, a six year old girl from Bangladesh, during the entrance tests. Her name had been called and she had followed a teacher into a classroom, had quietly followed instructions, applied herself to drawing quietly during spare time. Now she stood outside the door, holding onto her mother’s coat, crying noiselessly while her parents searched the list of those accepted for her name, repeating “no name.”

The words “no name” are etched on my mind, the words having transformed into a reminder that school choice is a process implicated in naming and claiming particular kinds of identities, which for pupils centers of being among those selected. In this process, the acceptance of some pupils in Sunny Lane School was signalled by naming them on the list of those accepted and thus separating them from those not mentioned, those belonging to the category of pupils who were not accepted, those of “no name” and with no place in the bilingual first grade. School choice and participation in the selection process for the bilingual classes took place at the risk of such exclusion, and the hope for being rewarded, being enlisted and named amongst those accepted. Testing and selecting children is performs a bodily demarcation in which, to borrow Grosz’ analysis, in which “the subject is marked, scarred, transformed, and written upon or constructed by the various regimes of

institutional, discursive, and nondiscursive power as a particular kind of body” (quoted in Somerville, 2004, p. 51).

To return to the reflection of Sanna, the mother who expressed the view that “maybe she understood the situation then, that it was a [pause] like an achievement, if you were accepted,” for parents and children applying for the bilingual classes, the testing functioned as a disciplinary mechanism in which key to the testing process is the ability to constitute oneself as a recognisably desirable subject. Anxiety and the will to conform, to please, was manifest in parents’ appearance and behaviour during school enrollment and the entrance tests, and was reflected in their brief exchanges with teachers as also in their instructions to their children, calling on their children to demonstrate good manners and conduct to teachers. Parents’ final attempts toward advice and reassurance before the entrance tests suggests that they were, indeed, very cognisant of the demand for their children to compete with other children for a placement in the bilingual class.

While the coordinates of belonging in school in Finland have been observed as defined through idealised notions of nationality, class and gender (cf. Gordon et al., 2000b; Hakala, 2007; Hautaniemi 1997; Lappalainen, 2006; Lehtonen, 2003a), school choice has not been strongly linked to “ethnic choosing” (Ball, Reay & David 2003/2006) in the past. Seppänen (2006), for example, claims that questions related to ethnicity did not emerge as a central factor explaining parents’ preferences in her data on parents’ perspectives on applying to schools. In the data I have generated, the postures parents assumed during the initial stages of bilingual classes demonstrated different perspectives and concerns toward schooling. There was common emphasis placed on English and Finnish by parents in contrast with other languages, and understanding of the importance of good English and Finnish skills in the countdown for placements in the bilingual classes. However, while the appearance was one in which parents were bound together by the common objective of procuring a place for their child in the bilingual class, the anxieties and fears expressed by “white” versus “non-white,” “Finnish” versus “immigrant” parents took different form. Minority

parents often demonstrated extreme concern and caution in responding to questions regarding home language and religion, and presented themselves as willing to conform to the norms of mainstream society. This pertains to Kenway and Bullen's (2001) proposition that the marketing of schools is characterised by practices of emulation. Citing the work of Seiter, they define emulation as a process involving "a double movement: an imitation of those richer as well as differentiation from those poorer or less refined" (p. 147). In a sense, emulation follows along similar lines to Fanon's notion of epidermalization (1952/1986) in which some bodies are made more meaningful than others, suggesting, as Gilroy (2000) writes, "a perceptual regime in which the racialized body is bounded and protected by its enclosing skin" (p. 46). This thematic is examined by Toni Morrison (1970/1999) in her book *The Bluest Eye*, where the protagonist, Pecola, accepts the image of being unwanted and unloved pushed on her by those around her. As the story unfolds Pecola, not recognising her self worth, comes to desire blue eyes, convinced that these will make her beautiful and will change her life.

How does one conceptualise such an identification? Priven (2008), pursuing Butler's (2004) discussion on mourning and her question related to whose lives *can* be mourned or grieved, suggests that the loss of language, similar to the loss of human lives, is also organised according to a hierarchy in which some languages cannot be mourned. He writes:

There seems to be a connection between the invisibility of non-European languages in the current political discourse on bilingualism and the non-grievability of the loss of those languages on the community level. This state of affairs firmly positions the immigrant children's competence in their mother tongues as leading to subtractive bilingualism. (p. 101)

Following Derrida, and Heidegger before him, there is "always an already": Categories of what it means to belong or to be a good pupil,

while contested, exist well in advance of the enrollment and entrance tests. The liberatory discourse suggested in Chapter 3 of learning one's mother tongue as a means to greater self-understanding and knowledge of the world, had little hold for minority parents in the moment of enrolling their children for the bilingual first grade. As Skeggs (1998) observes, central to processes of subjectification is "the recognition of others" (p. 40). Reflecting this observation, attending Finnish Mother Tongue lessons and Evangelical Lutheran Religion lessons was, I suggest, interpreted by minority parents as a means to present themselves as "unmarked," unproblematic, as not in need of additional support, speaking to the ways in which notions of Otherness in Finland are grounded in discourses of ethnicity and race (cf. Gordon & Lahelma, 1998; Paasi, 1998; Suurpää, 2001). Finnishness is the unmarked term in the Finnish-Immigrant couplet, and in the absence of similar demands to establish oneself as a legitimate subject, white, ethnic Finnish parents seek approval not on the basis of linguistic or religious belonging, but through establishing themselves as competent in knowledge and skills required in school.

Testing, Popkewitz (1998) writes, is a means to link "social norms with personal identities" (p. 109). In the ethnographic data I have generated of the entrance tests, children applying for the bilingual classes were subject to expectations to perform, to demonstrate their ability. Particularly interesting in the context of the entrance tests was the invitation extended to children and their parents to view the tests as a little school day. Teachers put effort into shifting children's focus from the event of testing, but teachers and children could not reshape at their will the conditions of testing or the logic of consequences on which the tests are premised. Signifiers of the good pupil were employed by both teachers and children during the testing, such as the ability to follow teacher directions in orderly fashion, respond to questions presented by teachers politely, move about quietly and maintain an appearance of quiet concentration. The children conformed, challenged and contested expectations towards appropriate behaviour, appropriating spaces and moments where they were not under the direct gaze of teachers to rep-

resent themselves through quite different repertoires of self, engaging in speech and play that did not conform with the discursive category of the good pupil. While children were able to choose, to certain extent, how to behave, they were subject to the demand to reiterate norms related to what makes a good pupil. Their possibilities to subvert the dominant categorisation of the good pupil, or to position themselves differently within this category, were restricted. Children were accepted into the bilingual classes on the basis of how well they were able to perform in the tests, and while the children engaged in resistance, they had to comply by the rules, participate and respond, go where told to go, and come when told to come.

7

Teachers and parents discussing school choice: Ideas of inclusion and differentiation

Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice.

Certeau (1980/1984, p. 115)

“Space implies time, and vice versa,” Lefebvre (1974/1991, p. 118) claims. Following this view, in their analysis of everyday life in school Gordon et al. (2000b) draw attention to “time-space paths” in school, to the coming together of spatial and temporal elements in the ways school is organised and to how pupils and teachers move within and inhabit physical, social and mental spaces in school, and to embodiment and the material and discursive conditions of existence of pupils and teachers in school (see also Gordon et al., 1999). Similarly, school selection is a spatial practice which implies various parental actions related to school selection at particular moments, and tactics such as school enrollment and entrance tests are employed by teachers to monitor and regulate the flow of pupils (see Chapter 5). School selection is also a practice that makes visible the ways in which particular subjectivities are linked with space, as apparent in studies that document how parents’ school choices are marked by the desire to move into more desirable spaces, identifiable through their absence of pupils des-

igned as less able or less motivated (cf. Davies & Aurini, 2008; Edwards & Whitty, 1997; Gewirtz et al., 1993), involving a discursive practice of “map making,” of which Popkewitz and Lindblad (2000) observe: “As a road map tells us about distances and routes for travel, a discursive map tells us symbolically how to order the objects of the world for scrutiny and practice” (p. 23).

In this Chapter, I teachers make sense of the selection of pupils, examining how they construct distinctions and divisions between pupils in so doing, and exploring meanings they attach to diversity and difference. The emphasis, I argue, is on a discourse of inclusion, and in my analysis, I examine how the process of selecting pupils for bilingual classes fits in with this discourse. I draw attention to some of the uncertainties, hesitations and skirted issues in how teachers discussed the specialisation of their school and the selection of pupils. In the second part of the chapter, I explore how parents discussed their choice of the bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School, examining the justifications they provided for choosing these classes and the differentiations they constructed between pupils in so doing.

7.1 Teacher reflections on inclusion and the task of selecting pupils

The promise of schooling as it is generally articulated is not one of ensuring particular pupils are excluded from privileged positions in society, but its opposite – of including pupils in school and in society. In teaching, the dual task of education, regulation and emancipation, is often translated into the ideal of including pupils into school; teaching knowledge and skills deemed necessary in society and organising classroom practice so that “all” children can participate. Popkewitz (1998, 2000, 2001) problematises the concept of inclusion, demonstrating how it is located within a political liberalist discourse of cosmopolitanism and is articulated through themes such as personal autonomy, freedom and empowerment, but at the same time is rooted in differen-

tiation from the “unfinished cosmopolitan”, the child who is identified as needy and at-risk. Inclusion, Popkewitz (2001) writes, does not imply exclusion as its opposite, for these are two different sides of the same coin: the identification of particular subjects for inclusion already construes others as being on the outside, the concepts inclusion and exclusion capturing the ways in which distinctions are drawn, “qualifying and disqualifying (...) for participation and action” (p. 180). As Popkewitz, Olsson and Petersson (2006) write:

The redemptive hopes and desires of the unfinished cosmopolitan are a double narrative that expresses the fears of the individual who will prevent and destroy that future and its notions of the civilized (...) The fears, however, do not appear as such. They are often expressed in terms of inclusion and questions of equity, to reach out to those at risk of falling behind or not catching up – immigrants, ethnic, and racial groups who have not succeeded and who are marginalized. (p. 443)

Cosmopolitan ideals, Popkewitz argues, function through their reasonableness: exclusions need to be identified to ensure greater inclusion, greater freedom, empowerment and progress. The way which this is taken up in education, he writes, is through pedagogy aimed at disciplining the *soul* of the child through “the inscription of the universal rules of reason transported to the actor and agency” (2001, p. 183). The child in school, the pupil, as he demonstrates, is positioned as the object for pedagogical reform and cure. This process draws from a cultural politic in which problems in discipline are understood through categories such as race, ethnicity, class and gender (Popkewitz, 2000; Rose, 1999). The teacher’s position is signified as that of interpreting and seeing pupils, and this vision is suggested as being transformed into pedagogical knowledge of what needs to be done to ensure each pupil’s journey into adulthood and their inclusion into society. The good teacher is to transmit liberal humanist ideals such as democracy, equality and freedom of choice, ensuring the progress, health and happiness

of each individual pupil, overcoming past failures, and the classroom is construed as a wellspring of pedagogical hopefulness (cf. Davies et al., 2001; Gómez, 2008; Simola, 1995, 1998). Such notions of progressivism in education, Walkerdine (1992) notes, “makes powerlessness, the product of oppression, invisible. Within the naturalised discourse it is rendered ‘unnatural,’ ‘abnormal,’ ‘pathological’ – a state to be corrected” (p. 21).

Under neo-liberal reform, the “profession and culture of teaching,” Kenway and Willis (1998) posit, has become increasingly redefined by logics derived from “economic rationalism, corporate managerialism and technical rationality” in place of moral justification and a more complex understanding of classroom practice (p. xviii; see also Ball & Vincent, 2003/2006; Fenwick, 2003; Whitty, 1999). Reform policies, however, do not reach the ground in the exact shape as they did when they were introduced in the state educational discourse of official documents such as the curriculum, and teachers have both accommodated and resisted neo-liberal emphases in educational planning (cf. Fenwick, 2003; Rinne et al., 2002; Rätty et al., 1997; Simola, 1998). As Ball (1997/2006) cautions, “it is important not to mistake the heat and noise of reform and the rhetorics of marketisation for ‘real’ structural and values change” (p. 13). There are both consistencies and contingencies in educational rhetoric. In Nordic countries, Gordon et al. (2003) note, the marketisation of education is visible in slippages in educational rhetoric from traditional emphasis placed on equality: discourse on education has not simply been overturned or changed its course completely, but traces of social egalitarian values appear alongside newer emphases. However, in Finland, teachers have been less inclined to critique the educational reforms of the 1990s than in many European countries. As Simola and Hakala (2001) note in their qualitative study involving interviews with fifty Finnish teachers, the teachers were generally appreciative of the increase in decision making authority to schools and the emphasis placed on pupils’ individual needs and interests (see also Rätty et al. 1997; Simola, 2005). In the following section, I examine how teachers make sense of the contradictions that emerge

from the selection of pupils and the principle of inclusiveness that Finnish schooling is spoken of as representing, analysing my ethnographic fieldnotes and ethnographic interviews with teachers in Sunny Lane School, as well as my interviews with Minna from Pudas School and Ritva from Suensaari School.

“Just testing language”

Beach (2003, pp. 120–122) suggests that two contradictory discourses prevail in teachers’ discussion of pupil performance: “visionary discourse” and “actual outcomes discourse”. He notes that while in visionary discourse teachers suggest more inclusive ideals, actual outcomes discourse focuses on differentiation in ways that rationalize the selection of specific pupils over others for educational investment, perceiving pupils from the outset in terms of differential capabilities. Pertaining to such a visionary discourse, teachers in Sunny Lane School maintained that school should be a place where all pupils experience success and where they learn and master knowledge and skills. This view was also reflected in the school curriculum which included the statements “everyone has the right to good learning” and “everyone should be provided with opportunities to grow as a member of the community.” Testing pupils was justified as a means to achieve these goals; as acting on behalf of the best interests of *all* children, and as a means to emphasise rather than oppose equal educational opportunity. Particular pupils, teachers suggested, needed to be protected from “feeling they’re always lagging behind.” The responsibility of teachers was construed as that of ensuring all pupils participating in the bilingual classes had the necessary skills to experience success in school, to study and solve problems in both English and Finnish. As bilingual teachers emphasised, “our starting point is that they have control of both languages.” During the time I spent at the school, teachers often repeated the view that the introduction of entrance tests had not interfered with ideals of inclusivity. Emphasis was placed on parents having decided to have their child

tested, and parents, rather than teachers, were suggested as interpreting the tests as a symbol of distinction and ability:

Silja: Yeah. But it's kind of radical, that school starts with these tests.

Anna: Yes, but I think that quite a lot depends on the teacher (when school starts), that in many families, it feels like a fine thing to come to school through tests. (Fieldnotes: May 2004)

The tests, teachers underlined, do not test cognitive abilities but "*just test language*," and act as a tool for determining who has the ability to succeed in a bilingual learning environment through "exposing, like linguistic weaknesses." Tiina elaborates:

Tiina: And our terms of admissions are that they have, like, two languages, that it is, that they have proficiency in both two languages. It hasn't been, like, defined where they've acquired the two languages, or what the background of the pupil is, where they come from. (Interview: February 2003)

While the literature on CLIL suggests that it is equally opportune for all pupils (see Chapter 3) with Merisuo-Storm (2002) noting in her study that CLIL teaching does not have a negative effect on the literacy skills of pupils diagnosed as having either poor or excellent levels of school readiness, such perspectives did not emerge in discussion on the entrance tests and on the need to select pupils in Sunny Lane School. In many of our discussions, teachers represented bilingual pupils with problems in Finnish or English as susceptible to fail in school, and the favourable option was suggested as being that of such pupils changing to a Finnish class. The impression was one of needing to carefully classify which pupils have the qualities required to participate, with teachers' discussion of the entrance tests focusing on the need to differentiate between children, to predict what possibilities children have to perform well in a bilingual class:

Pirjo: In my [class] it was quite descriptive, the test. For me, it went so that I had some ten who did excellently in the test and who came in fairly flying, and then I had this, like (sighs deeply) OK group.

Silja: Yeah, mm.

Pirjo: And then there were these that came from the queue. And then I went, I knew who came from the queue and I talked with their parents at our [Parent-Teacher] meeting the very beginning of autumn (...) Now unfortunately in my class it's somehow [pause] come true, that pupils who have been accepted, sort of, from under the decided [test score] limit, that there really are these [pause] problems, that the test sort of reflected, but not so detailed, that we could have [pause]

Silja: Yes.

Pirjo: not accepted them. (Interview: May 2004)

The tests were approached by teachers from a technical rationality, as the most accurate, efficient means to establish acceptance into the bilingual classes. Anna observed that originally the idea of the tests was for teachers “like special ed teachers’ like, check out that where do they have a plus and where do they need support” in Finnish and English. The purpose of the tests, she underlined, was to focus on pupils’ language skills, not to identify ideal pupils for teachers. “We have the right to test their language, but we don’t have the right to select pupils for teachers,” she emphasised. The tests, teachers asserted, were to differentiate between pupils who have merely acquired surface language level skills, or “social-” and “conversational skills,” and pupils who can manage with academic language that was associated with school:

Tiina: And it’s totally different to know this academic language than this social language that children use amongst themselves, this sort of “small talk.” It’s, like, usually it’s the most difficult thing in developing bilingualism, in the second language, this [academic language] (...) It takes a few years to develop academic language

so you can explain things in school, so you can translate things in your mind and guess what different words mean. And you can see it's more difficult for some pupils. (Interview: February 2003)

Unlike social language, academic language was linked by teachers to metalanguage, to the ability to compare and contrast languages, switch spontaneously from one language to another, have a good command of various concepts and be able to use clues to figure out the meaning of new words. "And it's this working skill that I think the test should measure," Tiina identified, defining this skill as instrumental to participation in a bilingual class:

And usually it's so that (...) if their bilingualism is strong then their metalanguage has developed (...) like "aha, this is how language works!" "My book says," and "this other book says," and "these things are the same, these things are different," "my book says this like this," and sort of "ah, in the book it's sort of, de-dee," this is it! It doesn't always work. You can tell really well if a child has this ability. (Interview: February 2003)

Participation in a bilingual class is presented by Tiina as requiring good translation skills, allowing fluid movement from one language to another, as well as self confidence and the capability to work independently. Bilingual pupils, as she describes, should not "get blown off their balance because of this feeling that 'I don't understand what the teacher's saying.'"

In teachers' discussion, the ability to acquire good language skills was construed as something pupils either have or don't have. As two bilingual teachers proposed in a discussion on the entrance tests results in 2003, they had "noticed" in school that some pupils often repeated the same grammatical mistakes such as the "did-thingy." This, they agreed, "is not about habit, it's about ability." Several teachers reflected on the lack of institutional support for immigrant pupils in regard to learning Finnish. The number of immigrant and special needs pupils,

as observed by the teachers in Sunny Lane School, had been on a steady rise, and many of the teachers voiced criticisms of the conjoining of the two. As one of the special education teachers remarked, most pupils in these classes in Sunny Lane School came from an immigrant background, suggesting the need to scale up preparatory schooling in Finnish rather than “keep increasing the number of special ed classes.” Kaisu, one of the bilingual teachers, critiqued the “pull-out” model (see Arnesen, 2003, p. 54) of support for these pupils as being out-dated and inefficient. At the same time pupils with more than two home languages were often interpreted in ways that identified these students as more prone to fail in school (cf. Lappalainen & Rajander, 2005):

Pirjo: Again, we have all kinds of experiences, and we have noticed that these trilingual families are a kind of, that it can work really well, it's not a rule, but a kind of. (Interview: February 2003)

Tiina: Trilingualism often means that the strong language at home is then another language than Finnish or English. And that's a bit difficult. (Interview: February 2003)

While Pirjo observes “we have all kinds of experiences,” her view was that poor Finnish skills often translate into weak achievement in school and poor educational prospects, and this view was shared by also other teachers in the school. The association of poor school achievement with poor Finnish skills was also reflected by discussion on Finnish as a Second Language pupils, who were represented as more likely to face difficulties in school and as less likely to do well in their studies, with some teachers contending the difficulties these pupils had in school reflected problems associated with their family or ethnic background:

Saija: then these (...) pupils who have this Finnish as a second language teaching also have, quite often, other special needs, too.

Silja: Mm.

Saija: That sometimes there are these [pause] quite clearly, these social problems, that, kind of [pause] Or that they don't have this kind of responsibility and they can't understand that things have consequences, and that things don't just happen. That for the kind of, that these (...) things make normal class work a lot more difficult. (Interview, May 2004)

On a similar note, Minna from Pudas School claimed "immigrants are completely another thing." To succeed, she suggested, they needed to be taught Finnish and even so, "how many of them make it that far [to upper secondary school], not everyone can become [an upper secondary school graduate]." In a similar vein, Anna identified the strong Finnish skills of the first bilingual class in Sunny Lane School as having been particularly favorable to their school achievement:

So, the first time we couldn't place a lot of emphasis on their English skills. So often, many of them had done really well in the Finnish tests and only a small group really had the English. But that class, when they left us, they were, well, incredibly good. Those children really had a good command of their own mother tongue and clearly it supported all their other studies and also learning the foreign language really well. (Silja: Mm). That class really didn't have kind of, hardly any kinds of problems, not in school attendance things in general and not, particularly not in their learning. (Interview: February 2003)

While teachers observed there were difficulties involved in just testing pupils' language skills, in staff meetings and staffroom discussion the focus was on questions of accuracy and efficiency and on the ability of the tests to differentiate between applicants, rather than, for example, on whether particular groups were disadvantaged or how socioeconomic advantage was associated with the selection of pupils. The bilingual teachers had developed the entrance tests over the years so that, at the time of my fieldwork, the test results formed a multi-paged packet.

Each year, teachers in Sunny Lane School went over the tests collectively to “improve” and “revise” the tests, the criteria and procedures of which teachers at Sunny Lane School were almost solely responsible for themselves. Objectivity, teachers maintained, was guaranteed by having many testers and many parts in the entrance tests which produced information of pupils’ achievement which was then translated into numerical details from the various parts of the tests. At the same time teachers also expressed uncertainty, telling me they had not been “prepared for this kind of thing,” and had received no support from the School Office in the form of training or guidance related to the tests. Katri elaborated how particularly in the past teachers engaged in “never-ending” conversations as to whether or not the tests tested pupils’ general school abilities or only fluency in Finnish and English. The matter, teachers asserted, could not be completely resolved:

Liisa: You can never have a totally objective test, anyway. We have to try and find out what’s closest, of course, or we end up sort of testing the child’s personality, but that [personalities have an influence] can’t really be helped. (Fieldnotes from a staff meeting: February 2003, in Finnish)

What was excluded from the discourse of just testing language was the place of refusal, of not wanting to participate in test activities, for children’s successful participation in the entrance tests required willingness to perform, to speak, in the moment of testing (see Chapter 6). While Tiina problematizes the assumption of the entrance tests just testing language, the test scores were not open for interpretation. Similarly, while the ideal home language situation was spoken of as one in which pupils have parental support for both Finnish and English – “it would be really important that the support for both languages is to be found in the homes,” as one bilingual teacher commented – importance was assigned to the test results rather than coming from a bilingual background. It was with some disconcertion that teachers discussed the non-acceptance of children whom they knew to be bilingual:

Tiina: One thing about the entrance tests, too, is that we have these familiar families that we know are bilingual, and a really strange situation took place last spring. The parents whose younger child was applying (...) well, the child didn't say anything during the test. And their oldest children are in our school [the bilingual classes]. We have the principle that we place our decisions on the tests and I talked with the mum after the tests, I told that I can't, we can't take her in if she won't speak a word. She said something in Finnish in a whisper, but was as quiet as a mouse all morning. So there you go, she's in the Finnish class now. (Interview: February 2003)

This child's failure, which defies the conditions of acceptance as the teachers already know the child to be bilingual, is described by Tiina as "strange." This strangeness is caused by a disruption to teachers' expectations of the children willingly participating in the tests. In refusing the demand to perform, she determines her non-acceptance. The refusal to speak renders teachers powerless to measure her performance, as it also enables the child to position herself, if momentarily, as powerful, as non-compliant with the demands of recognition and with the expectation to want to be accepted into the bilingual first grade. The emphasis placed on being able to speak Finnish and English translates silence into the inability to perform, as children who do not speak are automatically and without exception classified as not having the ability to do so.

Notions of normality and exceptionalism in teachers' discussion of bilingual pupils

The carefully planned and monitored tests were spoken of as the most just, objective means to cut down the number of pupils and were interpreted as ensuring that social advantage was not a decisive factor in determining which children are accepted. That teachers have been successful

in this task was, teachers asserted, apparent in the heterogeneity – and normalcy in heterogeneity – of the kinds of pupils in bilingual classes:

Tiina: And in our bilingualism we have paid special attention to, so in the selection stage that although we get together to share the results, and there are comments that “s/he is lively” and “was very restless” and like this, that you have to erase those. That it can’t influence. And I think that in Sunny Lane we have really emphasised this really well (...) And that’s one thing I’m quite proud about in our school, that we have a really heterogeneous bunch. (Interview: February 2003)

Several bilingual teachers observed “we have all kinds” of pupils in bilingual classes, implying that these classes were neither elitist nor reserved for a particular group of pupils. The suggestion that bilingual classes were composed of all kinds of pupils took place in relation to ability and motivation (“there have *always* been pupils who have worked hard and there have *always* been pupils who go where the fence is at its lowest,” as Anna claimed), and occasionally to pupils’ cultural or social background:

Pirjo: And then it’s been interesting to note, especially as you often hear teachers say that “those bilingual, they’re such nice pupils,” and like this, that it really shows that a lot of people have moved to Finland who clearly have a bilingual background. That we’re not talking about language skills that have come through, somehow, position or work, but purely from parents who represent two different cultures, and of course the children represent a different mass after that, which is really healthy, that we’ve been able to achieve, like, what I think is a more balanced pupil material. (Interview: February 2003)

Silja: Does this demand some kind of skills or knowledge or?

Ritva: I think language skills are the most, the most important

(...) I don't think the children are different (...) Let's say bilingual students definitely have, in the same way, mm, short attention spans and even social problems there, that their family situations aren't any more different than those of students on the Finnish side. (Interview: May 2003)

Normality, in these narratives, is not construed through being unmarked or through embodying the distinctions of desirable subjectivity, but through a reverse discourse, namely that of being equally heterogeneous to pupils in regular Finnish classrooms and other schools. "I don't think the children are different," as one teacher claimed. In this narrative, normal students are represented as having short attention spans, as coming from various "family situations," as disrupting lessons with chatter, forgetting homework and as sometimes failing to achieve well in school. As one teacher elaborated in a conversation we had in the staffroom at the time of the entrance tests:

I sometimes think that maybe because of the tests, the kind of pupils they perhaps favour, our pupils are very talkative, they have difficulties being quiet sometimes, but that's because we try not to pay attention to other things and just concentrate on language, although, of course, you can probably never completely [just test language]. (Fieldnotes: March 2003, in Finnish)

As Foucault (1975/1995) writes, discourses of power in the Western world have been connected to normalisation, to the introduction of divides between the normal and abnormal, and it is interesting to compare the emphasis placed on heterogeneity as normalcy in the context of bilingual classes with the idealisation of homogeneity in the context of special education and Finnish classes. As a teachers of one of the school's special education classes asserted in positive manner of his class, his class represented "more homogeneity" during the school year 2003–2004 than it had in the previous year, portraying high levels of difference in pupils' skills and knowledge as problematic to establishing

inclusive classroom practices. Similarly, one of the Finnish teachers, Tuija, in reflecting on several pupils in her class who had been classified as having learning difficulties, expressed concern that "I don't know, what will happen when one day they realise that they're not as good as the others."

In official educational rhetoric, as Arnesen (2003) writes, while emphasis is placed on ideas of inclusiveness, "normal school discourse" that prevails when problems arise "problematicises particular pupils, such as those defined as having "special needs," favoring some pupils over others (p. 53). In teacher discussions of pupil achievement, Arnesen observes, heterogeneity and normalcy intersect within a hierarchical structuring of academic merit in school, where – despite emphasis placed on heterogeneity – ability and giftedness are the desired qualities in pupils. These were also qualities often associated with bilingual pupils in Sunny Lane School. While teachers observed of bilingual pupils – and my fieldnotes include ample examples to support this observation – that they often interrupted lessons with commentaries, questioned teachers' practices and took initiative to speak without raising their hand or waiting their turn, this was discussed as being a nuisance more than a reflection of problems pupils might have in learning or of low levels of motivation. "In our school, most of the children do well [in school]," as one of the teachers explained to a visitor, continuing on a positive note on the presence of special needs pupils in the school: "it is good for them [pupils who do well in school] to see that 'we're different.'"

Having all kinds, as Hage (1998) writes, does not suggest a community that *is* plural, but one which *has* plurality, defining difference through a normative framework that conditions who can be recognised as able and normal. The emphasis teachers placed on normalcy as heterogeneity maintained an inclusive ideology through acknowledging and even emphasising difference, and choosing to momentarily overlook the extent to which failure to achieve well in school poses problems to pupils. The suggestion that pupils were variously positioned in relation to classed advantage and that there were also weak pupils in bilingual classes, however, positioned particular pupils as more prone to

succeed or fail in school. Furthermore, while teachers underlined that bilingual pupils demonstrated various levels of school performance and represented various classed positions, these claims were contradicted by some teachers in their descriptions of bilingual classes as absent of “really weak” pupils and of the school-orientatedness of families, as well as teachers’ depictions of the kind of work bilingual pupils are able to do (see Chapter 8).

The arrival of CLIL classes in Sunny Lane School, as also in Pudas and Suensaari School, had increased the number of pupils considerably, having more than doubled the number of pupils from its low. In all three schools, classrooms were being used to full capacity, and in Sunny Lane School, some of the rooms originally built for other purposes had been converted into classrooms to cater for the increased number of pupils. Thus, the library had been moved into the hallway, a cloakroom had been converted into a computer storeroom, and most of the classrooms were crowded, with little space to move between the desks – which, not only for pedagogical reasons, as one of the bilingual teachers pointed out, but also for reasons related to the lack of space were most often organised into rows or groups of desks facing the teacher’s table at the front. Indeed, in most classrooms pupils sat so close together that their chairs and bags bumped one another when they moved. Some of the larger classrooms had been renovated into two classrooms, and during the lessons you could sometimes hear sounds such as singing and playing from other classrooms. Not all of the pupils fit into the lunch hall at the same time, so classes came to lunch at rotating times between ten and twelve in the mornings. Teachers’ instructions to pupils were intermittent with calls to “put your school bags out of the way,” “one row at a time,” and “let’s make room for her/him to come,” for example. Coming into the school and going outside were closely monitored by teachers to avoid “pushing and shoving,” as one teacher explained, observing that “we noticed that the doors were a place that when they come in, it’s a bit restless.”

While portrayed as undesirable and as causing difficulties in the organisation and management of classroom space to maintain orderli-

ness, cleanliness and peaceful atmosphere, the large number of pupils in bilingual classes was suggested by teachers as possible because of the kinds of pupils in these classes and the kinds of families pupils came from. In discussing pupils who had passed the entrance tests and been accepted into the bilingual classes, teachers' view of bilingual pupils alternated to one in which they did *not* rule out the influence and importance of pupils' ability and social background. Although described as being more heterogeneous than Finnish grades by several teachers, as having "some that are really, really good and others that have difficulties [in learning]," at times bilingual pupils were suggested as being exceptionally competent pupils. Ritva from Suensaari elaborates:

Ritva: the children have, on average, seen the world more, they feel quite mature. It does place demands on teachers, on their teaching, too, yes, there are some Einsteins there, and, mm, the average teacher is really *helisemässä*⁸⁶. You have to stream, yes (...). If you think of biology in sixth grade, like I told you, it's really demanding. I've seen that they are really mature and language-wise learn other foreign languages really well [pause]. That very often they have a really good, sturdy background. (Interview: May 2003)

In contradiction to the ideal of learning all areas of the curriculum in two languages, Patrik identified "useful as frequent" as his "guiding star" regarding the introduction of new English vocabulary to his pupils. This was not because he interpreted his class as having difficulties in school:

Patrik: For example with vocabulary lists (...) there's no point in teaching loads of words that the kids will never use and that are infrequent or rare in normal language.
 Silja: Do you mean Maths or Science now, or?

⁸⁶ *Jingling*, suggesting being put under so much pressure that you start to jingle.

Patrik: Everything, everything.

Silja: [Pause]. Yeah.

Patrik: So for example, in say Science, I think it's pointless to teach them words like rhinoceros in English.

Silja: Mm.

Patrik: They can look them up on the Internet, so they learn how to find it, or from dictionaries (...) You can't demand them, because [such words] really rarely appear, and if they specialise to become biologists some day, then they can use the (...) English word for rhinoceros in their PhD. (Interview: May 2004)

The expectation was for bilingual pupils to succeed relatively well in school, for as another teacher observed, "this doesn't include all the pupils, but overall I would say that they are maybe better, better than a normal class." Bilingual classes were described as composed of pupils who are "terribly good, no problem children at all," who are "nice children (...) [who] don't have as much personality," for example. They were signified as being generally school-orientated, as hard-working and high-achieving, and this representation was also presented to and shared by various visitors who came to Sunny Lane School during the school year. As one of the bilingual teachers commented to a visiting teacher from another school that had recently introduced bilingual classes in another part of Finland, "yes, [the bilingual classes] are big groups, but because they come here through the tests, they're maybe a more homogeneous group." To this, the visitor responded, "true, if I think of over twenty normal children, it would be too much, but these kids are selected." In a similar vein, during the Parents' Evening of one of the bilingual classes, one of the teachers who made her appearance in the class explained to the parents that the class had "no pupils with real difficulties, they're a steady lot, and after all, they've all been tested," suggesting that variation among bilingual pupils was limited, and bilingual classes did not include pupils who faced extreme difficulties in school.

Denial of elitism

Woods and Jeffrey (2002) posit in the context of the restructuring of education in England that notions of what constitutes good teaching have changed in emphasis from a previous preoccupation with holistic child-centeredness to a focus on teacher competencies and expertise. This shift, they posit, has led to “a yearning by teachers to retain old values” (p. 97). While similar emphasis has not been placed on child-centeredness in Finland (cf. Lappalainen, 2006), being a Finnish school was often aligned by teachers with moral commitment to inclusiveness and equality. A logic of good versus bad teaching was present in the ways bilingual teachers identified themselves as dedicated to their work, and in the ways they described their efforts to improve and revise the entrance tests:

Pirjo: We’ve always got fifteen teachers in [the week before school begins], that we’ve, we’ve understood, together, that it’s important [to conduct the entrance tests]. That this is how, this is how it needs to be done so that we can work with the kids along the year. (Interview: February 2003)

There were, however, ambivalences, hesitations and some expressions of regret concerning the need to test pupils, with one of the bilingual teachers commenting that testing children is “sad but necessary.” The disappointment and critique of parents and children not accepted were, the principal observed, “really difficult to deal with,” and as Pirjo remarked after the entrance tests are over and the teachers began the process of compiling the results, “if I had to choose a school for my children, I’d put them into a normal Finnish school where they ski all winter and the rest of the school year they run.” In the staff meetings before and after the testing, as well as in informal staffroom discussion, particularly female teachers put distance between themselves and the social differentiation made possible through school selection. The emphasis on the personal commitment and dedication of bilingual

teachers appeared, at times, as a means to circumvent the question of how the selection of pupils fitted in with the school's focus of being a school "for all," particularly given that there was no space for deliberation regarding the process of testing.

I return to Anna's comment following the entrance tests that "the language is secondary, it is like an additional good thing; the important thing is that they learn it a little bit." Given that the school curriculum stated the aim of bilingual classes to "develop pupils' bilingualism," and given also the inclusive rhetoric articulated by the school's principal of "looking after Finland's children and children in our city" (see Epilogue), it could be argued that comments such as these were put forward by staff to evade the topic of how school choice is connected to social advantage, their silence perhaps reflecting discomfort with the consumerist ethic and competitive fervour of parents' pursuit of school choice, as also with the school's selection process for bilingual grades.

Most teachers did not oppose the freedom to choose a school, but many questioned whether or not children actually participated in this choice, and if so, how willingly, placing the burden of blame on parents who they described as being ambitious and often affluent. Teachers expressed dread toward parents who come to school to storm about the test results, for critique, when raised by parents, took place after the results of the entrance test results were publicised. The principal, in preparation for parents' complaints regarding the test results, kept the papers documenting the test scores by her phone for quick reference, "where I can see it (...) so it's there when they call," as she explained. Teachers described incidents involving parents, in particular fathers of children who had not been accepted, coming to school and confronting teachers in violent, aggressive ways, "waging a war" on teachers or "flying into a rage" over the test results, and of parents who had taken their complaints forward, appealing to school officials or court. As one teacher expressed in a conversation we had prior to the entrance tests, "we have to make good documents on the tests because I'm sure there'll be lots of complaints." The position adopted by some teachers, as defined by Mikko, was that "teachers are the professionals" (cf. Hakala, 2007).

The entrance test results presented a means to justify to parents why certain children were not accepted, and thus to avoid further conflicts:

Ritva: But that I feel secure, because I trust that because there are so many testers and (...) different kinds of tests and it's all documented, so judicially there's no weak link there (...) And we arrange, like, [the results of] the tests in written form, and the results [from the different parts] are bundled together. So if we get inquiries, like we do, on these scores, or like complaints, then we can appeal to this bundle. So it's a really good judicial, like I think it's the child's, too, kind of right [pause] legal protection, and our legal protection, that we haven't made any wrong decisions (...) And then of course it's unfortunate that they, on a weekly basis there are parents that you need to explain [why their child wasn't accepted]. (Interview: May 2003)

When recalling parents who aggressively objected to the rejection of their child for entrance tests, teachers revert from a narrative of pupils coming from all kinds of families representing a variety of classed backgrounds, to an alternative narrative which problematises the influence of parents' economic resources to the selection of particular pupils into bilingual classes. In this narrative, parents' financial resources are inadvertently construed as a decisive factor in determining the kinds of pupils that come to participate in bilingual classes, which is posed as marking a move away from a previous meritocratic focus. Pirjo articulates:

There are people who have the financial resources and put their children into an English kindergarten. But talented pupils aren't supported by the markets. Their parents just wouldn't come to thinking of this [bilingual program]. (Interview: May 2004)

The argument underpinning Pirjo's claim is that it would be good to allow talented pupils to pursue their giftedness (cf. Rätty & Snellman,

1998; Rinne, 2000) and that this should not be influenced by the financial resources of their parents. Inadvertently, Pirjo recognises that this is not presently the case. The free market has not, she asserts, delivered equal opportunities to all pupils. From this viewpoint, the discourse of just testing language appears as an idealistic discourse, as an effort to represent the tests as a means to ensure that all pupils are able to be included, that there is, to paraphrase Beach (2003, p. 126), no gaping hole between the logic of selection and ideals of inclusiveness. Some parents, teachers suggested, have lifestyles at odds with the schools' ethos of work and meritocratic commitments, teaching their children "daddy will pay," and taking "comparatively abundant days off school" to ski-, spa- and beach destinations, at the same time holding high expectations of school. Yet as Tiina expressed:

Tiina: [CLIL in Finnish and English] is a little bit of an elitist thing, as well, on one hand, that there is this kind of – I don't want to imply that our school is, or, but it's particular parents that want, that want, of course [unclear] that want this kind of bilingual schooling for their children so that they would be more successful in their lives. (Interview: May 2004)

Elitism was not a category bilingual teachers were willing to apply to Sunny Lane School, and was associated by teachers with the few private schools that exist in Finland and with particular parents. "I'm proud that we're not elitist," as one of the bilingual teachers observed. However, teachers denied pronounced or acute privilege rather than its existence altogether, for as one bilingual teacher observed:

Elitism, it still lives on in some families and like in the children's backgrounds (...) That in families it probably is one of those things that they discuss, that "well, our child goes to this bilingual school and of course it's a bit tougher, but everything's gone fine." (Interview: May 2004)

Elitism was associated with parents who teachers identified as often having high demands and expectations toward school and as lacking in neither economic resources nor the will to use these to their own benefit. Adopting a meritocratic discourse of education (cf. Canaan, 2004), teachers asserted that school should reward talented, motivated pupils. In this context, Anton claimed that to define schools with specialised programs as elite schools “is just some kind of a striking weapon or an exaggeration.” Inequality was located outside school, as reflecting the unequal structures of society rather than school, and the task of inclusion was translated by teachers into that of ensuring pupils “in the middle” are taken into consideration:

Silja sits down on a chair in the staffroom opposite Tuija, who is lying on a couch opposite her, one hand covering her eyes, the other holding on to a mug of coffee.

Silja: Feeling tired?

Tuija: Answers in the positive. She says “I have the principle, that whatever work I take up, I always give it my best.” At the moment, she says, she feels frustrated. She says she has been working hard, coming home “dead tired.” Tuija says she’s been thinking that maybe if she went to a school in another part of the town “I’d be of more use there.” She continues: “here parents think you can get everything with money.”

Tuija is a class teacher of a Finnish grade, but is also responsible for some lessons with a bilingual class. Silja asks, whether she’s referring to the parents of her class, or those on the bilingual side.

Tuija: “I don’t think there’s any difference between parents on the bilingual or Finnish side.” She pauses. She continues: “I’m such an idealist, I think you can still change the world through education.” Another quiet moment, then: “I’ve told parents that regardless of what you do or I do, those great men and women will arise out of there, but it’s especially those plodding in the middle, they’re important.” (Fieldnotes: February 2004, in Finnish)

Tuija presents herself as dedicated to progressive ideals according to which “you can still change the world through education” – a view which she identifies as being at odds with the expectations of parents in the school who view education as a means to ensure individual benefit to their children. These comments reflect Tuija’s frustration with the influence of class-based power relations in school, such as her frustration, put forward in earlier discussion, with parents who claimed the exceptional qualities of their children over those of others. Tuija claims education should attend particularly to the needs of those situated in the middle ground: towards those who are not destined, by reference to exceptional ability, to become “great men and women,” but who through hard work and diligence have the potential to make something of themselves and of the world. It is these students, with equal likelihood of either succeeding or failing in school that, she suggests, that need more attention in school. While Tuija renders problematic the pursuit of individual opportunity by parents she interprets as financially affluent, she does not problematise discourses that constitute pupils as having different learning needs and abilities. “Not everyone is suited for university,” as she expressed in a conversation we have later, taking up the position that teachers should respond to – but are not able to transform – the individual dispositions and abilities of their pupils.

7.2 Parents as choice makers: Responsibility and the pursuit of educational opportunity

In many countries, the right of parents to select a school for their child has been linked to the commodification of education and the cultivation of educational opportunity for an increasingly select few (cf. Ball, 2006; Beach et al., 2003; Forsey et al., 2008; see also Seppänen, 2006), exacerbating a morality embedded in competition and choice. Given the popularity of bilingual classes and the ways in which their introduction is linked by teachers to the educational needs and aspirations of a particular group of parents (see Chapter 5), an interesting question is

how *do* parents construct their selection of a bilingual class? Thus in the following section, I examine parents' narratives of school selection, exploring some of the differences between the narratives of ethnic majority parents and minority parents, drawing attention to discourses of mobility and meanings connected to location.

For most parents, school choice was clearly linked to the organisation of particular "time space paths" (Gordon et al., 2000b, 2007), and included decisions such as the selection of a kindergarten and the decision to move into a particular locality. Of the twenty-two families with children in bilingual classes included in my interviews, only five represented bilingual homes where English was spoken by one of the parents as a First Language. In six families, children had learned English overseas, and in eleven families children had learned English in a private kindergarten in Finland. The choice of the bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School was most often construed as having been parents' joint decision.⁸⁷ However, mothers rather than fathers discussed having done the work of "looking around," "finding information," and "discussing different options with friends" (cf. David, Davies, Edwards & Standing, 1997; Reay, 1998). In all the families, decisions related to kindergarten and school choice were made by parents, not children. A shared perception was that education is key to determining future opportunities and that parents' responsibility is to take their children's education seriously. With the possibility of selecting a school, parents suggested, comes the responsibility to give careful consideration to the selection of a school from the alternatives available. Kindergarten and school selection were discussed as having involved the weighing of pros and cons of different alternatives and making comparisons, positive and negative, between different kindergartens and different schools. As expressed by Kati, an ethnic majority mother:

⁸⁷ My data includes interviews with two single mothers who had brought up their children on their own, and six interviews with parents who had separated from their spouse but both of whom had participated in decisions regarding school choice.

There are, for sure, lots of opportunities then. I remember when we got this leaflet when he started first grade, [laughs], and I thought to myself, how does Martti [husband] know which of these schools is good for my child! (Interview: April 2004)

The discourse employed by parents was one of individual opportunity, which was connected to a common emphasis across parents' narratives of the instrumental value of education and of strong language skills in English and in Finnish. Paula, an ethnic majority mother, described how she had read about kindergartens that specialised in "different languages and some arts things" when her children were little, but that "language is so important" that she and her husband decided to opt for an English Language Kindergarten. In a similar line, Marita, an ethnic majority mother of three children, elaborated:

We think it's extremely valuable, it's a good thing that they learn this kind of everyday vocabulary in two languages. It's probably a real asset in later. Although I've lived [abroad], I've never learned words like *solisluu*⁸⁸ and others. (Interview: May 2004)

English, in comparison to Finnish and other home languages, was represented as serving many instrumental purposes, as "opening the world more" to quote one of the fathers I interviewed (cf. Ezra, 2007; Potter & Hayden, 2004). Parents constructed fluency in a major foreign language such as English as a self-evidently valuable form of capital. As Maija elaborated, "we didn't perhaps think about it terribly analytically then, [the importance of learning a foreign language fluently] was somehow self evident". In a similar vein, parents whose children had learned English while living abroad asserted that fluency in English was a skill which they wanted to maintain, ensuring their children's past struggles of learning English did not go to waste. As Liona, whose daughter had attended a school in English while their family lived over-

⁸⁸ *collarbone*

seas, commented, “the capital that she has from the language, it’s worth maintaining.” The narrative was one in which parents wanted to ensure greater opportunities for their children than what was available to them as children, with parents discussing the limited opportunities they had in their own childhood to learn foreign languages. “We want to give them more than what we got,” as Paula asserted of their selection of the bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School. Majja stated on a similar line:

I’m from the countryside, and you never really needed languages there. So I’ve had to learn it the hard way. So my preference has been that my children don’t have to go quite so much under the keel as I did. (Interview: April 2004)

Learning English through participation in a bilingual class was presented as being relatively effortless and as being a more positive learning experience than the punitive rote learning traditions some parents recalled of their own childhood. Emma described her experiences of learning English in school as follows:

My mother was just saying how it was, like, about learning by heart, just words, and then it was like, you had to read an excerpt and, like, everyone was sweating, that who has to read the excerpt, that “how badly I read it,” because the teacher told you straight off that “really bad pronunciation, you don’t know anything.” That that’s what kind of killed your creativity and motivation, and there was no, like this kind of conversation was not taught in upper secondary school. (Interview: April 2004)

For all parents, including those who spoke English as a first language, fluency in English spoke to increasing opportunities, and many parents linked their choice of a bilingual class in Sunny Lane School to the demands of an increasingly interdependent and globalised world. In these narratives, the value of English was attached by parents to its position as a global language, as the language of international communica-

tion, of trade and of commerce (cf. Heller, 2002; Weenink, 2008; see also Park & Abelmann, 2004). Parents highlighted the need for fluency in English in many work environments, abroad and in Finland. Fluency in English was seen in light of future mobility, as instrumental to possibilities to travel or study abroad, and together with fluency in Finnish, as offering access to study and career opportunities. As Marita posited, “through this language, a kind of openness, the world is more open.” Perhaps the most overt depictions of the promise attached to fluency in English and of the substantial steps some parents had been prepared to take in order to claim a place in a bilingual class, were described by ethnic minority parents. As one mother wrote in response to my questionnaire during school enrollment:

The child has participated in private lessons and we hope that this has not been in vain and s/he will be accepted. (Mother. Original in Finnish: home language Russian)

Factors such as the school’s proximity, nice teachers and the possibility of being in the same class with good friends from the same kindergarten were also mentioned by parents (cf. Seppänen, 2006), but were not identified by parents as decisive aspects of school selection, but rather as what could be termed convenient or nice aspects of the bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School. Despite comments such as “[i]t’s not just the language, but otherwise, too,” as expressed by Marita, parents often discussed their choice of the bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School in ways that prioritised instrumental and technical over emotional aspects of school choice. While parents emphasised the importance and value of kind, considerate teachers to their children’s learning and happiness to attending school, acknowledging the vulnerable position of their children should they have a difficult or inconsiderate teacher, their choice of a bilingual class overrid such concerns. While five parents commented that they had considered the option of transferring their children to a regular Finnish grade, no-one implemented such plans during the school year 2003–2004. Having a good teacher was, in the

end, construed as a matter of good fortune. “She’s an excellent teacher, Anette really had a lot of luck,” as one mother observed.

While Rätty, Jaukka and Kasanen (2004) observe that the parents in their study “did not express any particular concerns about educational standards” (p. 477), the impression in the data I have generated is one in which parents interpreted that not all schools are equally good and that they needed to be assertive to ensure good quality education for their children. Parents drew comparisons between smaller schools and larger schools, areas of emphases in different schools, and between the social composition of different schools. There was also a strong sense that parents evaluated their children’s teachers, as reflected by their appraisals of the pedagogical skills, creativity, and English and Finnish skills of bilingual teachers. This was also apparent in small incidents that took place in school, such as when one father interrupted the class teacher’s presentation during a Parents’ Evening to correct her use of Finnish vocabulary.

Parents underscored acting out of the best interest of their children, constructing the selection of a bilingual class as reflecting parental concern and responsibility for the wellbeing of their children. This was signified as a feature of parents of bilingual pupils, “parents are really involved here, maybe that’s something we share in common,” as one of the mothers suggested. A connection was drawn by parents between school success and parental involvement in their children’s education:

Marita: [In their] school I think that, kind of, parents care a lot for their children and think a lot and it’s, as it’s a school that you’re selected into, it’s perhaps a more peaceful working environment. (Interview: May 2004)

Parental involvement and interest were signified as markers of a safe, secure learning environment, and as providing schools with positive value (cf. Kenway & Bullen, 2001). “If you just think that “*Leena, you’re free!*” the outcome won’t be good,” as Pete said, elaborating as follows:

If I exaggerate a little, like, I think the question is mostly about what parents' relationship is with their child. If you take your child anywhere, and there are many out there like that, who don't have the ability or will to focus on this, and if you take your child into a school that you have to apply for, where there's something you have to pick up, then it's a good indication that parents are also committed to their children's education and their development. And [breathes out heavily] this is, of course, really cynical, but I think the question is that, well at least you have to have the desire and the will that the child, that the child has possibilities to succeed, and like this. (Interview: May 2004)

The chances of finding a learning environment characterised by the presence of involved, committed parents who are dedicated to investing in their children, Pete posited, are higher in schools that select pupils:

I think one central thing, in addition to language skills, has been that, that in this kind of environment, they meet children whose parents have wanted to invest in their own children (...) Like this. And the probability that [there are] these kinds of parents, these kinds of families, it grows when you select where you put your child. (Interview: April 2004)

There is an implicit acceptance in parents' narratives of school choice of the differentiation made possible through school choice, as there is in Pete's narrative and acceptance of the demand for differentiation from less desirable families and pupils, of finding a suitable school environment distinguished by involved, assertive parents, motivated pupils and good teachers.

Putting children first as putting one's career or life on hold

The discourse in parents' narratives of school choice was one of putting their children first, and this was described by parents as having consequences for decisions related to where to live and which job opportunities to pursue. Altogether five mothers I interviewed worked part-time from home and four were full-time mothers, of whom two had older children at home and two were on maternity leave. A common thread across their narratives was the importance they attached to having time to be at home for their children, to support them with their homework. While all mothers I interviewed spoke of the importance of supporting their children, particularly these mothers emphasised putting their children first. This was described as demanding that parents – which in practice referred to mothers – put their own careers on hold (cf. Aveling, 2002) in order to be, as Paula expressed, “a part of this”:

Paula: And I do think that, that I have an academic certificate, and I have [a] job (...) but to me it is, however, of secondary importance. That to me, the most important thing is that I can come [to school] and fetch my [child], that I don't have to put a child in After School, but can fetch them from school, and I see their friends, and I see things here. All the teachers have known me for years, and they chat and they say hi, and ask how I'm doing, and the principal waves to me when I come, and it's terribly important to me. And then these children, these children that know, they call out “Hi Paula!” and some even come to hug me (...) It's really important to me, that I can be like a part of this. (Interview: April 2004)

Paula construes having an academic certificate and a job as secondary to being able to participate in her children's schooling, placing value on a social order in which the image is one of the traditional family in which mothers are actively engaged in their children's education, and in which arenting is presented as placing particular demands on mothers

(cf. Walkerdine et al., 2001). Pursuing a similar emphasis, Nora, a mother of three, describes having thought a lot about different issues related to the education of her children as follows:

Well, if I were a person who went to work, then I probably wouldn't have the time to think so much about these things, but now I'm a full-time mother and somehow I think it's important to bring up your children yourself. (Interview: April 2004)

Altogether four parents, including Nora, linked their choice of the bilingual classes with their decision to purchase a home closer to the school. For several parents, the commitment they articulated to providing their children with the opportunity to participate in a bilingual class contrasted with the fixity of their current living arrangements:

Minna: We are, we're a bit frustrated with the crowded living space, now as there [are this many of us] living here, that at some point we thought, at some point we searched actively for a one family house outside [Sunny Lane School's municipality], but then this was one thing, this school thing, that actually even decided where we live, that we wanted Samuel there, in that school, so now our life pretty much goes according to this, that, so we are going to try and live here for at least primary school. (Interview: April 2004)

Archer and Francis (2006) observe in their analysis of the identities and school achievement of British Chinese pupils that "many Chinese parents, maintained their own economic and social 'fixity' in order to facilitate their children's social mobility" (p. 43; see also Aveling, 2002; Reay, 1998, 2008). Similarly, in the narratives of ethnic minority parents the scenario of mobility they attached to their children's schooling contrasted with the circumstances under which these parents lived, the fixity of their own location, and in some instances with a deep sense of personal dislocation. The choice of a bilingual class was construed as a

means to ensure a futurity for their children, as reflected by the excerpt from my interview with Laura, an English speaking mother:

But yeah, I don't even want to think about my future, or lack thereof, here. It's frightening. Yeah, I think I should just make sure that, um Sarah has a [pause] I think *she* has a future here, you know, having both languages. (Interview: May 2004)

Lisa, an ethnic minority mother, also articulated a strong belief in the merits of attending bilingual classes. While holding a university degree from her home country, she had not been able to find work in her profession since having moved to Finland before her daughter was born, and had shifted in and out of short-term jobs and participated in various training over the years. At the time of my interview with her, she described dreaming of moving abroad in the future after better employment opportunities, and summarized her decision to stay on in Finland until her child, Anna, had finished her schooling: "You know, when you have children, it is not so simple anymore, now our home is here." At the same time, Lisa articulated her ambitions for her daughter's future clearly, more so than most parents, saying "we will go to the end, till university," then laughing and continuing by saying "no, of course, we will see what she wants."

Alongside good education, the possibility of their child establishing roots and a sense of cultural belongingness were identified by parents as something responsible parents take measures to ensure, and were mentioned as justifications for staying on in Finland by non-Finnish parents. As Laura expressed, "I thought it was, I think it's [pause] so important to have roots. Like it's, how nice it is, I think a lot of that in Finland if you know somebody that you were a child with." Laura did not signify herself as fitting in, in any comfortable way, in Finland. By contrast, she offered the following succinct description of the lush, summery landscapes of her childhood:

Laura: [There's] an outdoor swimming pool and loads of, beautiful wildlife. Hummingbirds and skunks. Oh I like skunks, they're so cute even though they stink! And raccoons, dear, bears! Hummingbirds are just all around! Frogs, the most beautiful bright green frogs, everywhere around the pool!

Silja: That sounds really nice.

Laura: Yeah. And then of course the lightning bugs, I really miss those from my childhood, lightning bugs, I miss them so much! You know those bugs that light up at night and flash?

Silja: Yeah.

Laura: Cause of course, *all* my childhood we caught those and looked at them and Sarah loves that too. They aren't in Finland anywhere. I heard that they're in Central Europe. (Interview: May 2004)

Tim, a native English speaker who described his family as a “multicultural family” representing two cultures and two languages, Finnish and English, had moved to Finland with his wife when she was expecting their daughter. Before then, he had worked overseas, which he described vividly during our interview, contrasting the adventures of this experience with the perceived dreariness and boredom of staying home. Unlike Lisa and Laura, Tim had established himself relatively well in Finland, and indeed, a central element of his narrative was that of having worked to get where he was, of personal effort and the willingness to take risks. Like Laura and Lisa, Tim identified his daughter and her schooling as the reason for settling down in Finland and within easy distance of Sunny Lane School, speaking to the discourse of putting one's life on hold:

I met some guys in their sixties going out there, like, having a ball (...) So I looked at that and I said “life,” you know. And I looked at my own dad coming home from work and sitting in the armchair watching television and I looked at these guys, I said, “life,” you know (...) and I said to myself “life can be one, a lot of fun,” you know (...) Um, to be absolutely honest with you, I don't

mind where, I could go anywhere tomorrow. If it worked out I wouldn't care. Only thing be the daughter. That's the only thing at the end of the day what's stopped me from looking again. (Interview: May 2004)

Reay (2008) observes in her study of white middle class parents that those parents undergoing the most anxiety and risk in making educational choices were identifiable by their lower levels of economic, social and cultural capital, with “the most overt signs of anxiety (...) most apparent in the narratives of the more recent arrivals and less secure members of the white middle classes” (p. 1077). This observation was echoed in the perception – common across Lisa, Laura and Tim's narratives of selecting a school – that had their child not been accepted, there would have been few, if any, alternatives. The selection of Sunny Lane School was discussed by these parents in ways that suggest their decision, unlike those of ethnic majority parents', was not informed by the consideration of other schools. In response to my question as to which school her daughter would have gone to had she not been accepted into Sunny Lane School, Lisa's response, “some other school probably,” was decidedly elusive and short. Laura, in turn, had not even considered enrolling her child in a regular Finnish class, stating this would have given her no possibility to participate in her child's schooling. Tim presented his daughter's acceptance into the bilingual class as being a last resort in his effort to establish a life in Finland while retaining his own culture and language. Unlike Lisa and Laura, for whom English was also a home language, Tim proposed that his daughter was entitled to participate in a bilingual class:

Silja: what would you have done, by the way, if Elianna wouldn't have made it to this school?

Tim: *Probably – argued!* I think I probably would have given up (...) ‘Cause I said to myself the language is going bad (...) And I said that, I felt that we were entitl, more entitled than they were, because we were multicultural. (Interview: May 2004)

Denials and descriptions of privilege

As Leonardo (2002) notes, the preferred interpretation of power and social prestige commonly focuses “on individual merit, exceptionalism or hard work” (p. 37; see also Winant 2004, pp. 8–10), and these were themes that also emerged in my interviews with parents. With the exception of several parents representing families where English was a home language, most parents did not reflect on the influence of socio-economic resources, choosing to emphasise the accidental nature of their school choice or the individual capabilities of their children as the basis of their school selection (cf. Rätty et al., 1995; Rinne, 2000). Emma, who enrolled her daughter already as a baby in an English Language Kindergarten, described this decision as follows:

We’ve had this, like, feeling, somehow, the kind of feeling that when, if Anette had had difficulties when she was little, like with speech and things, that she learned to talk quickly and to use Finnish really well, and then we had a feeling then – and I thought about these things quite early on, that [put her] somewhere. (Interview: April 2004)

“This shows what kind of a child she is,” Lisa asserted on a similar line of her daughter, reflecting the common perception among parents that due to the process of selecting pupils through entrance tests, bilingual pupils were more academically orientated than pupils in regular Finnish classes. Suggested qualities attached to bilingual pupils by parents included those of ambition, the ability to concentrate and interest in academic subjects. Janita compared her children as follows:

Matti is like a meditator, he’s, like, interested in school and all this reading and writing and maths and all this like biology (...) Our Valteri [laughs], he’s the kind, I’m not sure he’d adapt to languages changing all the time. Valteri really likes to do things all the time, he has to be able to bustle about all the time, like

sing and play and he's really into the formula and cars. But Matti has always been good at concentrating. He is more serene and so I think these bilingual classes are better for him. I think they require, kind of, more concentration. (Interview: April 2004)

Several parents presented their choice of kindergarten as being the result of coincidence and good fortune, "the kindergarten kind of happened by mistake," as Kati claimed. Ella, who had set up her own company and worked from home, similarly identified their kindergarten choice as a coincidence, pointing out the 26 kilometer distance to the municipal kindergarten in which they had been offered a placement for their child. Nora was an active proponent of the bilingual classes, and in response to my question how their children came to Sunny Lane School, she responded:

Our Annina is very energetic and temperamental. I had to think of something for her to do. I was pregnant and I couldn't have managed with her. There was an English kindergarten near where we lived, and I went to ask if they could take her. So it was kind of, I just had to think of something for her. (Interview: April 2004)

Most parents discussed their local school only briefly, describing details such as the number of pupils in their local school and its areas of emphases, construing their local school as offering good education but limited options, as being too big or too small, with descriptions on school size focusing on the lack of a sense of intimacy and homeliness of big schools and the high likelihood of closure facing smaller schools. Local schools were thus often construed by parents as not inferior, but as different. However, while many parents asserted that their local school would have been a viable option to Sunny Lane School, the fact that parents had only partial information of their local school suggests the resolute nature of their choice of the bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School.

The family portrait which many parents attached to bilingual classes was one where either the family has lived abroad or where one of the parents spoke English, as reflected by statements such as “we’re quite a strange family, we’ve never been abroad” and “I don’t know if everybody, but probably pretty many have lived abroad at some point, or their dad or mum is a foreigner” put forward by ethnic majority mothers during our interviews. Bilingual classes were discussed as having pupils from families in which there are “two languages, two cultures,” where as one ethnic majority mother expressed, often “one of the parents is non Finnish,” describing this as a “really nice (...) really great” aspect of the bilingual classes. Primarily ethnic majority parents identified bilingual classes as consisting of pupils representing different nationalities, cultures and languages, which was commented on positively, with Tiina summarising this perspective in her comment on there being “*all kinds* of girls and boys” in bilingual classes.

In research on school choice in many countries, the concerns, expectations and outcome of school choice have been posited as connected to class, ethnicity and race (cf. Apple, 2004; Ball 2006; Forsey et al., 2008; Grozier et al., 2008; Hirsch, 1997). Tomlinson (2005), for example, claims of the British context that school choice has led to “an obsession with selection and segregation of children into different schools or different curricula, which effectively mirrored the social class structure” (p. 218). In our interviews, parents rarely made direct references to the connections between school choice and ethnicised and classed advantage. Particularly ethnic majority parents often chose to emphasise commonalities and common sentiment:

Marita: There’s like a positive energy there in the school. Sunny Lane School [pause] mm, status and well-being [pause] but it’s not like just economic well-being. There are families from all kinds of starting points. It’s the language that unites, not just financial well-being. There are all kinds of families. I think that’s good. (Interview: May 2004)

While an understanding of the importance of a good education underpinned parents' discussion of school choice, most parents did not detail ambitions regarding the future education of their children, suggesting they had not thought as far as secondary school. As a few parents emphasised, it was up to their children to decide for themselves which secondary school to attend. Pete was very articulate of the benefits he associated with acquiring fluency in English and unusually overt in the view that parents need to select the right kind of social environment for their children to ensure future success, expressing that such views are not considered appropriate in Finland; they were something "you shouldn't say":

And [breathes out heavily] this doesn't fit in with this Finnish culture, you shouldn't say this, this is really outrageous and careerist and all kinds of stuff, but I believe that more important than what they teach you in school is who you get to know there. (Interview: April 2004)

Hurtado and Stewart (2004) argue that denial, alongside distancing and belongingness, is an important mechanism in the construction of privileged identities, claiming "One of the major advantages of privilege is the sense of absolute belonging and importance" (p. 320). It is when this assumed solidarity begins to crumble, they note, that differences based on class begin to emerge. Likewise, while particularly ethnic majority parents placed emphasis on perceived similarities and common sentiments among parents – "I think there's a feeling of being in the same boat," as one mother expressed – it was in the narratives of parents for whom English was a home language⁸⁹, or who identified themselves as economically not as advantaged as most parents, that connections between economic and cultural privilege with school selection were identified. Such parents were more inclined to assert – and in a couple

⁸⁹ I interviewed one father and five mothers of five pupils for whom English was a home language. Four of these parents had separated, and two mothers represented families where English was the first language of neither parent, but was the shared home language.

of instances critique – the influence of socioeconomic resources and parental ambition that they associated with parents in Sunny Lane School. Laura, Outi and Sari, all mothers of bilingual children observed that children such as theirs with a bilingual background represented a minority in the bilingual classes:

Laura: Mm, I think our family is one of the few – I mean most of the families speak Finnish at home.

Outi: I think we're one of the only families that really *is* bilingual.

Sari: We're probably quite different from the others. I mean, like we speak both languages at home. From what I've understood, most families speak Finnish at home.

(Interviews: April 2004)

As some parents recognised, there had been more children from different nationalities in the English Language Kindergarten their child had attended and in other schools in the municipality. For instance one mother from a mixed race partnership observed of bilingual classes: “There is less colour here.” Tim was pointed in his commentary on privilege, commenting “I knew this school had a reputation of being for wealthy.” He connected the school’s admission policy for bilingual classes to the ability of financially affluent ethnic majority parents to pursue personal interests, stating: “which kids, they are Finnish, they don’t really need this English, that kind of, can afford to, you know that, you know about the ones that want to give their kids a good education cause they’re wealthy anyway.” Tim argued for the view that “the multicultural should have more of a crack, it has some weight, because it’s so important, the language, in a certain way.” He was vocal about the socioeconomic and cultural habitus he associated with some parents of pupils in his child’s bilingual class, describing having felt being “size[d] up and down” by one of the Finnish parents. A single mother observed on a similar line:

Yeah, birthday parties are a big, social, I always joke that it's the social calendar, you know, birthday parties, yes, and they all [pause] and my mother even laughs, she says it's like 'keeping up with the Jones's'. (Interview: May 2004)

While most parents did not describe the kinds of parents, pupils and teachers in their local school, Nina, a professional single mother who worked full-time, was vocal about the differences she perceived between her catchment area school and Sunny Lane School. She identified her local school as being considerably bigger than Sunny Lane School and as "probably more restless," which she connected to the presence of "differences in cultural backgrounds," specifying these as "not just between, like Finnish people, but between different nationalities." In recent years, she observed, the number of young people "loitering around" the local shopping mall had increased, which she linked to the general restlessness of the neighborhood. Nina expressed critique of social splitting (see Low 2004), the tainted and imperfect perceptions and the "not seeing" of reality that privilege afforded parents living in Sunny Lane School district, critiquing the naïve perceptions of multiculturalism adopted by these parents. Yet despite her critique, Nina's perception was that the presence of a large number of privileged parents in Sunny Lane School ensured the safety and being of her child. There was no denying the positive aspects of attending a school in a select environment such as Sunny Lane School⁹⁰, she suggested:

Nina: Let's say that in these Parents' Evenings, that somehow sometimes I've had this feeling that elitism, rather than multicult-

⁹⁰ A similar perspective, but in more overt form, was put forward by an ethnic majority couple I met at a Parent's Evening in January 2004, designed to provide parents with general information on the foreign language choices available at Sunny Lane School. During our brief discussion which I documented, the couple identified the presence of pupils representing different ethnicities and religious affiliations in their local school as key determinants driving their decision to find another school for their children. In Finland, the foreign languages studied in different schools are one grounds on which pupils can change schools, but as the father explained, "It doesn't make any difference whether they can learn English or Swedish (...) These things are as clear as daylight, if you want to do well and succeed in school."

turalism shows, so that [pause].

Silja: Like these [Parents' Evenings] for the whole school?

Nina: Yes, those specifically.

Silja: Yes.

Nina: That somehow, somehow it's reflected an atmosphere where (...) but that sometimes I've felt like where, where do these people live, that are their eyes open at all, that because it kind of feels like there are probably lots of children that live in an area where they don't necessarily meet a lot of that kind of multiculturalism, and all, all that can be related to this. That they live quite a protected life, in some ways. And of course it can be quite two-sided thing, that when [pause] that when your own child is there, that on the other hand, well, it's quite good that it's kind of protected. But on the other hand, that it isn't necessarily, in the same way, [they don't] see reality in the same way. (Interview: April 2004)

This signification of schools with pupils representing many nationalities and cultures as less beneficial environments for one's children, as potentially harmful and as effecting a different experience of school than in less heterogeneous schools such as Sunny Lane School, was also reflected in the comments of other parents. In a similar line to Forsey's (2008) findings in the context of school choice in Australia, while parents reflected on common good and sometimes also on the exclusionary nature of school selection, such considerations were overridden by the perceived advantages of school choice. Distinctions between different schools and their social milieus were recognised as valid reasons for pursuing school choice (cf. Crozier et al., 2008), contributing to the production of boundaries between "us" and a potentially threatening "them."

7.3 Conclusion

Referring to Billig's work and on the basis of ethnographic data, Kasanen et al. (2003a) identify silencing and counterbalancing as techniques employed by a first grade teacher to avoid the presentation of tests as proper tests (p. 54). These techniques or tactics were also present during school enrollment and the entrance tests in Sunny Lane School and in teacher discussions of the selection of pupils. Chase (2005) deploys the concept of "narrative strategy" to refer to her interview participants' different constructions of self across narratives (p. 663). While Chase recognises diversity among the voices of her participants and across different participants' narratives, narrative strategy, she tells us, refers to the connections within participant's often complex and contradictory narratives. Similarly, there are consistencies which travel across the different interpretations of teachers on the one hand, and parents on the other. Teachers often repeated that they were "just testing language" and emphasised school being a place for *all* pupils, representing their school as characterised by egalitarian ideals and practices, as being equal and inclusive. Together with the emphasis placed parents caring, listening to and teaching shoe-lacing to their children (see Epilogue), this can be interpreted as a means of negation, circumventing the importance of competition, school achievement and the selection of pupils for participation in bilingual classes. What is obscured is teachers' choice of the principle of selecting pupils. Teachers' articulations of heterogeneity and normalcy were stated as a denial of elitism, but this denial was partial as it was complicated by the need to differentiate between children to determine which children to accept, to identify who embodied the qualifications required of bilingual pupils. Furthermore, while the entrance tests were articulated as a means to include, this rhetoric was built on a logic of school achievement in which some pupils are inevitably expected to fail, inducing disengagement with the principle of selecting pupils. As Varenne (2008) somewhat polemically argues in the context of discussion on school achievement in America,

School achievement is but a small part of American education, and we must convince policy makers (and I include everyone here, from senators in Congress to school-teachers) that the main issue for American democracy is *not* [emphasis added] getting everyone to achieve at grade level. (p. 364)

Social norms and classed positionings, as Reay (2008) writes, are intertwined in often ambivalent and conflicting ways with how parents select a school for their children. While parents with children in selective schools have been identified as viewing the selection of pupils on the basis of aptitude or ability as having a positive effect on the learning environment of the school, analyses of the school choices of ethnic minority parents suggest the particular importance that they often attach to school choice as a strategy to facilitate upward mobility and overcome present economic disadvantages. (Cf. Abbas, 2002; Archer & Francis, 2006; Gewirtz et al., 1995; Reay & David, 2002; Reay & Lucey, 2003; Tomlinson, 2005.) In Sunny Lane School, these themes were present in the ways parents described their hopes and expectations regarding academic standards, and in how they characterised different school environments through the presence and absence of particular kinds of pupils and parents. In describing their school selection, parents can be interpreted as engaging in a “biographical project” (see Kehily & Pattman, 2006), with their reflections on reasons for their school choice relating to the kind of people they are or hope to be. Parents presented themselves as responsible choosers, as prioritising their children and their education. Ensuring future mobility for their children through school choice was a central element of this discourse, as was the instrumental value attached to education and fluency in English. Some mothers articulated this as demanding that they put their career, or in the instance of some minority parents, their life on hold. Particularly ethnic majority parents emphasised common sentiment and belonging, and critique of the social landscape of the school was most overtly articulated by parents who identified themselves as being less favourably positioned in regard to economic and social advantages.

8

Interpretations of landscape and maintaining a culture of work

Every school has its own profile, but that this bilingual foreign language instruction it then like its own, clear area.

(Annikki, Local Education Department)

Annikki (above), from the local education department describes the bilingual instruction at Sunny Lane School as “its own clear area,” and in this chapter I pursue Sunny Lane School’s specialisation into CLIL into the place of how these classes are demarcated. I ask how teachers and parents represent the social landscape of their school and how the bilingual classes are interpreted as fitting in with this landscape, investigating how the demands of belonging are iterated by teachers and parents and how these demands are made visible during lessons.

8.1 Teachers’ interpretations of landscape: Maintaining a culture of work

Under neo-liberalism and new/corporate managerialism, the expectation is for teachers to shape their classroom practices on the basis of evidence of what works (cf. Fenwick, 2003; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002).

While teachers in Finland, Rätty et al. (1997) observe, have not embraced the market-orientatedness of reform due to the challenges it poses to their professional autonomy, they have not objected emphases on differentiating education according to the needs and abilities of individual pupils. Indeed, deficit thinking, the association of particular children with school failure, has been an integral part of the language of schooling and of the professionalisation of teaching (cf. Simola, 1995). As a profession, Popkewitz (1998) argues, teaching embodies the technical rationality of populational reasoning, which emerged to administer social change for people seen as belonging to particular deviant populational groups, producing an understanding of the individual in which s/he is

thereby normalised in relation to statistical aggregates from which specific characteristics can be ascribed to that person and according to which his or her growth and development can be monitored and supervised. (p. 26)

Geographical locality such as council housing and private estates thus function to inscribe people with particular inner qualities and dispositions that are intermeshed in discourses of gender, class, race, and ethnicity, for example (Popkewitz, 1998; Skeggs, 2004; see also Low, 2004). As Walkerdine et al. (2001) claim, geographical locality and feelings of localism have become a significant means for interpreting “the type of people we are and the type we are not” (p. 34). One significant discourse through which this takes place is that of morality, which is a central means for the production of the Other who is signified as not belonging, as disrupting or disturbing homely spaces.⁹¹ Categories such as class, sex, race and ethnicity all participate in this process, and in this chapter, I thus analyse how teachers and parents constructed the social landscape of their school and how bilingual classes were seen to fit in this

⁹¹ Originally, as Cranny-Francis (1995, p. 68) observes, class was constituted not through economic or political terms, but through moralistic discourse.

landscape, drawing attention to how they identify what the demands of belonging to bilingual classes are. In the last section, I examine expectations of bilingual pupils put forward by teachers during lessons, and explore how bilingual pupils adopted and transformed some of the positions and stances made available to them.

School locale in teachers' discussion

In Sunny Lane School, common perceptions held by teachers included that socioeconomic differences had increased over the last decade or so, and that different school locales in the municipality as well as elsewhere in Finland had very different pupil intakes in terms of parents' classed positions and ethnic backgrounds. In comparison with other school districts, Sunny Lane School was described as "its own kind of place," with descriptions of Sunny Lane School's district focusing on the relative prosperity and social status of its inhabitants. Particularly parents living in the school's catchment area were often being identified as affluent, as having "a lot of privileges," with one teacher reflecting on the area as "quite depressing (...) so many nice houses." While Tiina specified "we do also have council housing here," as another teacher admitted, "this certainly isn't one of the poorest [school districts]." During the first days of my ethnographic fieldwork, one of the teachers printed me a profile of the area which identified the area as having its own "history," a white collar profile and various interesting architecture. By comparison, Timo described another school he had worked in before:

It was totally different. The families were completely different. You could have pupils coming in late because of difficult family situations, parents being drunk and the like. I mean, there were some nice houses, too, but the environment was very different, nobody could escape from that (...) Nobody is safe. (Fieldnotes: September 2003, in Finnish)

The presence of “some nice houses” was not enough, Timo suggested, to alter the problems connected to “difficult family situations”: its social environment was such that there was no escape from social problems (cf. Gitz-Johansen, 2003). Anton, on a similar line, identified the families in his bilingual class as characterised by a lack of problems, and was appreciative of the family backgrounds represented in his class:

Anton: My parents get along really well together, they have, to some extent [pause] most of them have the same socioeconomic background,

Silja: Which is?

Anton: which creates a good, a good foundation for collaboration, for what they do together, but they haven't interfered with this pedagogical side.

Silja: Right, right. So what is their socioeconomic background?

Anton: As can be guessed, pretty good (...) Smart parents and, and their finances are sound, and in my opinion you can see it [in the pupils]. (Interview: May 2004)

In such narratives, parents with a “pretty good” socioeconomic background were idealised as having characteristics particularly well suited to school learning and to home-school relationships. Yet opening the school to pupils across the municipality through the introduction of bilingual classes had, teachers asserted, diversified the pupil populace of the school. Parents living in the school catchment area had not, a few teachers asserted, welcomed the thought of introducing classes open to pupils across the municipality. As Anna explained, “the people living here weren't actually originally very enthusiastic about the bilingual classes, they didn't want pupils that came from other areas.” Katri, similarly, described how parents living in the area expressed irritation at the fact that their children did not have precedence over children from other areas to participate in the classes when the bilingual classes were introduced in Sunny Lane School. “Many parents,” she observed, “would have wanted immersion classes where *their* kids would have

learned [English].” Particularly Pirjo and Tiina described the pupils in the school often from the perspective of increasing heterogeneity. Today, they suggested, their pupil body was more heterogeneous, and they connected this heterogeneity to the presence of parents representing a greater variety of classed positions:

Pirjo: Well, if you think about the kind of socioeconomic backgrounds or social class and occupational groups of parents [in this school] they’re really very different. If you compare with some suburban school someplace where they have a lot of, where it’s only rented apartments, [and schools] in the vicinity of council housing estates, you’d probably see a difference. But otherwise we have this kind of very normal middle class and lower middle class representation here, and pupils with all kinds of backgrounds, so many kinds. (Interview: February 2003)

The arrival of bilingual classes was described by teachers as having altered not so much the ethnic but the classed composition of the school. Teachers identified Sunny Lane School as now having “more pupils, more parents,” explaining that the vast majority of pupils in the bilingual classes came from outside the school’s catchment area. While the social landscape of Sunny Lane School was not suggested as being “fully integrated, homogeneous and sealed,” to borrow Ahmed’s (2000, p. 25) expression, it was identified as sufficiently so not to warrant concern, reflecting the importance attached to particular qualities and characteristics of parents. Teachers characterised both parents living in Sunny Lane School’s catchment area and parents of bilingual as having high expectations of school:

Silja: And what about if you think of, for example, expectations that face schools, have they [changed]?

Anna: I think that, in fact, parents here have always had quite high expectations [of school].

Silja: Mm.

Anna: That, mm, maybe now we have more parents presenting their expectations, but [pause] I think, and well, yes, these bilingual classes do kind of bring, well, the kind of pupils whose families expect a lot from this [pause] But somehow I have the feeling that people have *always had expectations [of school] here.*

Silja: Mm.

Anna: That [pause] It's different, but the foundation is the same. (Interview: February 2005)

The bilingual classes, teachers observed, had not fractured the sense of school community, but fitted in well with the commitments and sensibilities of the parents and pupils living in the catchment area. As Anna claimed, they had, in fact, strengthened an already existent ambitious ethos in Sunny Lane School. Parents of bilingual pupils were generally described in positive terms, as “really nice,” “as making sure they get their homework done,” and as “participating in school stuff a lot,” for example. Typical descriptions of bilingual pupils, in turn, included that they were knowledgeable of what was demanded of them to perform well in school, engaged actively in lessons and came to school “*truly* to work.” Anna elaborates:

Anna: So there is, yes, a kind of [pause] a certain atmosphere of demanding-ness that they bilingual classes bring with them, that has been here before them, though. Perhaps it kind of increases the kind of, that we're here, *truly* to work, although it's nice and they don't [laughs] think about it themselves

Silja: Mm.

Anna: necessarily, but that [pause] We have goal-directed activities. (Interview: February 2005)

Underpinning teachers' descriptions of bilingual pupils was the expectation for pupils to produce themselves as individuals who are personally responsible and committed to learning, subjecting themselves to achieving the school's learning objectives and goals. This speaks to the

paradox of the model pupil and ideals of individualisation, of which Simola (2005, p. 466) observes in the Finnish context that it “seems to lean largely on the past, or at least the passing world, on the agrarian and pre-industrialized society, on the ethos of obedience and subjection that may be at its strongest in Finland among late modern European societies” (see also Tuomaala, 2000, 2004). It is to this thematic of obedience and subjection that I turn to next.

Not glamour, but hard work

In Sunny Lane School, the importance of hard work for school success was a recurrent theme in parents’ evenings, school newsletters and classroom interaction. The ideal classroom, as reflected by the excerpt below from the school’s annual report in 2004, was described as one where lesson time focused on learning rather than attending to the tedious task of educating or disciplining pupils:

When the pupil’s basic things are in good condition, it is possible to concentrate increasingly on studying, and the education of children does not require excessive energy.

Principles of hard work and diligence were described as pervasive and unchanging aspects of schooling. School, as teachers of Grades 1–3 emphasised many times in their team meetings, is about learning the principle of responsibility, of taking care of one’s work and accomplishing one’s school tasks in timely manner. School work, teachers contended, *should* demand effort. Rules regarding appropriate behaviour during lessons were connected to objectives regarding learning. Niki elaborates:

Niki: Of course, reading and writing are important skills and basic skills in Math, that that’s where things come from. Mm. But, but otherwise I feel that (...) they are not (...) as important

as to learn how to do work together, here, and to learn that what are the principles of working together, that how, how do we operate together here. That [they'd] listen to instructions and would be able to operate calmly and give others work peace and so on. (Interview: May 2004)

Teachers expressed the view that school work is not, nor should it be, voluntary. At the same time, they maintained that pupils should learn “how to enjoy work, that it shouldn't be forced, although sometimes it is,” as Kerttu expressed in a discussion I had her late one afternoon, continuing that the ideal was for all pupils to have “chosen to work themselves [and] when you get work, you get it done.” While teachers suggested fun moments are important – particularly to building a sense of togetherness and class spirit – school work was not suggested as being always fun to carry out, “it's not always terribly super fun,” as Niki observed. Peppi, a teacher of a Finnish grade, observed in a similar vein:

Peppi: “I don't want to.” “This is not fun.” So why, where does it come from, this idea that when you come to school, too, that the child can really decide?

Pirjo: Yeah.

Peppi: I'm afraid of this thought, this “wanting to.” That “I don't want to” (...) Why does everything have to be fun? When will the child learn to work? Why does everything have to be so fun? (Fieldnotes of meeting of Grade 1–2 teachers: August 2003, in Finnish)

Teachers suggested there were more possibilities to apply pupil-centered approaches in upper grades, once pupils had the necessary skills in English and Finnish, had learned what it was to be a self-responsible and “how to hold your pencil in your hand and be quiet,” as one teacher expressed (cf. Järvinen, Nikula & Marsh, 1999, p. 249). Hard work was suggested by teachers as being awarded by steady progression toward greater knowledge and competence. For bilingual pupils, the acquisi-

tion of fluent English was described by Tomas and Mikko as rewarded by increased opportunities in the future. Fluency in English was linked by these teachers to prospects of international mobility: “the world,” Tomas claimed, will be “more open” to pupils attending bilingual classes, it will be “smaller” and more accessible to them.

Tapping into the emphasis placed on self-responsibility, bilingual teachers identified there being “two sides” to bilingual classes: the “status and glamour side” and the “demanding side”:

Anna: [There’s the] sort of status and glamour, that many sort of think about, that it’s nice to tell your relatives that “our daughter is in one of those bilingual classes” or something. Then there’s the other side, that is kind of forgotten, everyday school. This is a really tough program, even for those that really have the two languages from their home. (Interview: February 2003)

Some parents, some bilingual teachers posited, had significantly invested in the opportunity of participating in a bilingual class and thus often held “wrong notions” of what being accepted into a bilingual class meant, misinterpreting participation in a bilingual class as signifying endless potential and horizons of opportunity. Learning in a bilingual class, teachers emphasised, takes place through language, and learning Finnish and English was interpreted as an aspect of all learning⁹²:

The teachers start discussing instructional materials and teaching in Finnish and English. Katri mentions she has collected materials “over the years” at Sunny Lane School. She says that although “you can’t always teach the same thing in two languages,” the pupils “should know the same thing in both languages [pause] they have to be able to explain things in two languages and know the vocabulary.” Katri describes an example of how she teaches

⁹² Exceptions to this rule during my fieldwork included History for upper grades and Religious Education for all grade levels, for example, which were felt to be so specific to national context that it was more relevant, as well as easier, teachers maintained, to teach these subjects in Finnish.

things in Science in English and then the kids get their homework from the Finnish books, suggesting that that way, they become familiar with the Finnish terms. She shows an old test she had made for her class, pointing out how “I usually have the first and second part on vocabulary [pause] the pupils have to explain a word in English or write it in Finnish,” for, as she finishes off, bilingual teachers don’t just teach content, “you have to also teach the vocabulary.” (Fieldnotes: meeting of bilingual teachers August 2003, in English)

Following the “fifty percent in Finnish, fifty percent in English” -rule, the expectation articulated by teachers was that bilingual pupils learn the appropriate vocabulary in both languages in school subjects. Core subjects, as Katri (above) suggested, were to incorporate learning vocabulary, and pupil assessment was to measure not only how well pupils have learned the areas covered, but also how well they have mastered the appropriate vocabulary in both Finnish and English. In addition to spelling lists that were assigned to pupils during English lessons, older pupils were provided with vocabulary lists for Science:

Tiina: Vocabulary lists are a key part of older students’ science notebooks, so when there’s a theme then there’s like two A4s of vocabulary, like these are related to the water theme, make sure you know. So it’s like learning the language as well as learning the subject. (Fieldnotes: meeting of bilingual teachers August 2003)

Bilingual teachers drew comparisons with Finnish grades, suggesting there may be “a tiny bit more,” “some more,” or even “double the amount of homework as in Finnish classes.” As one of the teachers explained:

During autumn term we learn the alphabet in Finnish, teaching reading and writing, and it means you can’t be flexible at all, like in the A-class they had apparently gone little by little, even over

Christmas with these letters, little by little. But you have to get them done by Christmas [in the bilingual first grade], the pace is really hard, and parents say, at home, that there's terribly much work, every week there are two new letters. *Sorge*⁹³, but then in spring it's again, the same rumba starts (...) Yes, in a bilingual class you can't loosen up at all, because now then it's learning to read and write English in turn. (Interview: February 2003)

Participation in bilingual classes was presented as requiring continuous self-development. Acquiring fluent Finnish and English skills and learning subject matter in the two languages requires concerted effort, teachers asserted, and parents (and pupils) should not compare the amount of homework with homework in regular classes:

Pirjo: I've noticed that parents, like compare, amongst themselves, like how much homework their friends' children get and "how much do our children get." And you come to notice quite quickly that a bilingual class just makes you work more, that there's no way around it, and because in Finland [school] hours are short (...) and then if everything is looked at through two languages, and then this was quite difficult [for some] to understand. Because amongst themselves they maybe think that, 'stupid, those teachers, to give so much homework'. (Interview: May 2004)

Homework was a recurrent theme in school newsletters, classroom interaction, and various events I attended such as parent-teacher conferences, several Parents' Evenings and an Open Doors-event. While homework was presented as pupils' personal responsibility, pupils were prompted to seek help from their parents by teachers on several occasions. Parents of pupils in the lower bilingual grades were likewise

⁹³ Swedish for *sorry*

advised to assist their children with homework, to “just have a quick check,” practice spelling “during little moments like in the car on the way to school,” and help their children with learning timetables, for example. Parents’ involvement in homework was supported by the introduction of a Pupil Diary where pupils were kept record of their homework and into which they pasted or slipped letters and notices from school, with teachers and parents exchanging messages on its pages. Expectations of parents also extended beyond monitoring that their children completed their homework assignments. Parents were expected to play an intimate part in their children’s learning, ensuring school lessons were learned:

Katri showed us a sheet she had prepared for the parents to sign. She explained that “you can put it in the students’ pupil’s books or in their English books, it’s a Reading Record sheet that asks the parents, please listen and check your child understands.” Parents hadn’t always met her expectations here: ‘some parents ticked the box, but still some kids didn’t understand all the words [pause] Parents have to read the book with their child!’ (Field-notes: meeting of bilingual teachers August 2003, in English)

The amount of homework was also related to the importance of instilling in pupils a responsible disposition toward their school work from an early age, with the assertion that homework is a central part of schooling in Finland:

Katri: And you may think that there’s maybe a little more [homework] in bilingual classes, but the idea of homework is, anyway, in a Finnish comprehensive school, that you learn a kind of pupil’s responsibility. You get some little thing you have to take care of, and then you bring it back. (Interview: May 2004)

Bilingual pupils’ passage through school was not described as an easy, fluid one by teachers, but as demanding self-responsibility,

commitment to accomplishing school work in good manner, and parental support – more so than in regular Finnish classes:

Pirjo: I do remind parents that we need homes to help with this terribly much. The children need it and in school we kind of depend on it, like with these reading tasks, we don't have the resources or lessons to have a look at English reading homework here every day. That's the job of homes. (Interview: February 2003)

While Anna asserted that bilingual classes require “just normal *kouluvalmiudet*,”⁹⁴ she also claimed “perhaps even more than on the Finnish side, parental responsibility is important, because there is more work to do.” Pirjo proposed that in bilingual classes the amount of work “never eases”: once pupils had learned to read Finnish, they needed to learn to read English and “all the time the pace [of work] is hard.” Consequently, parental support and involvement in ensuring the completion of homework was linked to the choice of a bilingual class. Some bilingual parents were problematicised for not taking adequate interest or responsibility for supporting their children with school:

Tiina: Particularly if [parents] choose this kind of special program and we've told them in advance that 'we really need your help' then well, I think it's thoughtless to start thinking about your own career development after that. (Interview: February 2003)

Pirjo described having gone over the list of her pupils and their entrance test results before the beginning of first grade, then discussing the need

⁹⁴ *Kouluvalmius* refers to skills children are expected to have when starting school, *koulu* meaning *school* and *valmius* meaning *preparedness*. In instances when pupils begin school a year earlier, for example, they need to be tested by a psychologist to determine whether they have the appropriate *kouluvalmiudet*.

for parental support with parents whose children had been accepted “from the queue”:

Pirjo: And then there were these that came from the queue. And then I went, I knew who came from the queue and I talked with their parents at our [Parent-Teacher] meeting the very beginning of autumn. And I was really lucky that these were children whose cultural background was like, well, very school orientated, but one of their languages was a little on the border. And then when I had these discussions, they took them really seriously at home. Silja: Mm.

Pirjo: And I had no worries with these, and I though ‘wow! if only I had sort of.’ I don’t know, it could be that if I had had a similar discussion with someone else it’s wouldn’t have succeeded. (Interview: May 2004)

Teachers, both in the bilingual and the Finnish classes I observed, assigned the same homework to all pupils, only rarely suggesting the possibility for pupils decide whether to do some or all of the exercises they had selected. This reflected the perspective common among both bilingual and Finnish teachers alike that differentiating between pupils should be avoided, speaking to a commitment to ensuring all pupils had studied the same areas in school and the perspective that pupils were thus more equally positioned to achieve well in school. As Tiina described in a discussion during break, “I told [my pupils], think how many words you will all have by Christmas when we study ten words every week!” In bilingual classes, however, this emphasis on responsibility and diligence precluded critical reflection on the amount of work required of pupils⁹⁵, which was not presented as an issue open for discussion:

⁹⁵ During my ethnographic study, I made notes of the amount of homework students in bilingual classes received. Whereas in the Finnish Grades 1–3, students received, on average, homework from one to two subjects, in the bilingual Grades 1–3 pupils often received homework from three to four subjects.

Katri: In my class, the amount of time spent doing homework depends really much on the student. Some pupils do a task in a quarter of an hour, with someone else it can take well over half an hour, and I know some of my pupils do their homework in fifteen minutes every day, that they don't use any more time than that. (Interview: May 2005)

Some teachers described having decided to “simplify” and “prioritise” homework assignments, with Anton expressing he had “come to my senses” and had “realis[ed] they are still children.”⁹⁶ Teachers’ perception was that pupils’ problems with homework were often the result of individual differences. Emphasis was placed on self-motivation and self-improvement, without which, teachers suggested, pupils were unlikely to succeed well in bilingual classes. Bilingual classes were demarcated by teachers as not opportune for all pupils, problematising the position they elaborated on inclusiveness.

Tensions between parents’ expectations and being a Finnish school

Studies on neo-liberal reform in education suggest significant changes have taken in teachers’ work over the past two decades which have altered teachers relationships with parents and with each other, and promoted the regulation of teachers’ performance in school through technologies of self-surveillance and self-policing (cf. Ball, 1997/2006, 9–25; Fenwick, 2003; Hill, 2004; van Zanten, 2002; Woods & Jeffrey,

⁹⁶ During my fieldwork, the strongest critique of the ethos of hard work in the bilingual classes was presented by Katja, a member of staff whom I had a discussion with a few times after school. On one such occasion in October 2003, she observed that in her experience “quite a lot” of the pupils in the bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School were depressed. In response to my question why, she claimed many of pupils from the bilingual classes found their homework over-challenging and were hard-pushed to meet the demands regarding school work, with a fair number of those struggling to master what is expected of them in terms of homework, she suggested. Katja contrasted this with another school in which she worked “where half the classes are ‘special ed’ classes.” While she associated the problems of pupils in Sunny Lane School with pupils striving to be good pupils, subjecting themselves to school demands and requirements, in the other school she identified the problems as being quite different: pupils playing truant from school, opting out of school

2002). Reflecting these findings, the perception articulated by several teachers in interviews and informal discussion was that of being closely monitored by parents in light of how successfully they were able to transfer knowledge and skills to pupils. Pursuing a similar argument to that which they had articulated of the entrance tests, teachers argued that the need to test pupils and monitor pupils' achievement in core areas of the curriculum such as reading and writing, were a means to generate necessary information to respond to parents' questions. As one teacher justified an extra double lesson of reading in English during which she listened to pupils read in turn, "I don't know where we're going, and soon it's our Parents' Evening." Bilingual teachers described incidents of parents asking them how much pupils used English in school, and as one teacher said in defence, "it is not so easy, it is not so simple that when a teacher speaks English that all the children speak it, too."

The expectations and demands of some parents, teachers observed, led to tensions between teachers and parents. Particularly problematic, teachers suggested, were parents who questioned the views and authority of teachers but were competent in "nice talk," who made subtle suggestions and posed questions regarding teachers' work in polite form; parents who "correct you" or "keep questioning you," intruding and imposing on teachers. As Tuija expressed, "I prefer a parent who will come to school and bang on the table, push it over, any day to a parent who will come over and talk their nice talk and tell you how things should be." She went on to describe some parents as being "superficially interested in school, like when it suits their schedule, their routines," at the same time placing high demands on teachers:

Tuija: Parents were quite disappointed in the Parents' Evening when they asked what kind of educational principles I have and I said that they're very simple and clear. That my experience is that the result has always been good when you've had the strength to be (pause) just and fair. That *they're there* (...) As old-fashioned as it may sound. (Interview: May 2004)

Tuija observed: “I don’t think there’s any difference between parents in bilingual classes and Finnish classes,” and indeed, Niki described bilingual parents who had lived abroad on a similar note as often “coming to tell that, ‘where *we* were’, that ‘I don’t want to *advise*, of course’, but ‘where we were, we used to’, and then you get all kinds of [advice], and from many [parents].” Katri compared Sunny Lane School with another school as follows:

Some parents are drug abusers there, but it seems like it’s really good to work there, the teacher’s word is still the teacher’s word, they have parents’ full support, maybe they don’t question teachers as much. (Fieldnotes of informal discussion: February 2004, in Finnish)

Particularly irritating, as described by several teachers, were parents who presented subtle suggestions regarding the teacher’s – and school’s – way of organising classroom practice, presenting their critique with an easy appearance and polite manners. Such parents were identified as harbouring expectations and ambitions which conflicted with the values and commitments of the teachers and of the school. Despite the emphasis teachers placed on school work, they expressed conflicts over the high demands and ambitiousness some parents were described as pursuing. While teachers acknowledged the status and distinction bilingual classes brought to their school (see Chapter 5), they took distance from the value and esteem they identified some parents as connecting to the bilingual classes. Bilingualism and maintaining one’s skills in English, Tiina suggested, are valuable, but not to the extent that some parents invested them with. “It’s like an ambition for parents, that they want to get here, at any price,” she observed, elaborating:

I remember last autumn (...) a few days before school started. There were a few kids whose parents had apparently, like really, now, into this bilingual school and they’d taken private lessons and it was like really important for them. And the kids were, like,

really excited and nervous, that “now it’s this important test and now I have to get into school,” and then don’t get in. And [unclear] the parents were somehow so – I think it’s great, of course bilingualism is a richness and it’s good to maintain it if you’ve acquired it for some reason, but that it’s like, many parents see it as an end in itself, you can see that, that *that’s* what makes a school good, *that’s* what will help their child get along in life, their child, their child won’t acquire good language skills without a school like this and that this is. We felt really sorry for some of the kids. (Interview: February 2003)

Teachers described educational achievement as being a key concern for many bilingual parents. Some parents, teachers elaborated, expressed demands and hopes for teaching to progress at a more rapid, individualised pace. What these parents needed to understand, teachers emphasised, was that the school was a regular Finnish school which was structured to progress according to a fixed pace:

Tiina: And I have had to keep repeating that this is a comprehensive school class where we study in two languages.

Silja: Mm.

Tiina: There’s a lot of, parents would like, it’s funny that apart from wanting, that the language skills are like an extra here, very quickly parents ask for mathematics to proceed a bit further and for science to be a bit broader, and somehow their expectations swell. I –

Silja: in your class, are there these–?

Tiina: requests, yes. Especially in first grade when we started in the basic education approach from the areas that were, then there was a lot of, like, “hey, we are going forwards, aren’t we,” and “this is going to move more quickly in the direction of,” and “these things have already been discussed in kindergarten and shouldn’t they?”

Silja: Yes.

Tiina: Many parents described in detail what their child already knew how to do, that “can’t we go forward a bit more rapidly?” (Interview: February 2003)

Teachers expressed concerns for particularly pupils they identified as struggling to keep up with their peers, and for pupils who took too much to heart their parents’ demands and expectations. Parents, it was suggested, needed to adjust their ambitions to their children’s abilities and prioritise their children’s well-being over and above parental expectations related to school achievement. The task of teachers was construed as one of constraining over-ambitious parents:

Ritva: I remember a couple of years ago we debated over how many languages pupils in bilingual classes can take in addition to English and Finnish (...) That we needed some sort of clear procedure in this language program, too. You can, for sure, see the ambitiousness of parents in this, that “our child is in an international class,” and so these languages, too, but still, you have to be talented, too. (Interview: May 2003)

The distinction between parental ambition and the commitments of the school (see Chapter 6) was marked by teachers by another one: the distinction between Finnish school culture and foreign school cultures. Ritva (Pudas School) and Minna (Suensaari School) elaborate:

Ritva: In some cultures parents’ participation in everyday life at school is a more strong than here, and then they bring this model with them without really asking anything of us, and I think they’re more kind of positive initiatives, and then the demands can be [pause] maybe they can be more demanding.

Silja: Can you tell what kind of things do the demands concern?

Ritva: Well, they very easily interfere with teaching. (Interview: May 2003)

Minna: Especially countries like Argentina, some totally different place, they don't understand that, for starters, in Finland parents can't interfere in school as much as they can abroad. (Interview: May 2003)

The relationship between Finnishness, which Sunny Lane School was seen to represent, and foreign elements associated with parents' demands toward school and teachers, were described of as giving rise to tensions between parents and teachers:

Niki: And then, what I've been quite surprised about is also that, in general I've received more feedback,

Silja: yes

Niki: – from parents. And then also kind of like critique, and on the other hand, receiving instructions from parents, that what kind of things we could do with our class, which surprised me as I'd thought this, for goodness' sake, is my work [laughs]. But then I got, from parents, that “then we'll do this and this trip,” and stuff. And I was a bit like, hang on, that does it fit in with our curriculum at the moment? That those are the kind of a little more unfortunate things. (Interview: May 2004)

School, Niki posits, is a space defined by the objectives of the Finnish curriculum and various institutional norms and procedures regarding Finnish comprehensive schools. The impression is one in which parents should be careful not to intrude in teachers' work, being mindful of their place as parents, not teachers in school (cf. Metso, 2004; Reay, 1998), returning to or taking up more traditional or Finnish ways of being a parent in school.

8.2 Parents and the maintenance of belonging: School as work

School locality has been identified as a significant element in parents' discussion of school choice, tapping into notions of respectability and morality, which have been associated with the production of social class (cf. Grozier et al., 2008; Kenway & Bullen, 2001; Walkerdine et al., 2001; Vincent & Ball, 1998). Studies in education point to significant differences as well as similarities between agendas of school choice articulated by minority parents and majority parents, between parents signifying the middle-class and parents signifying the working-class, underscoring the ways in which class, "race" and ethnicity intertwine in the selection of a "magnet school" or a "local school" (cf. Goldring, 1997; Lucey & Reay, 2002; Reay & Ball, 1997; Srivastava, 2008). In the analysis that follows, I examine how parents assert their commitment to their children's education, drawing attention to the ways in which they refer to an ethos of hard work and examining how this is intertwined with their representations of bilingual classes.

Making it by working hard

Discipline and hard work were often mentioned by parents in their descriptions of Sunny Lane School in interviews, and were also identified by parents in their response to the questionnaire I distributed to parents during the enrollment day, with parents detailing expectations such as that school should be "demanding" and provide "good quality" teaching. "I hope he comes to school to learn," as one mother wrote, continuing, "and will be in a nice atmosphere." One mother's expressed the following expectation of school in her response:

School has to be a safe place/strict. Good education is essential.
Rules must be followed and limits must be fixed to children.
Daily homework. (In English)

Good education, in this excerpt, is linked to qualities such as safety, discipline and adult authority, and these were recurrent themes in my interviews with parents, although not all parents adopted equally celebratory views of them. During the school year, however, there were some incidents of parents of bilingual pupils contacting their child's teacher with requests for more demanding work. One mother also requested her child's teacher to organise detention for her child for playing truant during two lessons at the end of a school day taught by a substitute teacher. Reflecting this importance attached to school work, Pete expressed the view that "Most important is that they learn certain social skills and the basic idea of how work is done, that *what* and *how* it is done." While parents described their children as acquiring English more easily and more fluently than what would have been possible through regular foreign language lessons⁹⁷, participation in a bilingual class was often signified by parents, also, as requiring more effort, more work than Finnish classes. "Of course it requires more work," Marita explicated, "as they have to learn both the Finnish language and peewit in English, peewit in Finnish, and how it sings." The additional effort required of pupils was represented by several parents as a pedagogical advantage:

Nora: Some do, some parents say to me, I've heard it quite often that "they'll learn English real quick anyway, they hear it on TV and all the songs and everything" [pause] But I haven't regretted putting her into a bilingual class yet. I think it's been kind of – she learned a really good work moral there. She's definitely had to work harder than in a Finnish class. But it's helped her understand that every day you need to do your homework and make sure you learn those things. You learn to take responsibility. (Interview: April 2004)

⁹⁷ Several parents also voiced the expectation that having learning one foreign language fluently, their children would learn also other foreign languages more easily. "The threshold is a terribly much lower," as Paula observed, and Marita, on a similar line, reflected that "could it be that when that English is stronger than it usually is, then these other languages will come easier."

Nora suggests the hard work required of bilingual pupils is advantageous to instilling “good work moral” and appropriate study habits in children, pushing them to achieve well in school, to try their best, teaching important lessons about responsibility. Contemporary society was associated by several parents to lack of discipline, and they maintained the importance of teacher authority and discipline in school:

Emma: And, well, we have a really good teacher, X is like [pause] you could say she is sweet, but then she’s resolute, that she clearly is able to keep that discipline, for them, which I think is really important, especially nowadays, that children have that discipline, that they can’t generally do, that if they say “I don’t want to do something,” that it’s not that you couldn’t say anything to children, that parents are all ruffled by it, that “our children were told,” and. That you need to be able to say to them *properly*, and children *need* limits. (Interview: April 2004)

“There is always the danger,” Nora posited, “that like I said, you shouldn’t make school too easy, not even for the kind, for the kind that have some difficulties.” All schools, parents suggested, did not have similar expectations of pupils to achieve well in school, nor resources and support measures to support pupils in this task, leading to differences in pupils’ learning outcomes between different schools. In Emma’s words:

The problem in many schools, with children, is that they are taught, in quotation marks, to be stupid, although there isn’t anything, the child can be intelligent, but then, like, [if] you have a problem with reading and not, like these kinds of problems identifying [letters], or whatever, that they don’t notice on time and nothing can be done to them, that there aren’t enough resources, then that’s a really bad thing, that the child will become disturbed and s/he feels that s/he isn’t able to cope with others and starts to disturb [lessons], and so on. (Interview: April 2004)

By comparison, most parents I interviewed described bilingual teachers as having high expectations of pupils’ capabilities and commitment to

school work, and many parents signified principles relating to school work and discipline as comprising shared, mutual ground between teachers and parents in Sunny Lane School by many parents. “We’re on the same level with the teacher and we can discuss things,” as Janita claimed.

Parental involvement and ensuring lessons are learned

In school, opportunities for parental involvement, as Ranson, Martin and Vincent (2004) argue, are limited and are “typically shaped by deep codes that reinforce professional authority and parental deference” (p. 273) as they are dependent on parents’ supporting their children in ways that comply with teachers’ expectations (see also Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Metso, 2004; Reay, 1998). While school choice has provided some parents with the means to exit schools they do not wish their children to attend, it would not appear to have changed the conditions under which parents are expected to participate in schools (cf. Martin & Vincent, 1999; see also Metso, 2004). Evans and Vincent (1997) observe: “the ‘good’ parent is not only the effective consumer, but also the responsible parent, prepared to offer whole-hearted support to the school and conform to its priorities and values” (p. 105). Demonstrating interest and support for their children’s school work and learning was a key element across parents’ narratives. The task of overseeing and helping with their children’s homework, however, was primarily identified as the mother’s responsibility, “my wife is responsible for these school things,” as one father described (cf. David et al., 2003; Davies & Aurini, 2008; Metso, 2004; Reay, 1998, 2000). In the snapshot below from my fieldnotes of a Parents’ Evening, parents discuss the importance of various practices orientated toward supporting their children’s learning in school⁹⁸:

⁹⁸ The importance attributed to providing a supportive environment for their child’s learning was also articulated by Petra, the local mother of a child in a Finnish grade. In our interview, she emphasised the importance of demonstrating a positive disposition and keen interest toward her child’s homework and

Several mums stand by the library table. Apparently Riku doesn't particularly like reading. His mum, Kristiina, says "you always have to force him a little bit," continuing "our Riku is like a Math man!" Kristiina says Riku had found the book he had brought home recently from the library a bit too "childish." Kimi's mother, Paula, tells the others about some really fun kids books about "the magical school bus" that her son, Kimi, enjoyed, describing it has having had "a bit more to offer for boys, too." She tells the others that whenever she has to travel overseas because of her work, she tries to find children's books in English to bring back with her. (Fiednotes, Parent's Evening August 2003, in Finnish)

Parental involvement in school has, Edwards and Allred (2000) argue, increasingly become influenced by processes of familialisation, institutionalization and individualization, which place emphasis on children as the responsibility of their parents, children as pupils needing to be supervised, and on children as social actors responsible for their own biography. While presented as in the best interest of children's education, emphasis placed on home-school relationships and on parental involvement runs the risk, they observe, of crossing privacy boundaries. This was also reflected by the interviews I had with parents, where organising family schedules according to homework and ensuring and

learning, reflecting on her part in supporting her child as follows:

What I've heard from some parents, they can have like an attitude that "oh no, is that how much homework you've got! Well oh-hoh, well oh no!" That in a way they moan on their child's behalf that "you have so much homework!" That I've been really careful to watch out that nothing related to school would be an "oh no," that on the contrary, that "wow! what a great book you have and really interesting exercise!" and for our child, she doesn't feel that homework would be a burden, that 'again I have to!' But of course it requires a little, kind of, that you have to, that interest and the kind of that I (...) I help her quite a lot if she asks something, and not just if she asks, but also, like "what did you get? what have you done?" and "can you show me?" That in that way, I like support, support it, and I've tried to watch out for, like, "homework, now you have to do them before you can do something!" That she can choose a little bit, and quite often she does them when she comes home from school, but then sometimes, or something, I don't think it's imperative that is sometimes a friend is going to skip rope that no, no I don't think that you need to, that "now you have to!" That a kind of (laughs), let her freely decide to do it, and I've noticed that it's worked really well. (Silja's "mm's" and "yeahs" omitted from the transcript).

enhancing their children's understanding of key areas of the curriculum were often presented as key parental responsibilities. Parents emphasised self-responsibility in relation to homework, at the same time assuming the position of supporting their children from the background:

Marita: That, like, I don't sit right next to each, sit next to each of them and watch over them so much. Of course I try and ask them [about homework]. But on the other hand, I think it's important that they learn to do it, and of course I want to know – that the mother is supporting you from here, behind you – but I'm, like, I don't feel like, you know, like Verna explained about her friend's mum, when she's a teacher, that she knows everything, where they're going in history and things.

Silja: Right.

Marita: That I don't know! (fakes a sob). (Interview: May 2004)

Drawing on Lareau's concept of concerted cultivation, Davies and Aurini (2008) observe that mothers, as good parents, are expected to “not only provide food and shelter but also nurture a stimulating environment in the name of child development” (p. 57). This expectation was also voiced by parents, with Lisa, for instance, positioning herself in relation to her daughter's homework as follows: “Sometimes she doesn't know so well (...) I mean, I try to teach her.” The task of supporting children with their school work was identified as having repercussions for particularly mothers' lives. Mothers identified themselves – and were identified on several occasions by their spouses – as organising personal and family schedules around their children's schooling. As many parents elaborated, the pattern or habit of parental involvement in school and parental support with educational tasks, for those parents whose children had attended a private English Language Kindergarten, dated as far back to when their children started kindergarten at the age of three:

Nora: From when they are little, from when they are three, they do these tasks (...) But it's not like just day care, they really do study from when they are three. And parents are in a significant role, that we had the important task of raising funds, and all in all parents have to participate from the beginning, that for example every week you get a new book that you have to read with your child, a book in English, and so that first the adult reads a sentence from there and then the child repeats it. And then there's a notebook where you write comments, that how has it gone and was it too easy. So, from this perspective, parents' participation starts already back there, that I've noticed – if I move on with this a little bit – that parents who come from this Play-school background, and the children, that the parents are also quite active in school, that they're kind of used to it already, that this is also the parents' thing. That this continues, this being active. (Interview: April 2004)

Those parents who had lived abroad recalled the active role that parents were called on to perform, such as coming to school to help out in the school library or in the class, and supporting their child with homework assignments. The active involvement of parents in their children's education was identified as also expected of parents in bilingual classes, with parents positioning themselves as keeping a close eye on their children's progress, ensuring homework was completed and lessons learned. In Tim's narrative the model of parental involvement is one where teachers ensure pupils' learning in school and parents, at home:

Tim: the homework is to make sure that you know where your kid is in school and, and homework is for *you*, it's for the parent, it's not for the teacher because they don't have enough time to teach, as I would imagine they go through everything with each kid, so they, they don't know if they're picking up certain maths, or [pause] and, mm, I said it's for *us* to know and have a problem then we can teach it, or if we see some problem with them help,

or, you know, where is the problem. It's not for the teacher to correct the next day. (Interview: May 2004)

Not all parents greeted demands related to parental support and the oversight of homework with equal enthusiasm. Some articulated surprise at the intensity of the support demanded of them. Nina, for example, recalled being surprised to realise "they don't always necessarily check their homework," and consequently having "started paying more attention to [my daughter's] homework." She elaborated, "Sometimes I have to help her, but at least I check her work, most times."

Competition and the fear of their children being singled out as less able or mediocre were recurrent themes in parents' narratives of homework. As Lisa observed, "in kindergarten (...) if you make, you make and nobody cares if it is good or bad, but in school they make level." "Making level" in this narrative refers to the introduction of standards against which pupils are compared and contrasted, which Lisa presented as a pervasive feature of schooling:

Silja: What kind of memories do you have of how the transition from kindergarten to school happened?

Lisa : Oh, *not easy*, because she doesn't understand this homework. She is, she prefers the same like kindergarten.

Silja: M-hmm.

Lisa : But *then* in the end she understand when they begin criticize. In kindergarten she don't make, if you make, you make, and nobody cares is it good or bad. But in school they make level. Straight. That "you're bad," "you're good," "you're excellent" [laughs]. And, ah, one girl she got some kind of stipend. She [Anna, Lisa's daughter] was shocked about it. I said "ah, you didn't trust me!" She didn't believe me that you *must* try. (Interview: April 2004)

One of the mothers discussed the loath her daughter developed for supportive Finnish lessons as follows:

Meiju got terribly stressed about going to the lessons there, then, that she just cried and cried, and it was like a terrible experience always for her, that I thought that what is it? That Ritva [teacher] was really hammering, I believe, but, mm, their chemistry didn't meet, that Meiju was really afraid of Ritva, and then when she always tests their speed with a watch. And she with a watch. Well Meiju, who has never wanted to admit she is a slow reader, that she is overall a very fast person, that it didn't fit into, [breathes out heavily], her self perception that she would be a slow reader, well she got really distressed (...) And then when we'd worked hard all summer and went there again, and again she took the time and said "you haven't made any progress this summer!" (Interview: April 2004)

Meiju's concentration and effort were not, her mother asserted, recognised by the teacher. Instead, Meiju was categorised as not quick enough to qualify as a competent pupil – a view the teacher had her learn through the introduction of the watch, the exercise of time-keeping and the comment "you haven't made any progress this summer."

Studying in a bilingual class was suggested by some parents as intensifying competition between pupils to perform well in school. Sari identified competition as having become more acute in schools today than when she was in school, at the same time emphasising "Finland *is* a competitive society." The competitive atmosphere of bilingual classes was often connected to parents' perception that pupils in bilingual classes were academically orientated. As Sari explained:

Sari: Like I think in her class, I don't know everyone really well, but I think some are really excellent, like they read Harry Potter and things. But no, not her. She really struggles (...) But am I doing something irreversible to my child. It's a really big thing, you know, if you make it through primary school with a good self-esteem. (Interview: April 2004)

Pupils who read “Harry Potter and things” are signified by Sari as competent, as fitting in with the milieu of the bilingual classes. Consequently, her concern and the concern of several other mothers, was that pupils struggling to meet the standards expected of them in school are easily led to feel inferior. In interviews, mothers from bi- and plurilingual families as well as a single mother I interviewed took distance from what they described as a “competitive” and “school work” orientated approach of bilingual classes. As one of these mothers said, “if English weren’t our other home language, I would never have put my child in this bilingual, that they have to work so hard,” continuing “I don’t understand, how some people from, like, Finnish speaking families, that how do they? It must be hard.” The expectation that participation in a bilingual class would be easier for bilingual pupils was observed by Outi and Sari, parents of bilingual children, as not holding true. Learning Finnish and English was not described as effortless by these mothers, but as requiring considerable efforts. They distinguished between “home language” and “school language,” claiming these were “two different things.” As Sari expressed:

I get really, I’m really allergic to people saying that the second language comes naturally, like with the mother’s milk. We, thought it would be easier, but no. (Interview: April 2004)

Sari was articulate about the negative effects participation in a bilingual class might have on her children, as she was of her fear to become singled out as a “difficult parent” if she were to voice her concerns and frustrations. “Sometimes I’m hard put trying to bear all that homework, sometimes when I come home from work, I’m cross already, in advance,” she said, continuing “I haven’t wanted to be known as a difficult parent, so I’ve just kept quiet about these things [in school].” This perceived demand to conform to teachers’ expectations speaks to a neo-liberal emphasis of individual responsibility in which as Evans and Vincent (1997) observe, “Once the initial consumer choice of school is made, the parental role, for the majority of parents, is marked

by subordination to school” (p. 105). Lea, a single mother, elaborated on a similar line:

Terrible amounts of homework, I gave feedback at some point ont that. To her teacher and the principal, upon which the principal explained to me that “parents have chosen this class and parents have chosen that there’s a lot of homework.” Well, well, guess were we told! Maybe at some Parents’ Evening it was mentioned, when I was at this first grade Parents’ Evening, but they didn’t specify it clearly there, in any case (...) Now it’s quicker, but sometimes she [daughter] doesn’t seem to be able to, those, writing like long stories in her story book (...) that she starts and scribbles something and complains and then she, if she concentrates, then they go more quickly, but in any case, that, that bilingual class, I have to say, sometimes I’ve thought of transferring her into a Finnish language [class], because I think our life has been to a large extent spoiled (...) I can’t go anywhere, because they have such awful amounts of homework. But I haven’t given feedback. The teacher says that parents have said that ‘you have to give exercises’ and the principal has said that ‘you parents have chosen this class and you’ve chosen that there’s lots of homework’ (...) And it feels like I’m alone, that I’m tied down anyway, and it feels, sometimes it feels that there’s no way I can go anywhere. (Interview: April 2004)

Parents’ support for their children’s homework, Lea suggests, was posed by teachers as an indicator of their commitment to their children’s education, constructing the position of the good parent as one which precluded critiquing the school’s homework policies. Yet parents such as Sari and Lea did not disagree with the principle of working hard in school, but with the amount of homework pupils had to complete. Supporting children with homework, some mothers indicated, took considerable time and emotional energy (cf. Reay, 1998). Sari identified both her children as having required assistance and oversight to ensure that they completed their homework and learned their lessons well:

Silja: So when your children started school, how did this transition to school affect your home routines?

Sari: Mm. Both our kids have needed help, you know, neither of them has been like ‘what fun to have homework!’ No way, it sure hasn’t been like ‘what fun to have homework!’

(Silja and Sari laugh).

Sari: It’s been, like, a task you need to get done, but neither of them have been very enthusiastic about it.

Silja: Yeah.

Sari: Sure, they do their homework cause they know they have to.
(Interview: April 2004)

Across parents’ narratives, teachers were identified as determining the pace of school work and identifying what needed to be learned and when. During the school year, teachers extended invitations to parents to participate in the organisation of extracurricular events, for example, and presented opportunities for parents to provide feedback, such as in the questionnaire sent out by the principal through Pupil’s Diaries asking for parents’ to detail their views on the school anonymously. These were acknowledged by parents, yet the feeling several parents articulated was that different perspectives are not always welcome in school. “They do not always want to hear what we say,” was the general observation put forward by one of the parents.

Rinne (2000) observes that “National school systems collide with the challenges of globalism in such simple things as organising their syllabi, curricula and educational structure” (p.13). Relatedly, Outi identified Sunny Lane School as a Finnish primary school which has “its own system,” suggesting the view of school as a closed, rather than open space, where negotiating with teachers over everyday aspects of schooling is difficult. In a similar vein, Janita described the importance attached to standard handwriting in her son’s class as follows:

Matti came here with cursive handwriting, and then the Finnish school institute doesn’t accept it and then Matti was put to do

letters in a totally different way (...) [His handwriting] was much more, like, twirly compared to Finland, that in Finland it's really plain. And so his teacher corrected it at first, and there was a bit of a conflict at first, that Matti had learned to do it like this, and me, I told him "do it just to please your teacher, to please the school, that there's no trouble," but every person has their own handwriting, that I don't understand now that why deny, when someone has learned, when they've done, for example, these letters in a different way for some time, so somehow, why does he have to suddenly have to make them like sticks? (...) Why does everything have to go according to the same standard and formula? I think it's a bit strange. (Interview: April 2004)

While some parents maintained a different view on school demands, importance was attached by these parents to maintaining an unproblematic relationship with teachers. Their perception was that there was little room for critique regarding school demands. This was also reflected in the view expressed by several parents that moving to a regular Finnish grade was the only alternative should they disagree with teachers on the demands and expectations of bilingual pupils. Yet despite ongoing or past difficulties, these parents underlined, their experiences of the educational standards of bilingual classes, bilingual teachers and the school atmosphere in Sunny Lane School were largely positive ones, which together with the observation that their children enjoyed their bilingual class, led to the perception that the benefits outweighed the costs.

8.3 Learning to work: Classroom practice

As follows, I move on to explore some of the positions and stances made available to and adopted by bilingual pupils during school lessons, tracing how bilingual pupils locate themselves within the discursive categories available to them in school. As Davies (2000a) writes, through discursive categories we learn to see ourselves "not just from the inside

of [our] assigned category looking out, but also from the position of [our] binary opposite”, positioning ourselves – who we are and can be – in relation to various categories. Our successful translation of these categories into practice, she notes, depends on our ability to signify ourselves in the likeness of the original which “lives on and transforms itself” (p. 23; see also Derrida, 1985, p. 188.) There are constraints as there is room for improvisation in the performance and maintenance of categories such as the good or able pupil, the masculine or feminine subject. As Youdell (2006) argues, Butler’s understanding of the subject as constituted through performance opens up the possibility of change, “the practices of these discursive agents [i.e. in the context of school, pupils] amount to a politics that insists that nobody is not necessarily anything” (p. 519). Butler (2004) writes:

If gender is a kind of a doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one’s knowing and without one’s willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. (p. 1)

In school, by tradition, girls’ school achievement has been demonstrated as intertwined with notions of gender, race, ethnicity and class. Thus, for instance, girls’ school success has been attributed to hard work and boys’ to natural ability.⁹⁹ (E.g., Canaan, 2004; Renold 2006a, 2006b; Swain, 2002.) Pupils are identified in school as boys, girls, Finn-

⁹⁹ In public debate, attention has been drawn in Finland as in many countries, to boys’ comparatively lower achievement in school (cf. Jakkuri-Sihvonen & Kuusela, 2002), framing educational success as a matter of gender (Gordon, 2006a; Lahelma, 2005). Considerably less attention has been drawn to boys’ success in school and after school, to gender disparities in the workplace – which remains highly gender segregated in Finland. Lahelma suggests the following assumptions on which the girls’ success versus boys’ failure is based: the generalisation that “girls are successful and boys underachieve”; “the evaluation of girls’ success as something problematic and of boys’ lack of success as something heroic”; the “attribution of boys’ lack of success to working methods and feminisation of the schools” and the assumption “school grades have a direct relationship with achievement in further education, the labour market and society at large.” These, she suggests, have been amplified by the neo-liberal shift in educational restructuring. Gender, Lahelma suggests, has become “the most important category of inequality in education” in Finland, one reason being that sex disaggregated data is regularly produced on pupils’ school achievement, whereas data on class and ethnicity is not readily available.

ish, Somalian, and Russian, for example, and with the associated attributes of these and other categorical divides. (Lahelma, 2005; Palmu, 2003; Tolonen, 1999). Pursuing a poststructural perspective, discursive categories such as good, able, masculine and feminine are understood as kept in place through culturally inscribed norms of intelligibility. Intelligibility, as Butler (1990) argues in her analysis of the production of gender, is maintained through inscribing coherence and stability between different markers of identity: “‘Intelligibile’ genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire” (p. 23). Thus understood, the assertion of oneself as able, for example, requires that one fits in to shared meanings of the distinction ability.

As Laws and Davies (2002) note, schooling is made possible, by pupils adopting the available “‘repertoires’ of ‘appropriate’, ‘good’ and ‘desirable’ school behavior” (p. 209). Part of the way in which this is achieved in school is through the production and management of classroom order. The concept of “order” and “orderliness” permeate representations of school, and in Finland, as Salo (2003) notes, *järjestys*, (the word denoting order in school), refers both to the time schedules, seating orders, the original word deriving from *järki* or *reason, sense* (p. 107). School classrooms are represented, ideally, as places inhabited by bodily control, where immobility and quietness represent the appropriate norms for pupil appearance (cf. Davies et al., 2001; Gordon et al., 2000b) within a signifying economy central to which is the representation of school as work (cf. Salo 1999, 2003). Work in school and classrooms is patterned, organised through routine and progresses according to a rhythmic pace that is produced through the temporal organisation of lessons, lunch time, breaks, and the pedagogical organisation of school tasks and school space. Working on school exercises, individually, as a group or as the whole class, Thomson, Hall and Russell (2007) observe, is part of the “cultural architecture” of school, it is a large part of how everyday life in school is organised or routinised (see also Gordon et al., 2000b; Hakala, 2007; Salo, 1999). Spatial arrangements such as seating orders function as a means to assess pupils, and speak to

important lessons about order and discipline (Gallagher & Fusco, 2006; Hakala, 2007; Kasanen et al., 2003b).

In the following section, I examine qualifications teachers of bilingual classes articulate of their pupils during lessons, examining the construction of norms related to good behavior and responsibility toward school work put forward in bilingual classes, then move on to analyse how pupils establish themselves within the discursive categories made available to them.

Self-improvement

A central division that is often produced in school includes the division of pupils into those presented as academically gifted and pupils who are presented as skilled in practical subjects such as crafts (Räty, Kasanen & Kärkkäinen, 2006; Räty & Snellman, 1998). Relatedly, pupils' academic achievement as reflected by their fluency in reading, arithmetic skills and knowledge of foreign languages, for example, often merited positive response by teachers in the bilingual grades I participated in. This is reflected in the extract below from my fieldnotes of the Introductory Day organised in May 2003 for prospective first graders:

The teacher lifts up a Finnish text book with gold lettering on it. She asks if someone could read what it says and Alekski, whose hand shoots up immediately, gets to read it: "*Kul-tai-nen Aa-pinen!*"¹⁰⁰ he reads. The teacher tells the children "this is where you will learn to read all the letters and learn writing, and after you have learnt them, the sky is the limit!" She shows them a picture of the characters in the book saying that "these are the characters you are going to meet." She props the book up on top of the teacher's table at the front where the kids can see it, saying that "this is here, you can look at it." The teacher then picks up

¹⁰⁰ *The Golden ABC Book.*

next year's Math's book and asks the pupils if they knew what book it is. Once again Aleksis's hand shoots up and he gets to answer: "*Tuhattaituri!*"¹⁰¹ to which the teacher continues "and that is what you are all going to be when you finish school," saying how "everyone" will be able to do many things. The children listen and watch. Finnish and Math, the teacher says, are core subjects in school, and learning to read and count make the whole world available to pupils. She smiles broadly while she holds up the book for all the children to see. One learns about the world through reading books, she teacher suggests, describing books as a "good companion." (Fieldnotes: August 2003, in Finnish)

Here, the ideal outcome of school appears as that in which all pupils learn to read fluently and where "the sky is the limit," and where pupils become skilled in subjects such as Math. The teacher paints a scenario of limitless futural opportunities for bilingual pupils, presenting school achievement as available to all pupils. It is not coincidence that the teacher highlights reading and writing (Finnish) as well as Math to the bilingual pupils on this their first official visit to school. In school, pupils' ability to master these subject areas was often presented as central to determining school success or failure. Thus, for example, particularly after special events such as class trips and school holidays, the bilingual teachers often introduced extra lessons on Finnish, English or Maths to make up for lost lessons.

After some teacher initiated activities, including drawing pictures of their families and listening to the Alphabet song in Finnish, the teacher invited the children to share with others where they had attended kindergarten:

¹⁰¹ *Tuhat* means a *thousand*, *taituri*, someone who is skilled at something.

Aleksi is the first to get to respond: I was in the same one with Charlotte!

David's turn: And we were in the same with Jon!

Josefina calls out: There are pretty many from our school here!

The teacher: Remember to wait for your turn.

Nick's turn: I caught a hare.

The teacher: Oh, so you've been hunting for some grub, have you?

She continues by asking if any of the children have siblings. Seven hands go up. Seven swift answers.

The teacher: You have listened to instructions really excellently, and followed instructions really excellently, you are really ready school pupils! (Fieldnotes: May 2003, in Finnish)

While Josefina is reminded of the rule of waiting for one's turn and the teacher changes the topic after Nick's comment, the position offered to the children is that of being "really ready school pupils," a phrase that was later used also by another teacher in spring 2004 on a similar introductory day with upcoming first graders. As above, teachers often provided pupils positive feedback on their work: for listening quietly, for correct answers, effort and neat appearance, producing the social space of the classroom as characterised by order and discipline (cf. Salo, 1999, pp. 63–109). Later during the school year, the theme of knowing how to conduct oneself appropriately, of how to be a good pupil, was often revisited in the praise and instructions of the bilingual teachers whose lessons I attended. Commitment to achieve well and high school achievement appeared as the norm, both in teachers' discussion with pupils and in the ways that pupils discussed school work among themselves (cf. Swain, 2002). "You've done good work and some serious thinking, I can see!" as one teacher remarked during a Science test to her pupils, with another teacher commenting in a similar fashion before a test, "like always, there's nothing to worry about, if you've done your homework and so forth."

School was presented by teachers as demanding continuous work in

order to achieve progressively increasing competence. The expectation which pupils were instructed on was that they put conscious effort into school achievement. Learning was signified by teachers to pupils as being “goal-directed,” as about setting objectives that are “not too easy,” and working resolutely to achieve them. Homework was presented as having the purpose “so that you learn these things,” as one teacher expressed, and break times were construed as welcome rewards for work accomplished during lessons. “Now it’s time for a well-deserved break,” as one of the bilingual teachers often repeated before break. Going out for break was dependent on pupils having finished a task, packed their school bag or pushed their chair under their desk, for example, and teacher-led discussion on break time often highlighted the principle that leisure time needed to be earned, chores and tasks accomplished before starting to play. School holidays, also, were presented as rewards for pupils’ hard work. The snapshot below is from the beginning of school in August. Moments before this discussion, the teacher had been collecting papers from the pupils on which had had to keep record of the books they read over the summer holidays, for pupils had been (and were) advised to practice reading also during the holidays. The teacher engaged the whole class in reflecting on the length of the summer holidays, signifying good pupils as committed to learn also in their spare time:

Jimi: I forgot to read.

Teacher: In Finland we have such a long summer holiday. Did anyone count how long it is?

Tommi (calls out): Ten weeks.

Teacher: How many months is that?

Several hands go up. Someone calls out an answer that the teacher indicates is wrong.

Salla (gets to answer): Two and a half months.

Teacher: Good! It’s a long time to stop reading altogether. (Field-notes: August 2003, in Finnish)

As reflected by this excerpt, bilingual teachers emphasised self-responsibility in discussions on schooling and on homework assignments. Teachers often prompted pupils to assess whether they needed more practice in knowledge and skills studied in school, speaking to the importance of self-evaluation and self-improvement in school (cf. Kasanen, 2003; Simola, 2002). Teachers' instructions during lessons were often accompanied by tips as to what constitutes the desired level of learning. "If you know your timetables, you should be able to think 'bling, bling, bling! like that!'" one teacher said to her pupils, continuing, "if you are still thinking, you probably need more practice!" Instances when teachers encouraged their pupils to engage in self-evaluation took place particularly often in test or test-like situations, such as spelling tests and during the beginning of lessons when pupils checked their homework collectively. In the bilingual grades, spelling tests took place on a weekly basis. In the lower grades, teachers gave pupils spelling lists in English at the beginning of the week, and tested pupils each Friday on these lists. This practice was sometimes accompanied by pre-tests where pupils could test how well they had learned the words and how much more practice they required:

The test over, the teacher tells the pupils they can check their spelling themselves. As she explains, "your result is for your own knowledge." She tells the pupils to "only tick your work" (not correct it), placing "a tick for correct or a cross for wrong" next to each word. The teacher tells them "it's feedback for yourself, do I need to practice more." (Fieldnotes: December 2003, in Finnish)

The pre-test, the teacher suggests in the extract above, will provide individual feedback to students on how well they have learned their spelling and how much room for improvement they have. This emphasis, repeated over time, supported pupils to establish themselves as diligent and self-responsible and invoked the desire to do well, to do better than others. It was common for pupils to compare test results, and during

tests, pupils often shielded their answers with their hand, pencil case or even by building a wall out of school books around their test papers. Test scores were not private information. In similar manner to forgotten homework, teachers kept record, in their notebook or sometimes on the blackboard, of pupils who did not pass spelling tests and needed to retake them, and some test results needed to be shown to and signed by parents:

Teacher: I will now give you your revision test back.

Pupils respond with oo, ee, oh no!

Teacher: One of your homeworks is to ask mum or dad to sign your revision [pause] I have marked down the points and in the top corner [right side]. I have marked the school number that you would get if we already got grades in our grade. (Fieldnotes: November 2003, in English)

While the teacher emphasises “if we already got grades,” for pupils test scores were an important symbol in establishing school achievement (cf. Kasanen et al., 2003a; see also Salo, 1999), and while the dominant discourse was one of bilingual pupils doing well in school, there were also disruptions to this narrative. Some pupils were presented as needing more support, and teachers did not apply the same expectations to all pupils. “You may need to do this with your left hand, but others need to concentrate,” as one bilingual teacher remarked during a lesson to a group of boys.

Most tasks were the same for all pupils, but when pupils were presented with a free choice their choices were subjected to a range of expectations. Choosing which book to read, how long a story or text to write, which exercise to complete, for example, all required pupils to identify themselves as being more or less competent, and often by association, as driven by different motivations and interests. Pupils were expected to have an understanding of how competent they were in different subjects and select tasks commensurate with their level of competence. For example, while pupils of Grades 1–3 were instructed to

choose which books to read during English reading lessons, these reading books were grouped in advance by their teachers to correspond with different levels of reading proficiency, and pupils needed to select their books from the particular group of books that corresponded with their level of reading proficiency. Slow readers were expected to select books with many pictures and little text while advanced readers were expected to select books with longer stories. This was implicit in teachers' recommendations to their pupils, such as "that's a higher level one," and "this one is too easy, it's not a challenge," provided by a teacher to guide her pupils to select the appropriate books to read during an English reading lesson.

Staying focused

During a bilingual teachers' meeting, a visitor from another school in Finland with CLIL classes in English expressed the view that many of the pupils in her school may move abroad in the near future and so "the way they learn is more important than the facts they learn," a statement which had those bilingual teachers sitting close to me nod their heads in approval. Yet as Simola (2002, 2005) writes, despite official discourse in education that has promoted values such as creativity and individualism, pedagogical conservatism continues to be prevalent in Finland (see also Rinne et al., 2002). A similar observation is made by Dovemark (2004) in her ethnographic study, where she claims that while neo-liberal discourse of flexibility and self-responsibility have influenced official discourse and classroom practices in Sweden, classroom practices continue to maintain the importance of submission to teacher authority. Gordon et al. (1999) note in their ethnographic analysis of two secondary schools in Finland that explicit references made to the hierarchical relation between teachers and pupils were rare. Teachers, they note, typically used "fake democracy", for example asking for a "turn to speak" when in fact they wanted pupils to be quiet and listen and allow them to assume control in the classroom (pp. 693–694). Reflecting this

thematic, in Sunny Lane School teachers, not pupils, were presented as determining the rules of everyday life in school. As Patrik, one of the bilingual teachers reprimanded a pupil who had broken the rules regarding break time, “you can’t be inside during breaks, it’s not a free liberty, a free world. If you need to be inside, you ask for my permission.” Another bilingual teacher, Kaisu, instructed her pupils, “sometimes you have to do things in school you don’t want to do” in response to a pupil’s question “what if you don’t want to do [the task identified by the teacher]?”

During the first week of school, all the Grades 1–3 teachers discussed the school’s rules with their classes (cf. Gordon & Lahelma, 1997). These rules were divided into three themes: “In school I study diligently,” “I behave responsibly,” and “I take care of safety.” Each rule had a subset of more specific rules. In one of the bilingual classes, the teacher explained the first rule to her pupils as follows:

“I study diligently,” that is something the teacher can’t know, only you can know. “I’m on time.” Well, that’s what life is like, (she recalls difficulties her pupils have had in the past to be on time, identifying this as sometimes due to matters beyond their control). But then there’s the other side: you should come to school the straightest way, right into the school yard. If, for example, you stop to play, you can be late. “I follow the teaching.” You should gradually learn to follow what’s happening so that everyone notices that “aha! Now a new thing is starting!” (Fieldnotes: August 2003, in Finnish)

Some classrooms also had a separate list of class rules written in bold print on a poster on the class wall, often near the door where all the pupils could see it. Common class rules that were articulated in different form in different classes included those of not disturbing other pupils, no name-calling, being friendly, and staying focused on one’s work, such as the list below in the bilingual first grade:

1. Do not disturb others.
2. Be nice to others.
3. Concentrate on your work and try our best.
4. Remember to speak English.
5. Do not run indoors.

During lessons, teachers reiterated these rules in different ways. Providing pupils with instructions on what exercises to do, how and when, were an integral part of school lessons. Teachers' instructions were accompanied by frequent reminders of the importance of concentration and focus, and feedback – positive and negative – on how well pupils had succeeded in carrying out instructions and completing exercises. “Excellent, class, I’ve forgotten how hard you can work!” “Nice to see how neatly you’re writing, I can see a lot of you are really trying hard!” and “Excellent class, it looks like you worked very, very hard again!” were among the positive feedback provided by teachers to pupils. Teachers identified additional tasks, such as adding details or colour to work, to pupils who finished their work before others, and additional praise was awarded to those pupils who put in the extra effort. As one teacher laughingly described, teachers applied the use of “both stick and carrot” in school. Teachers kept a record of pupils who had not completed their work as expected:

The teacher asks the children to take out their notepads.

Henrik: I didn't do my homework, because I forgot my notepad at school.

Jimi says he hasn't done his homework, either.

The teacher goes to her desk, takes out her teacher's diary, and writes something down. She asks pupils to open their notepads at their homework page, then walks around the classroom checking, briefly, pupils' homework, commenting “OK,” “great, good,” “please mark the page number in the margin,” “are you familiar with the use of margins” and “well done!” (Fieldnotes: September 2003, in Finnish)

While those teachers whose lessons I participated in often encouraged pupils to develop their own hypotheses, to reflect, observe and analyse rules related to English, Math and Science for instance, lessons were organised in ways that maintained the importance of listening to instructions, being orderly, progressing from one task to another without abruptness, and maintaining tidy appearance (cf. Salo, 1999). The image of quiet, disciplined work was present in the ways teachers discussed class work with pupils and in their expectations of pupils:

Somebody hums a tune somewhere.

Teacher: Who's humming and singing over here!

Pupils: Samuel!

The humming stops. (Fieldnotes: February 2004, in Finnish)

Pupils were organised into lines before walking to the school lunch hall or to assembly, and teachers often checked these lines, signalling with their hand to pupils who had stepped out of line to move back into line. A pupil who on several occasions played at being a frog or a rabbit, hopping along the class floor on all fours, was required by his teacher, who stood by the class door watching her pupils file out of the class in single line, to get up and walk with the rest of his class in a straight line. The attention to order was apparent in the straight lines that had been taped onto the floor of the school hall in advance of the first assembly, establishing how pupils were to locate themselves in the hall:

The classes file into the hall. There are lines painted on the floor and new lines have been taped onto the floor. The classes go to stand either on the lines or next to them. One by one the classes come in and stand in long vertical lines in front of the stage. There is a piano at the front, to the left of the stage, and one of the teachers plays *Valppain mielin*¹⁰², softly, to a marching

¹⁰² A Finnish children's song regarding traffic rules, teaching to the importance of vigilance, *valppain mielin* meaning *vigilantly*.

rhythm, while the pupils come in. The teachers sit at the back of the hall, on benches. (Fieldnotes: August 2003, in Finnish)

Desks were organised alternately into groups, long rows or pairs during the school year. While teachers maintained the importance of sitting next to and learning to co-operate with all pupils in one's class, restlessness was an often mentioned criterion for changing the seating order (cf. Kasanen et al., 2003b).

Discipline was not a task that teachers were fond of. As one bilingual teacher remarked in frustration, "sometimes it feels like it's important to learn to be quiet in school, and do as you're told and be a proper citizen." The ideal implicit in teachers' instructions and words of reproach, was that pupils participate, willingly and actively, in carrying out instructions and maintaining classroom order. Teachers encouraged pupils to accomplish themselves as orderly, diligent pupils through day-to-day routinised practices. Lessons often started and ended with desk top preparations, with pupils taking things out or putting them away from their desk top, as instructed by teachers. Each week, pupils took turn acting as class monitors, and this responsibility was connected by teachers to the task of maintaining the classroom tidy and in order – keeping the blackboard clean, the flowers watered and the tables and bookshelves neat.

Placing one's pencil down or emptying one's desk top commonly signalled that pupils are ready to focus on the next task. "Let's put our Mother Tongue books in our school bags so that we can use all of our listening skills," as one of the teachers said to her class. The expectation was for pupils to do such tasks quietly: "Taking out your books doesn't mean that you need to talk," as one of the teachers reprimanded her pupils. It is important, teachers emphasised, to know when to listen and when to speak. As teachers commented to their pupils, there were moments when work in the class required pupils to talk, move and do things they were normally advised against. "Some moments you can chatter, like yesterday you had to chat, but for example now you're listening really well, now it's listening time," as one bilingual teacher

explained to her pupils. Complying with such instructions was presented by teachers as demonstrating pupils' willingness and ability to participate in lessons. Thus *not* raising one's hands in response to a teacher's question, for example, was signified as indicating pupils did not know the correct answer to a question:

Teacher: You have seven tens and four from this box, but not six, so how much more do you need [to make it a ten]?

I sit by Anna, observing her work. Anna has all the correct answers but does not raise her hand.

Tommi, opposite her, counts outloud, using his fingers: Seven, eight.

A little later the teacher asks: How does this feel? (Pause) A bit hard?

Salla: No.

Teacher: But we've got only your hand up! (Fieldnotes: October 2002, in English)

Teachers employed various tactics to keep their pupils busy, often suggesting additional exercises or little cleaning up tasks to pupils who had finished their work. The beginning of lessons when pupils waited for their teacher to come into the classroom, teachers of lower grades suggested, were a time when it was particularly important to identify tasks for pupils to do. Pupils were instructed to sit down at their desks upon entering the class, often with the request to finish work from the previous lesson. My fieldnotes are remittent with teachers underlining the need for pupils to concentrate and stay focused, as in the excerpt below:

Teacher: Everyone has really interesting animal things, but if they're not so important, keep them to yourself, otherwise we'll have to stay in after the lesson, we have to get these done.

Maarit tells something about rabies and raccoon dogs.

Aino: What are we doing this lesson?

Teacher: I've been waiting here all lesson for us to be able to start!
(Fieldnotes: November 2003, in Finnish)

Time-efficiency, as reflected by the excerpt above, was an important aspect of lessons. As teachers often underlined, it was important for pupils focus and not waste "precious lesson time," as one teacher expressed. Pupils were expected to switch swiftly from one task and one language to another:

Teacher: Let's change languages now, and check at the same time that your desk tops are empty.

Pupils scramble to empty their table tops.

Teacher: Then put your hand on your knees when you're ready.

The teacher waits, then says: Adele, do you have a problem? The purpose is not that when we move from one thing to another that it takes so long to do that. (Fieldnotes: August 2003, in Finnish)

The task of educating pupils to become bilingual was translated by teachers into the perceived demand for pupils to learn to effortlessly switch from one language to another, having parallel vocabulary in both languages. This opened up an additional dimension during lessons, that of learning language, which was present in teachers' comments to their pupils, such as "a new thing this year is that learning science is often [English] spelling revision." Lesson time was often spent learning vocabulary:

Teacher: What did we hear about Lappland last time?

Elina: That there are tunturit, no, FJELDS!

Jere: Nordic lights.

Teacher (frowning slightly): U-hmm. Or?

Jere: Northern lights!

Teacher: Good, Jere, and Northern lights in Finnish are?

Jere: *Revontulet*.

Teacher: Good.

Kalle: The two euro coin has a cranberry on the back of it. That's *lakka*¹⁰³.

Teacher: Where does it grow? In English please.

Paula: On swamps.

Jere: They grow potatoes, too.

Teacher: True, but what can't you grow?

Ada: *Vilja*.

Teacher: Yes, and in English that is?

Jere: Wheat. (Fieldnotes: November 2003, in English, cursive in Finnish)

Learning new words and phrases underpinned the objectives of most bilingual lessons, producing the bilingual classroom as a disciplinary space in which the expectation was for pupils to work toward improving their language skills in English and Finnish, remembering which language to use. While all of the bilingual classes had dictionaries and teachers often encouraged students to use these dictionaries when they were unsure of how to translate a word, in their science tests pupils were to use only the language they had used to study the topics: correct answers in the wrong language translated into minus points.

In the lower grades, Finnish and Religion were taught in Finnish. While the materials such as Math and Science books were in Finnish, lessons in other subjects took place in English, or as defined by the teacher. In one class, the teacher put up a British flag to signal lessons in English, and a Finnish flag to signal lessons in Finnish, bringing in a reminder of nation-ness (Billig, 1995), and in some classes, teachers wrote the name of the language to be used during the lesson on the blackboard. All of these tactics were accompanied by monitoring pupils' use of language, with teachers – and sometimes pupils – calling out reminders to pupils who switched to the “wrong” language:

As she walked around the class, the teacher reminded the pupils, smiling broadly: “Adele, only English!” “Sharon, only English

¹⁰³ *cloudberry*

please!” “Tommi, only English!” nodding at the pupils each time she makes this remark.

Teacher: Class, can you remember what I asked you to do?

She walks around the class, and stops to say “Samuel, I heard you speaking Finnish, which means somebody else must be speaking it, too.” She reminds the students to speak English. (Fieldnotes: November 2003, in English)

While the establishment of what constitutes appropriate behaviour and performance in school is an interactive process, it is also one where teachers have the upperhand (cf. Davies & Hunt, 1994; Gordon et al., 1999; Hakala, 2007). The hierarchical relation between teachers and pupils was particularly visible in situations when pupils struggled to conform to teachers’ instructions on the language to be used, with pupils stumbling and searching for words, or sometimes simply giving up trying to say what they had been in the process of saying. Rules applied to language use were presented as non-negotiable, although exceptions were made by teacher to these rules, such as when solving disputes among pupils, consoling pupils, switching momentarily to another subject. Teachers, not pupils, determined when exceptions could be made to rules applied to language.

Pupils’ self definitions: The importance of achieving well in school

As Salo (1999, 2003) notes, pupils are quick to learn the different orders that function in school and that define right from wrong, and in the bilingual classes, pupils were quick to remind each other of work needing to be done and to point out to if someone broke the rules, making sure that principles regarding school work were not transgressed:

The pupils read their Finnish textbook quietly. All except Jimi, who is looking up at the roof and around the walls of the classroom.

Tommi comments, “Jimi isn’t reading!” He laughs.

Jimi turns his gaze down into his book and says vehemently, “yes I *am* reading!” and starts to read out loud, too. (Fieldnotes: August 2003, in Finnish)

While the extract above is taken from a classroom lesson, also in their informal discussion during breaks or other moments in the absence of a teacher, the dominant discursive category that bilingual pupils applied to themselves was often that of a hard-working and successful pupil. The ability to attend to the teachers’ instructions and complete one’s work to good standard were construed as markers of having achieved oneself as a good pupil in school. The extract below is from a conversation bilingual third grade pupils had as they prepared to leave the class for break:

Frank: Children’s work is to play.

Kaisa: No it isn’t, children’s work is to learn.

Paula: Yes, just so, children’s work is to learn.

Frank: I don’t want to be a grown-up.

Rebecca: You have to be a grown-up, some day you’ll have to be a grown-up. (Fieldnotes: November 2003, in Finnish)

These brief moments before going out for break were often moments when children negotiated amongst themselves who would play with whom, what they would play and where, and most of the pupils had left the classroom for break. Frank, perhaps thinking ahead to break time, remarks “children’s work is to play,” which carries the connotation, through progressive pedagogy (cf. Walkerdine, 1992) that children learn through play, separating children’s activities from those of grown-ups. Rebecca produces a new expression, “children’s work is to learn,” which can be seen as iterating the demand for pupils to take responsibility for their schooling, articulating the importance of hard work to this project. Frank’s comment, “I don’t want to be a grown up,” may well refer to the uncertainties of the future as also to the demand to work,

not play, for in my fieldnotes there are many incidents in which pupils iterate the view that school and education is important to future opportunities. “Education is something you always need!” and “I wouldn’t want to be in X School, all the pupils ever do there is play,” as Harri, a bilingual pupil claimed. Importance was attached by bilingual pupils to achieving well in school, as demonstrated in the following conversation between myself and Anna, a bilingual pupil, which took place during a class trip:

Anna: Silja, am I stupid?

Silja: Stupid? Where did you get that from?

Anna: Am I stupid? I want you to answer me, do you think I’m stupid?

Silja: Do I really have to answer? How did that come to cross your mind?

Anna: Tell me now!

Silja: You are certainly not, but where did that question come from?

Anna: Well, because Jasmin says I’m more stupid than she is. Yesterday. That she’s more intelligent than I am.

Silja: What does it mean if you’re intelligent?

Anna: Well, when you know more.

Silja: But there’s all kind of knowing. What does she know more?

Anna: Well, for example Math, and she just knows more, she can describe all kinds of things. I’m good in languages and in fashion, I know better what’s fashionable, but Jasmin knows more about these things.

Silja: What things?

Anna: Like school things, she knows about them more.

Silja: You know what, I don’t believe in the word intelligent at all, it’s kind of like a way to talk. There’s all kinds of knowing. I think we should get rid of the words intelligent and stupid.

Anna smiles (a little uncertainly, I think) and skips off to her friend. (Fieldnotes: May 2004, in Finnish)

As Anna articulates, knowing fashion is not equal in value to being able to demonstrate intelligence in school. Torn between an interest in the origin of her question “am I stupid” and an impulse to reject the construction of the hierarchy stupidity – intelligence, I ask Anna questions, first complying with and then attempting to reconfigure intelligence as an established way of thinking, as a non-legitimate, fictive concept, yet as Anna’s repeated question “am I stupid” suggests, it is a category that has pertinence for pupils. Being able to convey oneself as intelligent had social value, more so than knowing what was fashionable (cf. Burns, 2004).

In school, the ways in which pupils produce and fashion themselves as good pupils involves a balancing act between school achievement and that which is considered socially acceptable as articulated by norms related to gender appropriateness, for example. These norms have been demonstrated as varying according to the classed composition of schools, for instance. (Canaan, 2004; Davies & Saltmarsh, 2007; Reay, 2002; Renold, 2004; Renold & Allan, 2006; Swain, 2002.) As Nayak and Kehily (2006) argue, “notions of gender identity appear as an unassailable presence, a constant of the educational experience amidst the turmoil of reform and new initiatives” (p. 470). While Reay (2002) demonstrates how continual negotiation over gendered norms is required of boys aiming both to achieve well in school and maintain themselves as “lads” in a “sink’ inner-city boys’ comprehensive school” (p. 221), in Sunny Lane School, the available and socially acceptable repertoires of being a bilingual pupil did not involve the repudiation of the position of being academically successful, which was the legitimate position in pupils’ discussion amongst themselves. Similarly, declining from activities symbolically affiliated with masculinity did not systematically involve being labeled as feminine, as “weak” or as a “nerd” (cf. Connolly, 2003; Manninen, 2005; Swain, 2002; Tolonen, 2001):

Tommi asks Harri to join “our gang,” referring to the local football team, saying “I’ve asked you at least ten times!”

To this Harri: Why do you always ask me, when I don’t know how to play football!

Tommi: Well, 'cause you're my friend.

Harri: But what would I do there, I don't know how to play!

Tommi: We'd think of something for you to do, come on, join us!

Harri laughs. (Fieldnotes: April 2004, in Finnish)

In a later discussion this group of boys had over lunch, Tommi referred to Harri as "researcher," at the same time extending, again, his invitation to join the football team, an invitation Harri yet again declined, saying "I don't know so much about sports, well, I know Kimi Räikkönen." While my data includes many examples of bilingual pupils applying sexed and gendered expressions and investing in heterosexualized masculine and feminine identities, for Harri, while being labeled a researcher positioned him as different to sporty boys, in a subject position outside the expectations associated with hegemonic masculinity, the position of being a researcher is a markedly positive one that enables him to establish himself as appropriately, if not laddishly masculine. There was a sense in which the expectation that bilingual pupils achieve well in school and are committed to school work enabled the pupils to assert identities not as strictly confined to assumptions regarding also ethnicity (cf. Burns, 2004; Swain 2002; see also Connell, 1995; Manninen, 2005). Zeenat, also, an ethnic minority pupil who came to a bilingual class from a Finnish class, described to me how in her previous class she was teased for her foreign accent, telling me now, in her bilingual class, she felt more accepted. "It's better to study and I have some good friends like Anna," she observed.

The identity of being a good pupil was not without its constitutive outside, however. While Anna's question "am I stupid" is reflective of the ways in which relations between bilingual pupils were established through comparisons and competition with pupils in their class, my fieldnotes also include many examples of bilingual pupils drawing distinctions and comparisons between pupils in bilingual classes and those in Finnish grades, special education classes or, on occasion, in other schools, on the basis of pupils' perceived orientation to work: whether they were creative, intelligent and/or hard-working, for example, reflect-

ing Butler's (1993) argument that "Identities operate (...) through the construction of a constitutive outside" (p. 22). In the excerpt below Jimi and Harri, two boys in a bilingual class, discuss while walking out of the class for break whether they would like to attend another school:

Jimi: Harri, would you like to go to X School?

Harri: No, there they just play all day.

Jimi: Mm. (Fieldnotes: April 2003, in Finnish)

The division into Finnish and bilingual classes was one often produced by pupils, in the context of football matches during breaks and in relation to class work, with some bilingual pupils suggesting "Finnish pupils" often behave boisterously or unfairly, or, in one instance, that the Finnish grade were "copy-cats," with several pupils asking their teacher "why do they always have to copy us, to do the same things like us?" in relation to a crafts project. Similarly, when discussing the condition of equipment purchased by the Parents' Association for each class, including footballs and skipping ropes, one of the girls turned the discussion to the Finnish first grade, presenting the pupils in this class as careless, saying "1A [the Finnish first grade], they always play at the back of the yard and leave their things there."

8.4 Conclusions: "A good combination"

The combination,
that there's a school-orientatedness at home and in the child,
and then the teacher,
like, brings this,
that "you've been chosen into a program like this,
which is a fine thing,"
and then you tell them straight away
that "this demands some effort,"
it's a good combination.
(Interview with bilingual teacher)

During a moment of self-reflection after a school day (above), one of the bilingual teachers reflects on the coimplication of teachers to the production of bilingual classes as a particular kind of place. The combination of the “school-orientatedness” of the pupil’s family *and* the attention teachers draw to pupils having been selected for bilingual classes she suggests, compose a “good combination” which paves the way for successful participation in a bilingual class. Indeed, the ideal social landscape against which pupils and parents were compared and contrasted and which bilingual pupils and their parents are seen to reflect well, was signified by teachers as one in which pupils work diligently and where pupils and parents demonstrate commitment to the principle of hard work.

Hard work was spoken of as a means to achieve well in school, and bilingual teachers repeatedly emphasised that participation in a bilingual class demanded diligence of pupils and the commitment of parents. Such demands were discussed by teachers also through reference to ideals of bilingualism. Pupils, they asserted, need to learn two things at the same time: the vocabulary in English and Finnish and the thematic areas being studied. This was presented as requiring self-responsibility and commitment to self-development, pointing to the demands of performativity (cf. Ball, 2006; Beach, 2003). Different educational outcomes were presented as deriving from the skills and levels of motivation of pupils and from the level of support provided by parents, whereby as Rätty et al. (2006) write, “success and failure (...) present[ed] themselves as issues of learning, i.e., of the pupil, rather than teaching, i.e., of the school” (p. 6; see also Beach, 2003). Thus regardless of the proposition that hard work presented the means to achieve well in school, the ways in which bilingual classes were discussed by teachers did not construe hard work as guaranteeing success in a bilingual class where the demands, teachers observed, are high.

In teachers’ and parents’ narratives, the school community was idealised in terms of social cohesiveness. Teachers suggest the commitments and motivations of bilingual parents fit in well with those of the parents living in the school catchment area who have high expectations

of school. Self-responsibility, high expectations and “demanding-ness” were construed as characteristics that fit in well with the school’s ethos of work, establishing a sense of belongingness in school.

School work was connected by teachers to order: to active, focused minds and controlled bodies (cf. Salo, 1999, 2003). There were some strains of nostalgia in the ways ethnic majority teachers evoked school as being a place where pupils are to work hard, associating this with being a *Finnish* school, with a discourse of Finnishness entering the ways which teachers and parents described the school. Both unwillingness to adopt the school’s position on school work, which was suggested as conflicting with the school’s ethos of work, as also overly strong ambition which was also identified as problematic, were interpreted as not belonging to a Finnish school. Parents, teachers emphasised, should not idealise participation in a bilingual class or think, as Tiina says, that “the sole purpose, what makes a school good and what helps their children do well” is participation in a bilingual class. The individualistic pursuits and ambitions of parents were described as potentially bothersome, with parents crossing over into areas traditionally held by teachers, interfering with the commitments of the school as a national institution, which teachers suggested continues to be committed ideals of inclusiveness.

Also parents presented the view of bilingual classes being inhabited by well achieving, hard working pupils, iterating their commitment to the principle of hard work in school. The efforts their children put into school work were interpreted by some parents as affirmation that their children were receiving a rigorous, intellectually challenging education, increasing their future opportunities. Homework was discussed as a responsibility, as something pupils must do and parents must support. While almost without exception parents commended the atmosphere in Sunny Lane School as being a positive one and the teachers as being good to communicate with, their narratives also speak to the difficulties of approaching teachers with questions or suggestions related to school demands and classroom practices. The impression was one of maintaining unproblematic appearance with teachers, adhering to teachers’

expectations of parents and pupils (cf. Martin & Vincent, 1999; see also Metso, 2004; Reay, 1998).

Bilingual teachers often articulated the need for self-evaluation and self-improvement during lessons, and emphasised the importance of maintaining order, focus and diligence. Teachers articulated positive expectations of their pupils and emulated surprise and disappointment when pupils failed to achieve well. There were incidents when teachers called on pupils to exercise self-selection in choosing tasks, subjecting pupils' decisions to a range of expectations on their ability to perform. Expectations related to being a good pupil were often enunciated in the context of rules and regulations applied to language use, Finnish or English, where pupils were expected to be observant of which language to use, putting effort into the use of correct vocabulary and grammar. Pupils adopted the discursive positions made available to them by their teachers, positioning themselves favourably, as having the characteristics needed to succeed in school. This was achieved by drawing comparisons between bilingual pupils and pupils in special education and Finnish classes, for instance. In order to signify themselves as being competent and successful, bilingual pupils needed to comply with expectations regarding school achievement, putting effort into maintaining an appearance of diligence, orderliness and intelligence, and their participation in a bilingual class was marked by the pressure to succeed well in school.

9

Figurations of belonging¹⁰⁴ in school

It is the first day of school. At about 8.40 there is a throng of students and their parents in the school yard. Most of the younger students have parents with them. The teachers fetch the large cards they had prepared in advance with their class number and letter on them. I follow the teachers outside where they organise their pupils into lines, holding up class' name cards. The children form long lines in front of them. Parents help their children find their teachers. I hear one mum say to her child who looks around as if searching for something, worried expression on her face: "s/he doesn't look like s/he's here yet, maybe s/he hasn't come yet." The first graders, many of whom had been walking hand in hand with their parents, now let go and get into line. The parents stand watching their children. Some of them take pictures. Some parents smile and talk together, pointing at the children. The parents are dressed smartly, some are dressed in suits, one wears an army uniform. The (bilingual) first grade teacher calls out over the noises of the school yard, not shouting, but loud, "Hello everybody. I'm your teacher, and we've all met before."

¹⁰⁴ A figuration, St. Pierre (1997a, pp. 280–281) cites Braidotti as writing, is a “politically informed map”. While representations do not account for all realities, for absent presences, figurations, St. Pierre writes, “are carefully considered trajectories that send us headlong into the complexity of living lives” (p. 281). By referring to “figurations of belonging,” my purpose is to underscore the ways in which the concept of belonging to a community relies on ideas of nationed, raced and ethnicised differences, and is limited and arbitrary in its ability to reflect the complexities of reality as it is lived and experienced.

I stay with Niki's class. Niki instructs her pupils "follow me, please!" and holding the card up high, leads her class to the flagpole. The parents, who have hovered around the class, make room for them and disperse, to collect behind the lines of students standing around the flagpole. One mum tells another mum on the way to the flagpole that her child is starting at the afternoon club and would be there today for a couple of hours, and she asks where the other mum's child will be going for the afternoon. I join the parents at the back. The teachers stand by their class, making sure their class stands in a straight row. Eileen, at the front, gives her teacher a hug. The principal goes to the front, to stand on the slight mound by the flagpole. Some older students arrive, the boys jostling and joking with each other. Tiina and Satu, two teachers, tell the boys to hush down. Some boys to the front left of me jostle each other, quietly. A pupil holding a trumpet stands in front of the flagpole at the front. He is wearing a straight shirt and shorts and his hair is neatly combed flat, parted in the middle. Once all the classes are organised in front of the flagpole in straight rows he begins to play and everyone hushes down to listen to him. He plays a fanfare, unfaltering, ending with a handsome crescendo. There is a small music stand attached to his trumpet with the notes on it. The principal has a microphone and when he finishes she says: "and thus our school year begins handsomely! Now it's time to lift the flag, flagraisers!" Several teachers mime to some boys to take off their caps. The boys take them off, but shield their eyes from the sunlight with them, half planting them back on their heads again. We watch the flag go up the flagpole, pulled up by some scouts. The principal announces through the microphone: "and the flag goes up!" Once the flag is up, the principal says: "and so the school year begins, serenely. There is not much wind now, but the flag will definitely get some wind!" She speaks of the importance of co-operation between the school and parents, and of the importance of joy and hard work. She intervenes her speech by commenting that "good, the flag has begun to flutter in the wind!" People around me look up. The flag lies limp against the flagpole. The pupils in front of me look puzzled and I hear someone snigger, but otherwise it is quiet. Everyone around me seems to be watching the flag. I wonder if it really had been blowing in the wind because now it lays limp against the flagpole.

*Another teacher comes to announce the “school peace.” She reads a short speech from a paper, saying that “it is once again my pleasure of announcing school peace to all the schools in Finland.” She speaks of the importance of good manners that “need to be a part of every school day,” and tells us that this year’s theme at their school was safety, finishing by saying, with a smile, “and now I announce school peace and this school year begun!” The trump-
petist plays one more time.*

The event described above is from my fieldnotes of the flag raising ceremony that marked the beginning of the school year in Sunny Lane School, (and as I found out later, also the end of the school year). I was told that the school had a long flag raising tradition – which, in my ten year experience of Finnish schools (six years as a pupil and four years as a teacher in southern Finland), is not uncommon. “It is once again my pleasure of announcing school peace to all the schools in Finland,” as the teacher remarks at the flag-raising ceremony,” symbolically connecting everybody present to the national space. All of us standing under the flag that is described as fluttering in the wind, but at glance, appears limp against the flagpole, stand as an “imaginary one” under the flag. This ceremony, and others like it that take place during the school year, was discussed by teachers as reflective of the national and local community, as continuing traditions that have taken place in their school for some time. “Before, teachers used to sing pupils a song there by the flagpole,” I was told, and as one of the teachers explained to parents in a Parents’ Evening, “in spring we have these celebrations and church again; spring ends at the flagpole, and all pupils can attend, regardless of religion.”

The whole incidence of raising the flag, which we are expected to watch quietly, caps off, was rarely recalled by parents in discussing the beginning of school in interviews, nor did I observe pupils commenting on the ceremony as the day progressed. The lack of commentary during and after the event suggests the unremarkable nature of raising the Finnish flag, the banal nature of Finnishness in school (Billig, 1995; see Gordon et al. 2000b). Nations, as Anderson (1991) posits, are imag-

ined communities. Imaginaries are important, Hesse (1999) writes, “as political discourses because they express desires to overcome incompleteness or insufficiency in the construction of identities; they invoke perceptual objectives” (pp. 216–217). While as Anderson’s work demonstrates, nations and national identities are constructed as clearly defined and homogeneous, St. Pierre’s (1997a) observation of the way in which fictions are produced as representations of the real holds true for the ways in which nation and national identity are signified. As St. Pierre writes, this takes place through “the repetition of piling one citation on top of another and still another” (p. 280).

As Gordon and Holland (2003) write, nation space is organised as bordered territories and as sets of social relations and mental constructs, yet are a taken-for-granted, “unmarked part of our societies” (p. 36; see also Billig, 1995). Nationness and its ethnicised, raced, classed and gendered representations have been identified as a pervasive feature of schooling, as affecting the institutional practices pupils are to take part in and the kind of knowledge they are expected to accumulate in school (cf. Gordon et al., 2000a; Komulainen, 2001; Lappalainen, 2006; Roman & Stanley, 1997). This poses interesting questions concerning foreign language learning and CLIL, which have been connected to international and global perspectives in education. Thus in this chapter I examine how teachers, parents and pupils make sense of Finnishness, internationalism and multiculturalism, drawing attention to how they discuss race, racism, religion and culture in so doing. I explore what lessons teachers and parents suggest should be learned in school regarding these discourses, and what meanings are attached to being Finnish, international or multicultural in interviews, informal discussion and during school lessons.

9.1 Teachers and the task of educating open-minded Finnish citizens

I begin this chapter by investigating how teachers negotiate ideals of cultural belonging in school, drawing attention to how understandings of Finnishness, multiculturalism and internationalism underpin this discussion, and exploring how the construction of the good teacher is connected to these discourses. I then move on to an analysis the part discourses of nationality play in making sense of cultural belonging and difference, drawing attention to the perceived need to defend Finnish customs, traditions and school practices. In the last part of this sub-chapter, I draw attention to the neutral approach teacher assumed towards ethnicised, “raced” and gendered differences, and examine the ways teachers make sense of race and racist and sexist name-calling in school.

Being the good, inclusive teacher: The promise and limits to cultural belonging

The dominant paradigm through which differences have come to be marked and made intelligible in school today is that of a cultural paradigm of difference, informing the articulation of multicultural agenda. While systemic, unequal power relations, is noted, the focus is on culture and cultural membership, on cultural misunderstandings and on the recognition and celebration of diversity.¹⁰⁵ As a means to overcome

¹⁰⁵ This focus, Lentin (2004) points out, dates back to UNESCO’s 1950 *Declaration Against Race and Racial Prejudice* and the cultural paradigm. As Lentin writes, the explanations and remedies offered by institutions such as UNESCO replaced “political explanations with psychological ones and advocate(d) cultural rather than political responses to [racism]”, replacing “race” with “culture” and racial determination with cultural determination (p. 435; see also Goldberg 2002). The ideological aspects multiculturalism, Lentin (2004b) remarks, can be traced to a communitarian political philosophy which is opposed to liberal individualism. Cultural belonging, in this stream of thought, is viewed as the primary component of one’s identity and hence multiculturalist political argument is for minorities to be able to maintain membership with their cultural group and continue to develop their collective culture in the same way as majorities. (See also Benhabib, 2002; Hesse, 1999; Yuval-Davies, 1997a.) This focus of collective identity, while having been an important part of demands for citizenship (cf. Hage, 1998, p. 18), has been mobilised in ways that have been criticised for contributing to static representations of Others, sedimenting differences between “us” and “them.” The tendency, Brown (2001) writes, has been for multicultural politics to be “particularly susceptible to moralizing didacticism” in which “persons are equated with subject positions, which are equated with identities, which are equated with certain perspectives and values” (p. 38) and

intergroup conflicts, xenophobia, racism, ethnocentrism and ethnic prejudice, the cultural paradigm suggests the introduction of efforts to increase intercultural understanding and appreciation of cultural fluidity and change. Central to such efforts, it is suggested, is both recognition and tolerance of cultural differences, suggesting a focus on marginalised groups. Within a discourse of tolerance, emphasis is placed on cultural sensitivity and learning to understand different, other ways of thinking and living, containing ideas of difference in the concept of culture. (Cf. Banks, 2006; see also Lentin, 2004, pp. 434–437; Yuval-Davies, 1997a.) Banks, a pioneer in the field of multicultural education, suggests schools and teachers assist pupils in developing cultural, national and global identifications that are “clarified, reflective and positive,” elaborating:

Individuals who have positive cultural, national, and global identifications evaluate their cultural, national, and global communities highly and are proud of these identifications. They have both the desire and competencies needed to take actions that will support and reinforce the values and norms of their cultural, national and global communities. (p. 29)

While multiculturalist theory has contributed to challenging hegemony and normativity, calling attention to absences and exclusions to the generic figure of the citizen, it has also been a central tenet for the production of difference. In school, multiculturalist discourse has been charged with naturalising and reinscribing rather than altering or moving beyond the centrality of nationhood and normative assump-

political claims are made in the name of moral truth (p. 22). A politics that derives from moralistic discourse, Brown notes, runs the danger of a “siege mentality” that casts ‘us’ – on both sides – as to be defended” (p. 39). This is reflected by Hage’s (1998) observation that liberal discourses of multiculturalism were adopted in Australia by also right wing politicians to propose ways of accommodating and, ultimately, defining limits to diversity (see also Yuval-Davies 1997a). This speaks to the precariousness of belonging and the importance attached to origin in contemporary politics, where cultural signifiers of identity have come to define existing norms for recognition and representation. Yet as Brown writes, “suffering (...) cannot be resolved at the identitarian level” (p. 39).

tions regarding culture, race, ethnicity, class and gender. The focus on cultural differences has often had the effect of essentialising difference, rather than, as Yuval-Davies (1997a) proposes for a transversal politics, leading to dialogue that recognises different positionings and the partial knowledge these positionings offer (p. 204). Olneck (2001) suggests the failures of multiculturalism are related to its inability to think outside cultural givens. It has, he writes, continued to pose the same questions, such as who the nation is composed of (p. 343; see also Anthias & Lloyd, 2002, p. 12; Watson, 2002, pp. 11–12). The articulation of change in multiculturalist politics, of how to resolve issues that emerge from xenophobia and nationalism, turns back on the very system it seeks to change, that is, the idea of nationhood, which it tries to revise.

In Finland, the concept of multiculturalism has been traditionally linked to new groups of migrants, new “strangers” marked by ethnicity and race, who interrupt traditional notions of settledness. The concept has also been used to construct multiculturalism as a variant of older discourses of internationalism: as having its origin elsewhere and as having only recently arrived in the country. The tendency has been to focus on cultural difference and incompatibility, and on between-group differences rather than within-group differences. (Cf. Kurki, 2008; Lappalainen, 2006; Oikarinen-Jabai, 2008; Mietola, 2001; Rajander, 1997.) In her analysis of how cultural difference is made intelligible within multicultural education agenda, McCoy (1997, p. 334) identifies multicultural education as being seen as needing to address the following problems:

- (a) social realities
- (b) psychosocial attributes of students, their families, and their teachers
- (c) schooling
- (d) representation.

An analysis of the writings of Finnish advocates of multiculturalism, such as those of Talib (2002, 2006; Talib, Löfström & Meri, 2004; see

also Lampinen & Melén-Paaso, 2009), reveals similar concerns. The rationale for change is construed as that of increasing understanding of cultural difference, identifying teachers as a key resource in initiating this process. Schooling is interpreted as having the potential to correct the “scripted” ways (Talib et al., 2004, pp. 168–169) in which social life is perceived, namely, the stereotypical representation of members from minority groups. Yet often, reflective of the adoption of liberal multicultural discourse rather than a critical or anti-racist multicultural agenda, multiculturalist initiatives in school have tended to focus on features such as food and clothing (Lappalainen, 2006; see also Mietola, 2001; Rajander, 1997). Such a focus, as Mohanty (2004a, p. 203), points out, does not challenge the hegemony of dominant knowledges or histories. Indeed, Lappalainen (2003) notes in her analysis of international or multicultural theme weeks in preschool, the “celebration of internationality is (...) experienced more as a celebration of Finnishness” (p. 91).

As feminist pedagogies have underlined, the inclusion of marginal experiences in the classroom as a means to challenge hegemonic orders in the classroom is a complex issue (cf. Ellsworth, 1989/1992; hooks, 1994; Mohanty, 2004a; Orner, 1992). As Jones (1999) observes, calls for cross-cultural dialogue often rest on the assumption of minority pupils sharing their experience, on the “dominant group’ students’ desire for the other” (p. 303), reinforcing a tendency for majority experiences to be defined individually while minority experiences are defined in relation to their cultural groups. Furthermore, cultural pluralism is not merely an objective reality knowledge of which can be easily transmitted to pupils: it is a discourse which is constantly reproduced and through which individuals make sense of themselves (cf. Barinaga, 2007).

In Sunny Lane School, teachers often connected the introduction of bilingual classes to the individual needs of families “whose culture has probably changed because they have moved from one country to another, that they’re not your basic Finnish family, whatever that is like,” as Niki expressed. What was evoked in such discussion was a dis-

course of caring for pupils, which is, as Vogt (2002) writes, is often attached to female teachers (see also Acker, 1995; Gómez, 2008). While as Johanna, one of the foreign language teachers, suggested, “like, as a woman, or I think that if you want to try, and you should try to separate yourself from this mother’s role as much as possible,” the discursive association between female teachers and caring was a common one in teachers’ informal discussion, and was reflected by the tasks assumed of and taken up by teachers during the school year (cf. Murray, 2006).

Most often female teachers – sometimes willingly, sometimes reluctantly – assumed responsibility for organising annual events such as the end-of-term concerts, and their efforts were an undeniable resource in the production of the school collectivity in its local and national dimensions (cf. Gedalof, 2003). In the absence of volunteers, a female teacher volunteered to bake a cake for the coffee the teachers organised for the minister of the local church; two female teachers took responsibility for the organisation of an alternative event during the Christmas service attended by most pupils; and when it appeared no-one would be producing the Nativity Play for the Christmas Concert, a female teacher volunteered to take on this task, despite articulating reservations about the association of Christmas with Christianity. Likewise, a female teacher assumed the task of decorating the staffroom for special events with berries, flowers, rocks and pussy willow, according to the time of the year or the event being celebrated; a female teacher organised for a pupil to play the trumpet at the flag raising ceremony event; while yet another organised the pupils to raise the flag. The principal and a teacher, both women, spoke at this event, and later in the year, female teachers took main responsibility for the organisation of an Independence Day -event in the school hall.

Some bilingual pupils, teachers elaborated, may only be in Finland for a short time, and efforts to educate pupils on traditions associated with Finnishness were discussed by these teachers as intended to instill a sense of belonging to *some place* in pupils, to the local community and to Finland. Educating pupils on the history, environment, cultural traditions and values associated with Finnishness was construed as some-

thing good, inclusive teachers do. “The children have no roots (...) they are rootless in their home environment and rootless in school, they live in different places,” Anna observed of bilingual pupils. School was construed, symbolically, as a home or point of departure, which was implied by comments such as “they will be leaving us and going into the world” put forward by the school’s principal of the sixth graders at the end of spring term. While never explicitly defined, Finnishness was associated with common values and cultural traditions:

As I sit talking with Anna, each of us with a cup of coffee in hand, I hear Tiina and Timo discussing something about values and then the French debate on whether head scarves should be allowed in school.

Hanna joins the discussion: And are crosses just jewellery or are they religious symbols, too?

Tiina and Timo comment that this is a good question.

Tiina says it’s important to notice that there’s a diversity of values, but “it’s also important to find some core values.” These core values, she argues, have to be clear. She raises her hands to demonstrate, drawing two straight lines down through the air, saying “it’s important” for children to have “clear values.”

Timo: That’s quite a dangerous way to think, if everyone thinks about their values like that, *putkessa kasvetaan*¹⁰⁶. (Fieldnotes: January 2004, in Finnish)

The discussion of headscarves and Hanna’s question on crosses bring to fore the ways in which difference was defined through a national framework in which Finnishness assumed also religious content (cf. Komulainen, 2001; Lappalainen, 2006; Tuomaala, 2004). Relating a view of Finnish society as having become more plural and fragmented, Tiina suggests a focus on the construction of collective values as a means to address cultural and social fragmentation. Her perspective is educa-

¹⁰⁶ *We’ll grow up inside a pipe.*

tional: pupils need “clear values,” she argues. While the discourse of social cohesion and its attendant idea of core values evoked by Tiina is problematic in its assumption of coherence and equal access to similar identities (cf. Fanon, 1952/1986), Timo’s argument is not unproblematic, either. Timo’s critique “That’s a dangerous way to think, if everyone thinks about their values like that, *putkessa kasvetaan*” is reflective of a critical multicultural position which maintains the importance of pluralism, hybridity and tolerance, yet this emphasis is not necessarily connected to reciprocity, nor recognition of, or will to transform the forms of cultural values and traditions existent in school and in society.

It is important to underline that Tiina did not object to ideals of cultural pluralism. On the contrary. “I think it’s really, one richness is the wealth of cultures we have in our school, that we have children who have lived elsewhere,” she expressed her view, applying a multicultural rhetoric that construed cultural diversity as an enriching characteristic of particular families in the school (cf. Hage, 1998; Hesse, 1999). It is that the idea of inclusiveness endorsed by Tiina as well as other teachers was one which maintained its anchorage in a discourse of origin and belongingness in which Finnishness was construed as first-ness (cf. Harinen, 2000), and in which the task of teachers was translated into the maintenance of Finnish culture, naturalising different cultural backgrounds as “givens” rather than interpreting them as invented or produced. This was reflected in Tiina’s later critique that school should also aim to “strengthen also, or highlight the children’s own cultural background more.” Cultural belonging was spoken of as being of de facto importance to individual pupil’s self concept, and this view is also shared by male teachers. “It’s a totally Finnish school, a few words of English spoken, in various classrooms,” Tomas critiqued, continuing:

If you take a step back and look at it, these children are going to have problems, you know, like they’re coming from different parts of the world, they’re in a, you know, strange setting, strange environment for them, you know, it’s difficult for them to cope. (Interview: May 2004)

Teachers emphasised the importance of identifying cultural similarities, with Katri articulating “it doesn’t work anymore, that I tell a small group of kids that ‘we’re here and the others are there’, a kind of ‘*us* and *the others*.” Yet the importance of “roots” and “origin” were a consistent theme in teachers’ discussion. Cultural background was construed as a fixed property, rather than as being transitory or partial. This is articulated in Katri’s and Tiina’s comments on “who you are” and “different cultures”:

Katri: I think the emotional and social side is extremely important. Pupils are sometimes here for just a short time and it’s not nice if you just put a book in front of them, that “here you go!” More attention should given to who you are, where do you come from, that [we] take things into consideration. (Fieldnotes: discussion during break in March 2004)

Tiina: I think it’s also important that it’s not just, mm, that we help those pupils that have come to Finland from different cultures, for example, or that have, like, a different home culture than in Finland the home culture of many Finnish children, that we, like, help them to integrate and become Finnish, but instead we [pause] I think it’s terribly important, also, to show those children that “what you are and what your culture is, is also really valued, it’s right and it’s good, too.” (Interview: May 2004)

The ideal assumed by teachers is that of being change-agents, positioning themselves as responsible for the task of inclusion (cf. Banks, 2006, p. 31; Deveney, 2007). Their perception was that lack of knowledge of Finnish values and traditions contributes to increased social vulnerability and exclusion. The suggested solution was that of increasing knowledge and understanding of local and national traditions and cultural heritage, linking the task of education to the project of Finnishness. This positioned teachers as experts on Finnishness, as being able to define what the national values and traditions are (cf. Hage, 1998,

42–47), and positioned the task of teachers as a moral one. It is the moral duty and responsibility of individual teachers, as teachers suggested, to respond to the individual emotional needs of pupils who had lived overseas and who came from different cultural backgrounds:

Niki: But somehow, well [pause] you don't probably, that I don't normally think about [the kind of things that are to be found in the children's background].

Silja: Right. Is it somehow that this everyday is so, that it speeds you along, or?

Niki: Well, well, maybe that too, and then somehow you [pause] somehow you don't [pause] It is, I think that it's the kind of thing you need to stop and think about first so that you'd understand it, and after that you should, like, stop to think about it regularly and try and remember to bring something of it into everyday [school], that that would be good. (Interview: May 2004)

The teachers whose lessons I participated in often articulated principles of being supportive, empathetic and inclusive, and offered descriptions of “orientating myself multiculturally,” “putting myself in their shoes.” At the same time, they suggested there was no simple recipe for translating ideals of being inclusive in bilingual classes, beyond, as Tiina contemplated, the anecdotal “translation into English from Finnish.” As she admitted, “it's terribly difficult, for me, also, I've noticed during my [teaching] years, to bring to a concrete level, that what in reality, what I notice in reality, that how do I take this into account in practice?” The general approach appeared as that defined by Watson (2002, pp. 51–54) as soft multiculturalism, the suggestion being that space needed to be provided for discussion of children's different experiences and knowledge on topics ranging from school, religion and cuisine, for example, and that this would encourage increased understanding and tolerance among pupils, and enhance minority pupils' engagement with school (cf. Lappalainen, 2006).

Finnishness and “vieras tulee ajallaan, talo elää tavallaan”¹⁰⁷

While teachers maintained the importance of cultural identity and diversity, in Sunny Lane School’s curriculum, specific objectives for bilingual education had not, some bilingual teachers lamented, been detailed beyond a general statement emphasising bilingualism as an area of school work in the bilingual classes, and the affirmative statement that teachers and pupils would “learn to understand and respect” each other and each other’s cultures through bilingual study. Discussion on diversity and international perspectives, several teachers observed, was limited, and bilingualism was not a central organising principle in the school environment and in school practices. The school as a whole and its bilingual classes in particular had not engaged in efforts to broaden their perspective beyond the statutory recognition that “we have bilingual classes alongside Finnish classes,” Katri observed:

Katri: It’s kind of, we do our work in such a Finnish framework and in a [Finnish] school system, like myself, too.

Silja: Do you find it, like limiting, somehow? That [pause] in a Finnish framework and school?

Katri: Well, no, not limiting, but it kind of guides us in a direction where there’s less internationalism. (Interview: May 2004)

Working in a “Finnish framework” appears in this excerpt as something teachers are inexorably tied to, limiting possibilities to engage with internationalism. Later, Katri expressed the view that the school’s curriculum should be revised to be more reflective of internationalism, pointing out “there is flexibility” and “so that the school isn’t divided into two units, the decision has been to have the same curriculum.” Finnish classes, too, could begin to organise “international” events such as Halloween and International Food Evenings for their classes, several bilingual teachers suggested, emphasising such events should not be

¹⁰⁷ *The guest arrives when s/he may, the house lives according to its ways.*

restricted to the bilingual classes. At the same time, bilingual teachers often took distance from a celebratory approach to internationalism with one of the bilingual teachers claiming “internationalism is something that can be included in there, in the [classroom] discussion, we don’t need to have these visible festivals,” and another observing internationalism has “a bit of an elitist sound to it.” Importance was attached to cultural authenticity (cf. Lee, 2006):

And then we organise, also, we had, for example, these parents who were either from America themselves, or have spent a lot of time in Canada, America, who organised this Halloween party with us close to Halloween time, and because of them, we had authentic decorations, these, like tracks there, and things. (Interview: February 2003)

The discourse is one of internationalism with an attendant focus on the positive value of different nationalities. While the discourses of multiculturalism and internationalism were interconnected in teachers’ discussion – the common association being that they are both recent arrivals in a mostly homogeneous, monocultural Finland (cf. Lepola, 2000) – internationalism was associated with travel, mobility, affluence; it was more clearly delineated as a resource whereas the association of multiculturalism was more often with minority pupils and their struggles to succeed in school. “Here multiculturalism is completely different,” Tiina compared the bilingual classes in Sunny Lane School with a previous, multiethnic school where she had taught. “It’s more like a richness (...) multiculturalism is more, like, which families have been abroad.”

Even as teachers emphasised adopting a more diverse, international approach with Pirjo expressing she would like to “get a bit of, like a different breeze” to her teaching, such emphases were complicated by the perception that some parents had endorsed an international, pluralist orientation at the expense of Finnishness and a common sense of community. “Someone suggested once that the Finnish classes could go

somewhere else,” as a bilingual teacher remarked of the aspirations put forward by a bilingual parent. Some parents, teachers expressed, *expected* cultural experiences of bilingual teachers. This demandingness was not regarded positively by bilingual teachers:

It doesn't always feel good [to organise these events]. Parents expect me to do all the organising, and some of them are critical of my teaching. [Recalls a previous year when] the parents asked me to organise something for Halloween, and they asked me for some small program, and we prepared some program with the class (...) Nobody clapped, and I had to announce the program was over.” [She tells me the parents dressed her for the evening]. They had an outfit ready, nobody asked me if I wanted to wear the outfit.

She concludes by telling me she is not comfortable with parents telling her “we want this and this.” (Fieldnotes: discussion during break in November 2003)

Various international events and cultural theme days were organised on occasion in bilingual classes, but Finnishness remained the culture into which pupils needed to be accommodated, teachers maintained. There was something to be learnt from the experiences of pupils who had attended school abroad and from pupils' cultural backgrounds, but as Anna expressed, “internationalism means we get these breaths of air, that our doors and windows are open,” but that “*vieras tulee ajallaan, talo elää tavallaan.*”

Parents of bilingual pupils are, teachers suggested, active in voicing opinions and contacting the school. This activeness was discussed as both a potential resource and a potential nuisance. On the one hand, more active parents' participation in extracurricular events and in Parents' Committees is, teachers suggested, welcome. “In Finland, parents are a bit timid about joining in, that, like 'are we stepping on the teachers toes' or something,” as Katri observed. On the other hand, parents who questioned teachers' views on school practices were identified as

interfering in quite bothersome ways in teachers' work, with teachers identifying cultural and national differences as the cause of many of such troubles. Niki described sometimes feeling defensive when parents approached her with questions and comments concerning school practices and processes, articulating:

Then these parents, too, that bring their, what they have experienced in different cultures and then they bring it [to school] and I notice in myself, too, that my first reaction is like, a defence. And, "wait a moment!" that "who are you to assess our system!" till you somehow calm down and think that, really, "OK, what was the point this person was trying to make?" (Interview: May 2004)

Teachers invoked a discourse of Finnishness in making sense of such confrontations with parents. The institutional practices of schools and the relationships between teachers, pupils and parents are, teachers suggested, different in different countries. Parents who had lived abroad were suggested as needing to adapt to norms regarding school and parental participation in Finland:

Silja: Yesterday I wrote down in my notebook, and I think it was you who said it, that some of the parents on the bilingual side consider themselves *maailman nähneitä*¹⁰⁸. Could you explain that to me?

Tuija: Yeah, sometimes it feels like families that have lived abroad and their children have maybe been to school there for four to five years, their parents have been active in Parents' Committees and then they come here. [Pause]. In Finland we think that if you have something *weighty* to say, you get in touch, but not just to show that you're active.

¹⁰⁸ *Maaailman nähneitä* refers to someone who has *seen the world*.

Silja: So do you feel parents do that here, just to show they're active?

Tuija: Yeah, sometimes. (Fieldnotes: discussion during break in April 2004, in Finnish)

Tuija marks a difference between the detached disposition some parents assume, and the local and particular position assumed by teachers (cf. Alapuro 1998, p. 83; see also Szerszynski & Urry, 2006). While not a perfect institution, teachers remarked of Finnish schools, it is important for parents and pupils to accommodate their expectations and views of school from any “new ideas” or “foreign thoughts” they may have acquired. “They have to adapt to this Finnish norms, parents, too, that we go according to this scheme here,” as one teacher expressed.

Troubling and maintaining the notion of school as a tolerant place

While tolerance and openness toward differences have often been presented as central values and starting points in education in Finland (Lahelma, 2004), particular value has been attached to cultural transmission, educating pupils on values and traditions associated with Finnishness (Gordon & Lahelma, 1998; Komulainen, 2001; Tolonen, 1999). Enemy images have also abounded. Particularly Russia and Russians have often been portrayed in negative ways (Lappalainen, 2006; Tuomaala, 2004). In Sunny Lane School, the view put forward by teachers of the importance of cultural belonging embraced an inclusive and individualised rhetoric where “every child is important, every child is special,” as Anna expressed. Importance was attached to the positive recognition of pupils’ diverse cultural backgrounds. Valuing cultural pluralism *and* Finnishness involved holding paradoxical thoughts together, however, which was partly resolved by the suggestion that school was a neutral, equal place – at least in comparison with many other places. School, Katri maintained, was more reflective of diversity than kindergarten:

Katri tells me about the children of a friend of hers who are in X kindergarten. She tells me that her friend's family do not belong to the church and in kindergarten, whenever there's a religious event, "and most times they are fun, like Christmas, Easter, puppet shows and things," her friend's children are always put into a separate room. Katri says "in kindergarten they don't organise any parallel events, you either belong [to the church] or you don't. It isn't until you start school that different religions enter the scene." (Fieldnotes: May 2004, in Finnish)

Yet Finnishness was produced as an important feature and everyday aspect of school. As part of the school's policy, teachers were required to prepare an annual plan for their class each autumn, identifying key themes and subject areas for their class. While Math, for example, clearly followed subject objectives, the Christian calendar year and cultural events were integrated across a broad range of subjects. Events ranging from services held in the local church to Independence Day and end-of-term concerts were discussed as a core part of the school's traditions, and as Minna, a teacher of a Finnish class, commented, "luckily we have these celebrations, they enliven the everyday [in school], make it fun." Indeed, Christmas in Sunny Lane School well surpassed a mere Christmas service and Christmas Concert. From the end of November, the school corridors and classroom walls were decorated with artwork related to Christmas, set up on backgrounds of bright red and dark green cardboard and Christmas songs and stories were incorporated into many of the lessons.

One exception to this rule was the class display outside the classroom of one of the bilingual grades, which featured pupils' book reports on *James and the Giant Peach*, a book the teacher had recently finished reading to her class. All the pictures featured a bright orange peach and were mounted on grass-green cardboard, in sharp contrast to the reds and greens of the surrounding displays. I commented on this to the teacher, who responded by elaborating: "Christmas is rolling in, I'm trying to keep it off for as long as I can," connecting this to Muslim

pupils in her class. While this teacher sought ways of addressing the concerns of religious minority pupils in her class – in the end keeping up the James and the Giant Peach display outside her class all through December – inside her class, she sectioned off half a wall for a Christmas calendar she made with her pupils, having negotiated with the Muslim parents in her class first, justifying this through the assertion “Christmas is, to me, a children’s celebration.” A similar stance was taken up by other teachers as they discussed Christmas in the staffroom, identifying Christmas as a children’s celebration central associated with the make-believe-world of elves and the anticipation of presents.

While foregrounding Christmas as a children’s celebration, teachers did not seriously suggest leaving aside all the Christian aspects of Christmas. The new education law on religion was interpreted by the principal as “not taking away that we have Evangelical Lutheran Religion, but as making it more free.” As she commented of a letter sent to the school by the local education department: “it was put quite nicely in these papers that one hymn doesn’t make a Christmas Concert religious.” The views put forward by some teachers in response to parents’ critique, real and imagined, of the ways in which Evangelical Lutheranism was present in various events in the school calendar included “we do live in Finland, after all!” and “the number of times Jesus, God and Christmas flits through my speech, you just have to put up with!” reflecting the ways in which “home, the church and the fatherland,” to quote Anna, continued to be braided together (cf. Komulainen, 2001), casting “others” as late-arrivals in a national space that was figured as culturally bounded and secure (Harinen, 2000; Lepola, 2000).

As the James and The Giant Peach display demonstrates, teachers were reflective of the symbolic association of various annual events and festivities in the school with national and religious sentiment and it was quite commonplace for particularly bilingual teachers to acknowledge that schools in Finland engaged in limited ways with cultural diversity. The centrality of events associated with national and Evangelical Lutheran traditions, Katri acknowledged, can be hard to come by for religious and ethnic minority pupils. “How to find, and can you find

events where there's no flag and religious stuff," she reflected, perplexed, in the staffroom one afternoon. Mikko commented in reply that "Finland is a free country," continuing that if unsatisfied with the teacher's way of accommodating religious diversity it is possible for minority parents to apply for other schools, too. "There are other options," Mikko proposed, exposing the limitations of school choice to mutual deliberation, suggesting that if unsatisfied, parents should consider changing to an other school.

Issues such as xenophobia, sexism and racism were rarely discussed by teachers, and were much less recognised than multiculturalism as being issues to be addressed in school. Yet research findings suggest that in Finland, racial inscription continues to be quite common (Rastas, 2002, 2004), and Finnishness has been demonstrated as commonly being equated with whiteness (Gordon, 2001; Oikarinen-Jabai, 2008; see also Lappalainen, 2006; Mietola, 2001). Suurpää (2001) introduces three core narratives of racism. In the first, racism is interpreted as xenophobia, as fear of the other; the second construes racism as a reflection of the national mentality, as a form of collective identity; and in the third, racism is connected to ignorance and lack of self-reflection. In the few discussions that surface among teachers on racism – a couple of times initiated by my questions on incidents of racist name-calling – teachers defined racism primarily as a set of individual beliefs and prejudices rather than as structural or systemic (cf. Raby 2004). Suurpää (2001, 2002) notes in her analysis of young people's narratives of racism, that racism is socially frowned on in Finland, and perhaps self-evidently, teachers positioned themselves as firmly against racism. Teachers drew a separation between adult and child forms of race-incited behaviour and ways of thinking, endorsing a psychological discourse on development. Pupils, particularly younger pupils, were presented as not capable of being racist. "Children are not racists," as one of the school's special education teachers said, later clarifying "I think children can have some kind of pre-stage, but I don't think they can be racists yet." "Bigger pupils know that it's insulting, so when they want to say something insulting, they can also throw in like the kind of

nigger comments in there,” one bilingual teacher considered the possibility of racist incidents in the bilingual classes. Smaller pupils, this teacher suggested, had not yet learned to apply labels related to race in making observations on appearance:

And then [while the class was on its way somewhere, walking in pairs] they thought that who has, that Anette’s hair is liquorice, [my] hair is toffee, and then, that, and that somebody with really blonde hair then has vanilla ice-cream, and like this they spoke of these differences in appearances in a really natural way, those little ones, that they didn’t, or at least I haven’t heard, in this class, any of that kind of [like the older pupils’/racist] comment. (Interview: May 2004)

Individuals, as Raby (2004) observes, can hold many often contradictory notions and positions on racism (see also Lee, 2006). Similarly, in the excerpt below from a discussion in the staffroom, while teachers deny the presence of racism in their school, this is contradicted shortly after by the perception put forward by Timo that racist behaviour is an unlikely event that is restricted to individual outbursts, which do, in fact, occur at times:

Timo: Aila, were you here when Jone was here? Jone had trouble coping with school work, but was verbally very skilled and he always managed to somehow survive. But when he went to lower secondary school, he met with racism. When the others there noticed that he had trouble coping, they took him as their object. And then Jone started boxing [laughs]. He got a bit of self-esteem.

Silja: Have you had any racism here?

Several teachers respond in the negative.

Timo: Maybe if someone got really furious, then it would be visible. When I was in X School, the situation was totally different. There were many council housing apartments there, where quite

a lot of immigrants lived, so in school there was some racism.

Aila: Like some Russian and Somali can call each other *ryssä* and *neekeri*.¹⁰⁹

Timo: Yes, racism was visible in minority pupils calling each other names. (Fieldnotes: January 2004)

As in this excerpt, the presence of racism was commonly linked by teachers to particular social milieus, to schools with a high concentration of immigrants and, more specifically, of Russians and Somalis. Interestingly, minority pupils are singled out as using racist language and engaging in racist behaviour (cf. Manninen, 2005; see also Raby, 2004; Reay, 2008). In this vein, one of the special teachers cited incidents of racist name-calling as reflective of deprived social milieus, claiming: “where there’s an accumulation of all kinds of problems, there’s racism,” in a later conversation asserting: “If the family is really racist, a child will pick up those ways of talking. And then you get those collisions in school, because school is a tolerant place.”

The interpretation of school as a tolerant space where race and racism do not have salience was particularly pronounced in the interpretations put forward by a few bilingual teachers of their pupils. They suggested their pupils rarely made comparisons on the basis of ethnicity or race. An interpretation put forward several times by these teachers was that as most bilingual pupils struggled in similar ways to acquire fluency in English (and sometimes in Finnish), this together with the expectation of high school performance and pupils’ identification with school success, contributed to the unimportance of categories of race and ethnicity. “We work in an environment where we speak English, and that’s what becomes the common, uniting factor,” as one bilingual teacher claimed. Another bilingual teacher observed of a new Pakistani girl in her class on a similar line: “in bilingual classes they’re used to students not being entirely fluent so she doesn’t stick out.” While this pupil was still identified by her teacher in terms of ethnic origin, study-

¹⁰⁹ *Ryssä* is a derogatory term used to name Russians, *neekeri* translates into *nigger*.

ing in a bilingual class was presented in such statements as affording immigrant pupils a degree of invisibility. Race and ethnic origin, teachers suggested, were not central organising categories in pupils' relationships and friendships with each other, and while racist name-calling might occur on occasion, these were not interpreted as reflecting deeper structures of feeling.

When I asked one of the teachers about the language the boys in the bilingual sixth grade used in reference to girls during one of the lessons I attended, such as their frequent use of terms such as "chicks" and questions such as "how many women are there in your class," the teacher defined this as "children's language." The use of sexist language by the boys was construed by this teacher as "obligatory" speech, and as not being truly sexist in intent. It was necessary for the boys to use such language, the teacher explained, in order to gain peer legitimacy:

Yes, they talk, but I think it's the kind [of talking] that is, what I've listened to the class talk, that it's kind of obligatory, but it's still children's talk rather than pre-adolescent talk. (Silja: How do you recognise the difference?) I don't know, it's difficult to say, but somehow it becomes, that these could just as well be playing at the sandpit as puffing out their chests in front of the girls. That there's something, well, again, having seen sixth graders before, and some have a *terrible* job being an adolescent, that they really have to bend themselves into that role. (Recorded conversation, March 2004)

Interestingly, the effects of sexist and racist name-calling on immigrant pupils and girls did not award collective attention, nor did the school have a policy on how to deal with incidents of racist or sexist behaviour (cf. Lahelma & Öhrn, 2003). Reflecting the observations Lappalainen (2006) makes in her ethnographic study of two Finnish kindergartens, Finnishness was often equated by teachers with equality, which was connected to the perception that while sexist and racist language were to be condemned, these were often adopted in innocent fashion by

pupils, and thus there was no need to address them collectively in school.

9.2 Parents, nationality and differentness

In this chapter I continue with the theme of how school choice functions as a means to assert the kind of person one is, examining the postures parents assume for themselves in regard to Finnishness and internationalism in describing their school choice. I also explore the cosmopolitan imaginary that many parents connected to the acquisition of English and to the bilingual classes.

Adopting a broader perspective

Cosmopolitanism has been variably defined as a social condition linked to global interdependence, a personal disposition reflective of particular moral values, a set of classed cultural competencies, and a way of life connected to mobility, for example. As a concept, cosmopolitanism is constructed through opposition with the sedentary local. (E.g., Park & Abelman, 2004; Roman, 2003; Skeggs, 2004; Thomson & Taylor, 2005; Weenink, 2008; Werbner, 1997.) As Roman (2003) quotes Rege (2001) as writing: “A cosmopolitan is someone who, depending on one’s perspective, is either valorized or reviled as a citizen of the world, free from any national restrictions or allegiances” (p. 285). Skeggs (2004) connects cosmopolitanism to possessive individualism, with having access to and inscribing oneself with cultural resources of exchange value, as defined by the elite. Individuals, she argues, are differently positioned in regard to cosmopolitanism. (pp. 157–162.) In the excerpt below, Lisa describes a trip she made to Lanzarote with her daughter Anna, signifying fluency in English as having particular value, as allowing recognition in a new and foreign place:

Lisa: There we're in Lanzarote (of photo).

Silja: Oh, yes.

Lisa: It's my friend, X. We went, five people, it was a *very* nice trip.

Silja: Mm!

Lisa: And she, now, Anna won in Lanzarote, there was this competition, a dance competition (...) and this lady (pointing at photo) is from England. And she [Anna] spoke English and I was so proud, and she said "where are you from" and [Anna] said "I'm from Finland, I'm five years old" her name, and do you know, it's *so* nice, and yes, I was encouraged I had put her [into an English Language Kindergarten]. (Interview: April 2004)

Not all parents I interviewed could afford to travel on regular basis. Of those non-English speaking parents who discussed travels overseas, regardless of how often they travelled, when they recalled travel overseas it was often from the perspective of the ease with which their child was able to communicate across cultural and national divides. Paula, for instance, elaborated "we've tagged them along over there all around the world, like we've taken them along on our work assignments and then on holidays, too, in such amazing places." She presented the following example of the kind of unprecedented comfort English skills can allow in a foreign country:

It was, like, fun, when we were in China, and Kimi was five years old, and we were there [unclear] in this, one of these meetings, and we were there for a week [pause] And then we were in a shop, in a museum shop where they sold dinosaurs, and Kimi was a passionate dinosaur researcher then, and he said to me "how much does this cost?" And I said I don't know, but to go and ask the shop assistant. And he went, just like that, and asked "excuse me," that "how much does this cost?" And then he came back and said "this costs this much," that "can we buy one?" I thought it was incredible, that the child was only five and in China. (Interview: April 2004)

As Kaplan (2003) observes, “foundational to Western culture is the idea that travel produces the self, makes the subject through spectatorship and comparison with otherness” (p. 212), and in some parents’ narratives, the experience of being a foreigner overseas was connected to increased understanding and knowledge of other cultures, nationalities and etiquette. The discourse was one of cultural cosmopolitanism, of “travel[ling] among global cultures, savouring cultural differences” to quote Werbner (1997, p. 11). One important aspect of travelling in Paula’s narrative appeared as that of developing appropriate behavior and a tolerant disposition toward other cultures, lifestyles and foods:

This spicing food is a good example, that Finnish are like “let’s just put half a teaspoon of aromatic salt so it’s not too strong,” and you can’t give children anything spicy. Why not? Half the world eats chili every day, even the children. And then our children are like, they have this tolerance, that we [don’t want] to be really like Finnish in this aspect (...) .maybe like with this [choice of a bilingual class] we’re hoping that our children develop a strong self-esteem, that they know how to use the language and they know how to behave in different situations, or taste something different. (Interview: April 2004)

Open-mindedness and appreciation toward different cultures and nationalities appeared in the explanations of many parents for their selection of a bilingual class, but took different form for ethnic majority and ethnic minority parents. Ethnic majority parents commonly assumed a posture of valuing and respecting culturally diverse others, emphasising sensitivity toward cultural differences. The ideal endorsed by these parents was one of a common humanity in which people representing different nationalities, skin colours and cultures live a peaceful, respecting and tolerant existence. Nora explicates:

What’s always been really important for me, and this is related to this internationalism, but what’s always been important to me is

that there would be this, like, accepting atmosphere (...) I've always wanted that we organise different kind of events around this internationalism and in its name, because I believe it should be a richness for us, and we have to be able to value it, that we have different nationalities (...) I think it's a fabulous thing that we have a lot of kids from different parts of the world whose parents are from different cultures. And I think it's great that we have this kind of accepting atmosphere. (Interview: April 2004)

The focus is on internationalism, on different nationalities. Different kinds of pupils, should, Nora asserts, be acknowledged as "richness." This emphasis placed on internationalism and open-mindedness can be read as an effort to frame the selection of a bilingual class within a moral agenda, as the performance of an ethical self (cf. Skeggs, 2001; see also Crozier et al., 2008), taking distance from such Finnishness that maintains a xenophobic, prejudiced approach to difference. As Paula asserted: "I think there continues to be more and more racism, although you'd think that it would decrease when people of different nationalities come here [to Finland], yes it just increases."

In line with findings from research on international school parents (cf. Ezra, 2007), several parents asserted that schools should assume a more international or global perspective and prepare pupils for adulthood in a plural, interdependent world. Many of the parents presented critique of nationalist assumptions and orientation. "We should realise that we're not the only people in the world, we should show more solidarity," Johanna, a mother who had worked for an extensive period of time overseas, argued. Paula, similarly, asserted that the understanding that "we are only one part of this entirety [is one of the] most important things you can give your child, in addition to language skills." Education, parents underlined, should be more reflective of the cultural diversity present in school and in society. As Emma expressed, school should foster an understanding that "there are differences and things (...) that there are different cultures and different ways of doing things." The orientation in Emma's narrative is one of wanting her child to grow up

with a different school experience to that of her own in regard to Finnishness and internationalism:

Emma: We thought it was really sensible that she would get (breathes out heavily) a kind of a little bit different education than what we had, that it would be, right, [aimed] toward internationalism and related stuff. (Interview: April 2004)

In Finland, the posture assumed by members of the educated class toward national identity and Finnishness has often been one superiority and criticism, symbolically associating Finnishness with less favourable characteristics (cf. Alapuro, 1998; Apo, 1998). Parents took distance from the perceived flaws they associated with Finnishness. In this respect, Reay's (2008) observation that most middle class parents in her study approached "ethnic minority others" more positively than "classed others" was illustrative of the ways in which parents asserted a tolerant approach to difference and adopted a superior posture toward attributes they associated with typical Finnishness. These included exaggerated self-admiration, poor knowledge of other cultures, weak self-esteem, poor ability to express oneself in foreign languages, poor knowledge of social etiquette, narrow-mindedness, selfishness and racism (cf. Apo, 1998; Gordon, 2001; Peltonen, 1998; Ruuska, 1999). As Nora described, "we [shouldn't] start thinking that 'oh! what's that coming from over there!' that 'we don't want those kinds in our school.' That the opposite." Paula explicated on a similar line:

In Finland, Finns have always traditionally imagined themselves as being better than others (...) But when you've been used to seeing, from when you were little, that Finland and the rest of the world, you get this visual distortion from this. And then there's talk of Finnish quality and, like, Finnish reliability, and Finnish this or that. And now we have this Nokia-phenomenon that makes us believe, even more, that we're at the very top of the world. But then reality is something totally different, that Finn-

ish construction skills, they're just a total myth, and the quality of our garments is just a total myth, and everything is, we're just like everyone else. Or the opposite, we are socially completely inept, when we enter the international circles, like it's said, we fall silent in many languages. We know the grammar, but nobody says anything at all. We dress badly and behave like idiots (...) And this is related to self-esteem, cause Finns have quite a weak [self-esteem]. (Interview: April 2004)

One by one, Paula unpicks beliefs she suggests Finns erroneously profess of the relative quality and value of Finnish know-how. These, she suggests, are unsubstantiated and have resulted in a collective error, a "visual distortion." Paula identifies with comic irony how Finns "fall silent in many languages," "know the grammar, but nobody says anything," and attributes weak self-esteem as the cause of all these troubles. Clearly, she does not assume this identity for herself, for as she expresses in summary, "I would like to educate our children to become like, that they would get over this as children, this kind of Finnishness."

Not noticing race

Bilingual pupils were described by their parents as having become accustomed to cultural, national and racial differences in kindergarten and in school, and as having become indifferent to such differences. Parents identified tolerance as an admirable quality in their children, and suggested their children had learned appreciation and respect towards difference from their parents:

Nora: I think they have grown into it from from when they were little. That's it. I don't think they notice if someone's got a foreign name or not, it's kind of more natural for them. It comes from their home from from when they were little. (Interview: April 2004)

Sirkku: So these children don't wonder at all that "why do you have a name like that?" or anything (...) they've grown into that naturally [pause] toward difference, that they've never thought that there would be anything different in them, that what some-time some might see in them, like Finnish speaking [people] (...) Yes, so the class is composed of people with different backgrounds, and I believe it comes that way, too, and [having] self-esteem. (Interview: April 2004)

Parents drew parallels between indifference to cultural differences and indifference to divisions based on race, with several parents claiming the absence of racial conflicts in Sunny Lane School and particularly in its bilingual classes, although a few parents suggested that their child had picked up racist language from other pupils in school. Interestingly, while none of the questions I asked parents addressed race, it was a category that emerged in many of the parents' narratives of Sunny Lane School. Whereas several parents identified racial categorisations as having been a central organising category in their own childhood, bilingual pupils were suggested as not applying, and not conscious of the category of race – for them, their classmates were just pupils:

Paula: I remember this situation when I asked, when there were all different colours, that "is that the black boy?" and the kids didn't know that was he black or (...) They didn't understand the question, that "what does it mean?" (Interview: April 2004)

Nora: I once asked, it must have been our Markus, in first grade, that Markus was telling about some child who did this-and-this, and I asked "oh, is he the black boy?" He looked at me, like "what do you mean by 'black'?" That he had never thought that, like, skin colour, or anything, that it was the boy. Yes, I was a bit embarrassed at myself, that I had kind of organised these people, by skin colour. That these [children] don't think like that, and I think that's one of those important things. (Interview: April 2004)

As Apple observes, the category of race has a tendency to be “applied to ‘non-white’ peoples” (2004, p. 81), and Nora’s and Tiina’s commentary, presented as a challenge to marking racial difference, maintain whiteness as the norm. Finnishness appears as self-evidently white, marking blackness as differentness (cf. Gordon, 2001; Rastas, 2002, 2004; see also Fine & Weis, 2004; Winant, 2004). The discourse parents adopted of the unmarked and unremarkable character of race thus did not apply easily to blackness.

Parents’ understanding was that children cannot be prevented from becoming aware of racist categorisations and labels. However, in a similar line with the claim put forward by a teacher that “children are not racists” (see Chapter 9.1), parents’ perception was that children are innocent of racist beliefs and prejudices. This innocence, Sirkku suggested, was to be defended through avoiding speaking about race – until the unavoidable took place:

The kids don’t notice anything like this kind of skin colour, that it’s for sure something that they don’t pay attention to. I had, one day, Adele came to ask me “what’s an *eekeri*?”¹¹⁰ And I thought that “what *eekeri*?” and I realised that she had heard someone use this kind of word at school, and she didn’t know what it meant [unclear]. And so I made the decision, that as she hadn’t heard the word correctly, that I said that “I’m not really sure that what word is in question, but that some people can call others names, that some people can do that.” (Interview: April 2004)

Sirkku, like other parents, positions herself as against racism, construing the use of racist labels such as *neekeri* as a characteristic of other people. Her narrative suggests that she recognises racism as being more than just a psychological trait and more than ignorance, but like many parents she does not extend the discussion to critical reflection of the structured racism in society.

¹¹⁰ *eekeri* as in *igger*, from the work *neekeri*.

Avoiding unnecessary attention to race, adopting a colorblind approach to difference, merited positive response from parents (cf. Billig, 2004; Revilla, Wells & Holme, 2004). As Maija elaborates in her reflection on multiculturalism in school, she is not convinced that drawing attention to difference is the sensible thing to do:

Maija: I don't, I'm not necessarily convinced that *does* [multiculturalism] need to show much earlier, that people are just, in a way, different looking and different colour, but their school language is Finnish and English there, and in a way, they are all the same kind of children. That I'm not sure if you have to explain it so much.

Silja: That in a way, it's kind of present?

Maija: Yes, but I don't think it's underlined in any way, and I don't think it needs to be, either.

Silja: Yes, OK. And what about, are there –

Maija: But clearly over there they, mm, respect people's religion and everyone has their freedom to choose what comes to culture and nationality. (Interview: April 2004)

Maija does not use the term “race” directly, preferring instead the more neutral terminology of “different looking” and “different colour”; nor does she refer directly to “whiteness” as the distinguishing category. Her suggestion that differences of appearance do not demand to be explicitly addressed resembles Jones' (1999) finding that learning about difference was interpreted by majority students as “resulting from *having direct speaking access to the [sic] other* – being taught by the visible, speaking, embodied other” (p. 312), where having pupils representing different ethnic and “racial” groups is suggested as sufficient in itself to educate pupils on lessons on tolerance and respect.

Several parents of mixed-race or multicultural¹¹¹ children assumed the posture of gratitude for lack of discrimination in their reflections on

¹¹¹ This was a category applied by several parents to refer to their family.

the bilingual classes. For these parents, equality was not self-evident, underscoring the marginality of their position. Lisa listed many things that she appreciated in Finland, ranging from clean air and equality to child friendliness in school. “Everyone is equal here,” she posited, “you have rights here.” The subject position Lisa saw herself and her child as occupying was one of being accepted, in their differentness, in Sunny Lane School and generally in Finland. She asserted that for her and her daughter, life was “not so difficult” and “everything is good,” elaborating “I have not felt racism here, [but] it can be a little more difficult sometimes, it depends on who you are, Somali or Russian or what.” This speaks to the ways in which blackness is interpreted as a defining characteristic of not fitting in, of not being considered as belonging, epitomising one’s differentness (Oikarinen-Jabai, 2008; Rastas, 2002; Tolonen, 2002; see also Guinier & Torres, 2004).

Saana, the mother of three mixed-race children, elaborated that many Finnish people are still “shocked” by differences in skin colour. “They aren’t able to, in a way, see through colour, that who is this person, that they just see the differentness surrounding that [person],” she expressed. Saana described her children as having had to “[q]uite a little, they’ve had to be the object of those kinds of negative comments, that it’s been more positive.” Despite this assertion, she presented her choice of Sunny Lane School as a means to reinforce her children’s identity as “different”:

Saana: I started thinking about which preschool to choose when a friend of mine who has African-Finnish children and once one of their girls was told by her best friend, who was a genuinely Finnish, white child and then this girl who had really grown up without her father in a very Finnish environment, and then this genuinely Finnish girl goes and claims that “you’re not Finnish!” But inside her this little girl felt as Finnish as Finnish can be, never mind that her skin is brown, or cocoa, or what be it [laughs]. So it’s a terrible conflict. So at that stage I thought that I kind of want some reinforcement to that identity, that you can

be different and it's normal and acceptable and great [laughs] and so on, that you don't need to be the so-called "different one" then.

Silja: Mm, mm.

Saana: When you grow up. (Interview: April 2004)

In this excerpt, the possibility of being denied membership in Finnishness is presented by Saana as connected to being signified as racially different. African-Finnishness, Saana recognises, is positioned through its difference to "genuine" Finnishness, and despite personal attachments and identification with being Finnish, it is a position that is easily denied its identity. Saana's expectation in selecting the bilingual classes was thus that they would be more appreciative, more inclusive of differentness, and that the likelihood of there being pupils who reject other pupils from the category position of being genuinely Finnish on the basis of skin colour would be smaller. As she went on to describe, being positioned as different may also derive some pleasure: "if you settle down somewhere where there are nice people around you, in some smaller places people probably easily take you as, like, a pet" (cf. Jones & Jenkins, 2004, p. 147).

Finnish traditions and Christmas

As Park and Abelman (2004) observe, nationalism and cosmopolitanism do not necessarily preclude each other. Relatedly, while ethnic majority parents took distance from undesired characteristics associated with Finnishness, they did not signal this as a rejection of national identity, and did not represent their selection of a bilingual class as symbolising a move away from Finnish identity or traditions. Nora, for example, positioned her and her family along a discourse of Finnishness as being "such a genuinely Finnish¹¹² family although our child is in a

¹¹² *supisuomalainen*

bilingual class. Our backgrounds are really quite Finnish and we don't even have any intentions of moving abroad." As some parents expressed, their preference would have been for a bilingual over an all-English option, had the latter been available to them.

Appreciation for diversity was invoked by ethnic majority parents, in a similar line to the views of ethnic majority teachers, as a move in which multiculturalism and internationalism are welcomed to familiar, Finnish spaces. This, these parents posited, required an appreciation first of Finnish values and traditions. Maintaining "old" traditions was construed as important to maintaining a sense of belonging, a "comforting frame" (see Brown 2001, p. 28) in a world that is discussed as rapidly changing and more plural. "Of course the world changes and has to change," as one of the ethnic majority mothers, Emma, expressed on positive note in our interview. At the same time she, like many other parents, maintained the importance of continuing old traditions:

And then we write the addresses by hand there, that we don't just print them out, although it would be a lot easier, but I somehow don't, I want for us to maintain (...) that the children learn, on their own, that we make our Christmas cards ourselves and put the names there ourselves and, and write by hand (...) that I think it's right for a child to maintain these (...) old good things and values, they're important to maintain, because nowadays it's somehow more difficult (...) That like, that not everything goes like, that it's easy, that we just send Christmas cards by text message and in school they would do the same, that you do nothing by yourself anymore, but everything comes on a tray chewed in advance. (Interview: April 2004)

Finnishness obtained religious content also in parents' discussion on Finnish traditions. Preparation for events such as Christmas and Easter through practicing songs and customary Art and Crafts projects were described as traditional aspects of schooling. While parents welcomed events such as the International Food Evening, more traditional events

such as Christmas and Spring Concerts were described as core components of the school year, and were ascribed particular symbolic value which was linked to the maintenance of Finnish traditions (cf. Komulainen, 2001; see also Lappalainen, 2006). Maija discusses Christmas and Spring Concerts as positive highlights of the year:

Maija: It does give a rhythm both to the child's year and somehow, like (...) after he went to kindergarten and then started school, it's somehow like your own life, too (...) and gives a rhythm to your own year, too, that it's the Christmas Concert and then Christmas starts from there, and then when it's the Spring Concert, then the summer holiday starts from there. That before, you knew from white knee socks that it was spring time, but now when you don't use white knee socks anymore, it's maybe not as clear when it starts. (Interview: April 2004)

Christmas and Spring Concerts, Maija suggests, structure the school year through a rhythmic pattern, marking the progression of time. Now that white knee socks no longer signify the folding of the year into spring, Maija represents these concerts as signifying a desired continuity, bringing reminders of one's own school years onto the present.

The disposition parents articulated on open-ness toward cultural diversity and the celebration of different national and cultural traditions did not translate into a willingness to transform Finnish traditions:

Nina: Now you somehow, somehow you miss, that in a way, a little what you had yourself that you would like to, like, share those kinds of feelings, that [pause] a little bit of old, old-fashioned and traditional. And especially nowadays, when the world is what it is, that somehow everything is so hectic and like that, that it feels, somehow, that those Concerts could be a little more peaceful.

Silja: Mm, yes. In school, are there these, how do you feel that such traditions and then these, like, new, so –

Nina: It's probably the traditionalism... It's partly, as I see it, that for example those *juhlat*, the traditionalism of Christmas Concert, well it, it's kind of difficult because of multiculturalism, because probably those traditional Christmas Concerts would probably be quite Christian and then this whole celebrating Christmas is problematic, of course, when you have [people] in different religions, so there is that, too (...) that it probably [pause] a little bit, that multiculturalism like takes away some of the traditions. (Interview: April 2004)

Central to Nina's narrative of Christmas is a romanticised conception of community belonging in which old Christmas traditions are associated with tranquility and peacefulness. Through reference to "different religions," Nina connects Christmas traditions also to religion, linking Christianity with Finnishness (cf. Lappalainen, 2006; see also Winchester & Rofe, 2005). She interprets the presence of multiculturalism, particularly of different religions, as a sign of turbulence in the context of Christmas traditions, as potentially challenging and "taking away" school traditions that date back to her own childhood. Also other ethnic majority parents described a sentimental attachment to particular traditions, such as standing up to sing *Enkeli Taivaan*¹¹³ and *Suvi-virsi*¹¹⁴, and the performance of the Nativity Play by the younger pupils, which was described by one mother as "making [the Christmas Concert] more festive," and as a "nice" aspect of the school. Anita elaborates:

Anita: And all these, of course, these traditional Christmas Concerts and these, this year, too, they had these roles, that what were they, who was a shepherd and these their own performances, and it was quite, it was nice to go and watch them. [They're] like a nice thing that's a part of Christmas. (Interview: April 2004)

¹¹³ Traditional Christmas hymn *Angel from heaven*.

¹¹⁴ Traditional summer hymn, *Summer hymn*.

Religion, rather than nationality or race, was referred to by ethnic majority parents as a visible form of difference. “Well one maybe where [differences between pupils] shows is then religion,” Pete observed, continuing, “[a]nd this they want to know precisely, that who is in Orthodox religion, who is in Lutheran, who is a Catholic and who is in Ethics.” While Pete does not mention Islamic Religion, Paula assumes a discourse in which being a Muslim, (it was a Muslim pupil who was not allowed to participate in a birthday party), is constructed as conflicting with an ideal of belonging in which differences should not register attention:

Paula: And then one thing that I think is interesting is this, that when there are these different religions, which is kind of, more than that appearance, it affects these children, that there can be a child who is not allowed to participate in anybody’s birthday, that s/he has such a kind of religion. S/he can be also a different colour, but that’s something that there’s never been any talk about. (Interview: April 2004)

While most ethnic majority parents described school as a place where different cultures unproblematically blend together, and interpreted celebrations such as Christmas as times of “eroded social distinction,” to quote Winchester and Rofe (2005, p. 271), the minority parents I interviewed did not present school as a place that was neutral in its approach to difference (cf. Hautaniemi, 1997, 2004). The position adopted by racial minority and immigrant parents was appeared as that of asserting themselves as unproblematic. “I mean, she lives here and she lives by these rules,” as one mother expressed.

A few minority parents representing cultural rather than racial differences, Western rather than non-Western nationalities, adopted a different stance, positioning themselves as entitled to opt out of cultural and religious traditions observed by the school. The influence of norms and values related to Finnishness on pupils’ school experiences was also present in these parents’ narratives, however, in their denial that they

were influenced or propelled by Finnish customs and ways of thinking. This is illustrated by the following denial presented by one father:

I don't see the religion, cause she's not coming home saying "God bless mummy," and "God bless daddy," and "God bless my friends," like that. (Interview: April 2004)

Lea, a non-Christian Western mother, was explicit in identifying the ways Finnish cultural and religious traditions organise school life. She suggested "a Finnish school is what it is, and a minority child is probably not comfortable anywhere," recalling a Maundy Thursday as follows:

When it was Easter, there was nothing, just the, that the principal put a letter, and it read that they get home at eleven, or was it half past eleven, well anyway, they got out half an hour later. On Maundy Thursday we had agreed that I wait for Hannah at the bust-stop and we pop by the supermarket together, and I'm worried when there's no, that she was supposed to get out at eleven, and I try and call [the teacher] but she doesn't pick up because they're in church, and in the end I thought I'd go to the supermarket, and after a while Hannah comes and she's crying hysterically, that she was alarmed when I hadn't waited for her (...) And none of the teachers had noticed that from one month to the next [the principal] had written it wrong, that it should have read eleven thirty. (Interview: April 2004)

While identifying her religious identity as marginalised and even repressed in school, Lea does not position individual teachers as responsible for such problems. "X is really friendly (...) and I don't think we have problems, that [the teacher] would have done things on purpose," as she stated. Rather, Lea challenges the self-evident and unquestioned position of Evangelical Lutheranism in school. The consequences of this position were discussed by Lea as not intentional, but not entirely acci-

dental. Despite good intentions, she suggested, teachers were often reluctant to address the status of Christian traditions in school. Lea identified the current principle of holistic integration of school subjects as exacerbating the status of Christianity in school:

The system is now when we have this integration principle whereby Christmas, also, is put into every damn subject. It's up to individual teachers now (...) It demands a lot of work, that if they've pushed Christmas into every damn lesson and then they have to take religious minority pupils into account, and then this multiculturalism means a terrible amount of additional work for teachers, and the fault is a little bit somewhere else than in children being of a different religion. (Interview: April 2004)

Neither the assertion of the school as culturally diverse, teachers' good intentions nor discussion with classroom teachers, Lea suggests, are able to resolve the difficulties religious minority pupils often face in school. "Dialogue means that everyone is equal, but in school it's not like that, a minority is a minority," she expressed, speaking to the ways in which identity is lived, as Brown (2001) claims, as injury.

9.3 Translating ideals into practice: Classroom discussion

Representations of nationality rarely attract the limelight during everyday school and its rhythmic progression from lesson to lesson, but are nevertheless woven into the fabric of how schooling takes place and condition which pupils and which knowledge have the most legitimacy in school (cf. Gordon et al. 2000a, 2000b; Popkewitz 1998). In this chapter, I explore the proposition made by teachers and parents that bilingual classes are sites where pupils are exposed to more international, plural perspectives in school. I interpret fieldnotes on teacher-led discussions in bilingual classrooms and on my informal discussions

with pupils and among pupils, drawing attention to what truths were constructed around nationed, raced, classed and gendered differences. I analyse what subject positions are made available to pupils in discussions on nationality and cultural difference, and explore what positions pupils adopt for themselves.

Commonalities and differences

Kaisu: It's really important that we're all here [in school] together. During the weekends, it's a different thing, you can call individual friends and play [with only them]. In school, like we discussed last year, you have to know how to be with everyone. (Fieldnotes: September 2003, in Finnish)

During lessons, teachers construed school as a place where pupils need to learn how to get along with everyone, the term "everyone" commonly signifying different kinds of pupils as above, but also "all of us grown-ups," as identified by the principal during one of the first assemblies of the school year, referring to teachers but also the kitchen staff, cleaners and caretaker who had come to introduce themselves to pupils. "There are many, many pupils in school," as Tuija underlined on a similar line to her pupils in a discussion on school rules. Underlining this conceptualisation of the school was a humanist vision of individuality which presupposed, to quote Weedon (1987), "an essence at the heart of every individual which is unique, fixed and coherent and make her what she *is* [*sic*]" (p. 32). The importance attached to individuality was articulated particularly often during Evangelical Lutheran lessons, as reflected by the excerpt below from a bilingual second grade lesson:

The teacher takes the teacher's manual and asks the pupils to take a comfortable position to listen. She reads them a story about a seed that grows into a large, red flower. After reading the story,

she says to the pupils “and that was really the kind of life circle of a plant.” She then turns to the blackboard where she has drawn pictures before the lesson of three flowers, asking pupils to look carefully at the flowers, explaining “these each had a part that is there for the particular purpose of making them fly far.”

Henrik tells the class “last summer I grew a tree in the ground, but my little brother pulled it out of the ground.”

The teacher expresses her sympathy, “oh, that kind of thing happens sometimes,” continuing, “isn’t it amazing how there are so many seeds in nature and only one or two of them grow into trees! And just like a little seed grows into a big tree, each of you has been really small inside your mother’s stomach.”

Joel calls out: My brother was the size of a packet of coffee.

Teacher (smiling): Yes, and even smaller than that!

Henrik calls out: The size of a sweet!

The teacher smiles. The children sitting in front of me talk animatedly, sharing birth weights and proposing different things that they “were smaller than.”

The teacher raises her voice to ask the pupils to listen, and then continues, “people are so small at first that you can only see them with a microscope. They are made of cells. At first there are only two tiny little cells, but now we’ve become this big!” (she stretches out her arms to demonstrate, smiling at the pupils).

The pupils in front of me are smiling. Salla reaches up with her hands, mimicking the teacher. (Fieldnotes: November 2003, in Finnish)

The view offered to pupils by the teacher in this excerpt is that of unique individual personhood which retains, to quote Gale and Densmore (2000) “an essential inner core, existing from birth” (p. 118). Like seeds that grow into trees, pupils were presented as growing toward adulthood, and pupils expressed both fascination and pleasure with the idea of having grown from something small into something big. Individuality appeared as universal; questions of class, gender or race were not

suggested as being important. The vision is an idealistic one, of a shared humanity, as also illustrated by the following excerpt:

The teacher comes into the class with a CD, smiling. She told the pupils they would start with a song.

Julia: Can we stand up?

The teacher looks at the pupils, some of who voice Julia's idea.

Teacher: Yes, let's stand up!

The teacher has trouble putting the CD on (...) Once she has the music on, she walks to the side of the class, puts on the CD and they begin to sing (. . .) Most of the pupils know the words of the song by heart and those around me sing enthusiastically, miming rain etc. with their hands as their teacher has clearly taught them (she makes the same movements at the side of the class).

The song is from Jack Grunsky's CD *Children of the morning*. There are several verses and a chorus that is repeated between verses. The idea of the song is that whoever you are, the sun shines and the rain falls down on you "no matter if you're rich or poor, no matter if you're short or tall." In-between verses the teacher praises the kids: "good, well done!" and "you can remember this so well!" (Fieldnotes: February 2004, in English)

Parallel to this focus on the uniqueness of each individual and on shared humanity was a focus on cultural difference, which was connected to ideas of cultural roots and origin. Teachers adopted a position of exposing pupils to cultural differences and commonalities. Pupils were taught the existence of differences in religion, home language and national origin, for example, and were taught they belong to particular categories of people, and by extension, not to others. This was particularly pronounced in the context of discussion on religion:

Jasmin has come to school for eight again. One of the pupils notices and calls out "Jasmin should be in Ethics." The teacher

asks Jasmin if she wants to go to the *morning park*¹¹⁵ or stay in the class. Jasmin wants to stay. She listens to the story with other pupils and after this, while the others write something in their notebooks, she takes out her Science notebook and colours a page with pictures of different leaves on it.

The teacher comments on Jasmin's participation in the lesson to the pupils "I can tell you that each of you takes part in just one kind of Religion lessons." She explains that Orthodox Christians go to Orthodox lessons, Muslims to Muslim lessons, if there are Catholics, they have their own lessons, too.

One of the boys calls out: Where does Harri go?

Teacher: Harri goes to lessons here, so in Evangelical Lutheran Religion lessons. So each of you belongs to one. (Fieldnotes: March 2004, in Finnish)

Each religious group, as the teacher explains to her pupils, has its own religion lessons. Interestingly, although one of the pupils calls attention to the presence of Jasmin – a pupil who took part in Ethics lessons – in the class, the teacher does not discuss the option of attending Ethics lessons, nor the position of non-religiousness. Religiousness is positioned as the norm. Religious identity appears in the singular and is presented as a neutral category that one simply comes to belong to:

Teacher: How do you become a member in our church?

Kimi: You're baptized.

Teacher: When?

Kimi: When you're a baby.

Tommi: I think when you're two or three months old. (Fieldnotes: April 2004, in Finnish)

¹¹⁵ In Finland, school starts and ends at different times of the day for pupils, and older primary school pupils have more lessons than younger pupils. The "morning park" was organised for younger pupils whose lessons started later than eight, with a school assistant looking after the pupils in the school facilities.

Teachers introduce discussion of other countries and national cultures, both contributing to and challenging ideas of cultural belonging as fixed and authentic. In the conversation below from an Ethics lesson on personal hygiene and the importance of washing hands, the teacher focuses on troubling notions of cultural homogeneity:

Annika: In Wales, everyone has a shower in the morning.

Adele: In the morning they have a shower and in the evening they have a bath. They eat two times, and lunch is just a small sandwich. My dad is in Wales and he likes cars a lot.

Teacher: Do you think that in Wales everyone likes cars?

Adele shakes her head.

Teacher: We are all quite different, we like different things.

The teacher instructs the pupils on what to do next. (Fieldnotes: May 2004, in Finnish)

While Adele is not claiming everyone in Wales like cars, the teacher's observation "we are all different" appears directed at her comment on her dad liking cars. While the teacher's question appears as a corrective to a claim that has not been made, Adele does not contest the teacher on this but shakes her head. The generalizations put forward by Annika of everyone in Wales having a shower in the morning or by Adele on showers, baths and eating habits are not discussed and the discussion ends with the teacher's definitive statement "we like different things." Intended as this statement is at troubling cultural stereotypes, it also participates in their maintenance for the terms of speech remain unchanged: heterogeneity is still pitted against homogeneity. After singing a song *Lasken matkaan leijan kauneimman*¹¹⁶ during an Evangelical Lutheran lesson, another teacher introduced a discussion on commonalities across countries and religions as follows:

¹¹⁶ *I set a most beautiful kite on voyage.* The verses in this song end in prayer, *Anna rauha, varjele meitä*, which means *Give us peace, protect us*.

Teacher: This song combines a custom of many religions and beliefs in many parts of the world to send prayers up, for example, prayer candles are sent up into the sky with kind of like hot air balloons.

A pupil comments: Yeah, when we were in Thailand, they did that, too!

Teacher: When I was in Vietnam a year ago, they sold little sparrows that you could buy in little cages. And when you bought them, you opened them by lifting up a little hatch and then you could wish for something. Then the sparrow would take the wish up to the sky with it. I sent two sparrows up with wishes, too.

The teacher explains that afterward, the sparrows were carefully caught again, so that they didn't get hurt.

She then continues: In our school, we have an international theme a couple of years ago when we, also, sent up balloons into the sky. And everyone got to send up a wish with the balloons, so everyone got to write down a wish for all the children in the world.

Harri: They've probably popped by now.

Teacher: Yes, they've probably popped.

A couple of boys comment on some of their balloons popping.

Teacher: But this, sending something up into the sky is often connected to a wish. Last time we discussed prayer, and often people think that these wishes find their way up better, when something takes them up, that the wish or the thank you will make it up to heaven better. (Fieldnotes: November 2003, in Finnish)

In this excerpt, the teacher presents a somewhat romanticised view on cultural commonalities, which is slightly disrupted by the boys' commentary of balloons popping. Unperturbed, she returns to the topic of prayer, identifying commonalities and drawing attention also to cultural differences, identifying the tradition of setting sparrows free as authentic to Vietnam.

Similarly, during an Ethics lesson when one of the pupils shared with the class that she had found a four-leaved clover in the school yard during break, the teacher of this class introduced a discussion on beliefs, pointing out “Finnish people have their old beliefs,” and invited pupils to share beliefs they had heard with the class:

Teacher: What other beliefs do you know? The Finnish people¹¹⁷ have old beliefs and so do other peoples. The Finnish people have this belief that a four-leaved clover brings luck, but what other beliefs are there?

Eero: If you find a horse shoe, it brings you luck.

Teacher: Yes, what else?

Adele: If a bird poops on your head, it brings you luck.

Teacher: Horrible! [laughs] I haven't heard that one before!

Eero: If you break a mirror.

Teacher: Yes, if you break a mirror, it brings you seven years of bad luck. And then there's another one, that if you walk under a ladder, you'll break [something I don't have time to write].

Zeenat: My mother is Pakistani and they have one where if a black cat or any cat crosses the road, it brings bad luck. (Field-notes: January 2004, in Finnish)

The task teachers assumed appeared as that of broadening pupils' awareness of other countries and cultures. Pupils were invited to share their knowledge and experience of other cultures and countries with bilingual teachers asking “what was it like” -type questions, positioning pupils as experts of their culture (cf. Jones, 1999). When the pupils of one of the bilingual grades prepared posters on different countries for an International food Evening, the teacher suggested that “because we have experts, you should take advantage of this and ask them questions.” In the bilingual first and second grades, pupils sometimes brought along small trinkets for “show and tell” after trips overseas:

¹¹⁷ The teacher used the term *kansa* which refers also to *nation* or *folk*. The word *people* in this excerpt is thus a nationed concept.

We come into the classroom. The teacher is at the front, and says “everyone, your own places please!”

Ellu (turning around, whispers to me): We’re making rubies!

Kaj has just come back from a vacation and has brought back ruby-making chemical substance, we are told. Kaj has a jar on his table. He tells the class, he bought it in Florida.

Teacher: I guess it’s something you can’t get in Finland.

Kaj tells us what the substance is and how it works, adding “it cost fifty dollars.”

Joel calls out: Fifteen dollars?

Kaj: Fifty dollars.

Joel: Oh, I thought you said fifteen dollars.

Kaj: No, fifty dollars.

Kaj continues with explaining how the substance functions, fetching water from the class tap to mix with the substance.

Teacher: Should it all dissolve? It’s not totally dissolved yet.

Kaj: Yes, it should. It works like a juice.

Once he has finished mixing it, he takes it to the teacher, who goes around showing it to the class. (Fieldnotes: May 2004, in English)

While it was common for pupils to identify where their show and tell-things originated, particularly interesting in the excerpt above is Kaj’s identification of the substance in terms of its cost, through which he can be interpreted as projecting himself as being able to spend money casually; and the teacher’s comment “I guess it’s something you can’t get in Finland,” presenting the ruby-making substance as something to be valued and appreciated as it can only be bought abroad. Similarly, cultural experiences accumulated value through their projection as a rarity. Pupils were often keen to tell others about their knowledge and experience of other countries, comparing who has been where and how many times:

Jimi: I've lived there.

Alisa: Yes, and I've been there twice.

Josefiina: Where?

Alisa: In Sweden. Yes, I've been there twice.

Josefiina: I've lived there.

Niina: Oh, where?

Josefiina: I've lived in Finland and Sweden, but I don't know Swedish.

Miko: I've lived in Ireland.

Niina: My sister was born in Germany. (Fieldnotes: December 2003, in Finnish)

The focus in the discussion above is that of having been in or lived in another country, not on qualifying this experience. What matters is that one has been able to have this experience. Travelling was often discussed by bilingual pupils as something they wanted to do, and was part of the way in which they identified themselves.

Silences

Bilingual pupils were keen to share their experiences from holiday trips overseas, and were often encouraged to do so by their teachers. This privileging of experience and possibilities for dialogue in classrooms were not straightforward issues, however, as reflected by my fieldnotes on the following discussion which evolved during an Environmental Studies lesson:

Teacher: Aapo probably knows, having just come back from Egypt, that what a sphinx is.

Harri: It's half human, half cat.

Aapo: A sphinx is half human, half cat.

Teacher: What size is a sphinx? Did they talk about the size there?

Aapo answers something quietly.

Teacher: Probably, was it about the size of our school?

Aapo nods his head.

Joel: Do they really exist?

Teacher: It's like a statue made of a kind of stone.

Joel: Ah! I thought it meant something that was really half human, half animal.

--

Jasmin: I've been to Egypt.

Ester: I've heard about something called the Greek sphinx (she explains something about its hair and wings).

Teacher: That's related to Greek stories. I wrote in Eve's story, where she had a flying horse, that in old stories, they often had mythical creatures.

The pupils start chattering excitedly.

Teacher: Now we need to be quiet so that we get to this lesson's subject. Let's listen to some comments.

Tommi: What size is a sphinx?

Teacher: Aapo knows. [To Aapo:] Did you walk around it?

Aapo: No, we rode around it on camels.

Chattering.

Ester: My dad is an Egyptian.

Teacher: Quiet please, let's see which table group is ready first.

It quietens down.

Ester: Some of you probably know that my dad is an Egyptian.

(Fieldnotes: November 2003, in Finnish)

Despite many previous discussions in the class on different cultures and different countries, it was not until this lesson that Ester told the class her father was Egyptian. Why? In order to interpret the construction of raced and ethnicised differences in school, it is important to understand silences, for as Jones (1999) claims, speaking is not enough; what is said must also be heard. Persistent features of discourses of nationality include emphases placed on origin and purity. While Gordon (2001) found that notions of ethnicised and raced nationality among the

young people she interviewed were shifting and changing, she also observes that a persistent pattern to construct being a Finn through notions of origin. “Even in critical speech,” she writes, “being born a Finns and the connection of nationality to blood [inheritance] are part of an existing cultural reserve that has a long tradition”¹¹⁸ (p. 31). Hyphenated and hybrid identities are often constructed as problematic to national identity (Harinen, 2000; see also Manninen, 2005). As Friedman (1997) notes, hybridity is based on “the same essentialised and fundamentally objectified notion of culture” as racism and notions of ethnic purity (p. 82). Ester’s previous silence could thus be interpreted as a refusal, as not wanting to be locked into the identity of part-Finnish, part-Egyptian. The representation of Egypt with the sphinx and with camels, both objects of fascination among the pupils, may have thus encouraged her to disclose her father’s nationality as Egyptian. As Gray (2003) writes of Irish emigrants, “the taking up of the position of the ‘other’ and sentimentalism become positive resources in a multicultural present in which spaces of consumerism seek out diversity and signs of otherness” (p. 165). Esther was keen to assert her father’s lineage as Egyptian:

Kimi turns the discussion to Ester’s father’s origin, asking “is he born there?” to which Ester responds “yes, he’s completely Egyptian.”

Kimi: Sometimes it can be that you have just a little bit of Egyptian blood.

Ester: Hey, hello! His dad and mum are both dead but they were both Egyptian!

The teacher asks the class to take out their spelling books. (Field-notes: November 2003, in Finnish)

¹¹⁸ *Kriittisissäkin puheenvuoroissa (...) suomalaisiksi syntyminen ja kansallisuuden kytkennät vereen ovat osa olemassa olevaa kulttuurista varantoa, jolla on pitkät perinteet.*

After this discussion, Ester avoided drawing further attention to her father's nationality. When later on in the day the pupils made Father's Day cards and Kimi suggested to Ester that she write her card in Egyptian, she blushed visibly and responded "no, he can understand Finnish." I did not observe her discussing her father's nationality further during my fieldwork.

Anna, similarly, rarely discussed her mother's home country in class. While she was silent about this in school, she took obvious pride in learning to read and write her mother's home language, showing me her home language notebook when I came to interview her mother and describing some of the lessons she had learned. During a class trip, Anna described her experience of being different as follows:

We have come to a zebra crossing and need to stop talking while we hurry across. Once we are over the street, Anna says to Zeenat "you have brown skin and dark hair like me." Zeenat reaches out to stroke her hair, which is braided into a plait.

Anna: Silja, guess what, every time someone new comes to our school, with brown skin and dark hair, normally they come from somewhere in Asia, then I go talk with them. They're like me. (Fieldnotes: April 2004, in Finnish)

Anna discusses her relation to the majority of pupils in the school in terms of appearance, something I did not hear her articulate during lessons. Having brown skin and dark hair colour have significance for the way in which Anna discusses her identity in this excerpt. "They're like me," as she observes of some new pupils in the school. Shared identity is readable in this excerpt as a shared experience of being marked as different, as having an origin in another part of the world (cf. Rastas, 2002, 2004).

How pupils' different positionings, opinions and personal experiences were influenced by asymmetrical power relations was a topic that teachers preferred to avoid discussing:

It is almost the end of the lesson. The pupils stand up to sing Happy Birthday to Samuel who then distributes lollies to everyone. The pupils start to lick their start to quietly eat their lollies. Emma (calls out): Our living-room is big enough to fit all of Liisa's house inside it.

Joel: How big is it?

Emma: I don't know, but we always have my birthday at home.

Teacher: *OK everyone, please take out your homework diaries!*

(Fieldnotes: May 2004, in Finnish; italics in English)

The teacher's request for the pupils to take out their homework diaries interrupts the discussion that began with Anette's comment "Liisa's whole house fits into my livingroom!" during a quiet moment of handwriting practice. "That came out of the blue!" as the teacher commented of Anette's comparison after the lesson. Her interruption was intentional, for as she explained after the lesson, she did not find it easy to approach the topic of differences between pupils' socio-economic backgrounds. Similarly, I did not observe racialisation being brought up by teachers as a topic to discuss with pupils. Racial categories were applied, however, by pupils, and there were also incidents of racist name-calling. The incident below occurred when the class' regular teacher was on sick leave:

A group of girls rush into the class first.

Emma: I was first! First the angel!

Someone calls out "second the needle's eye" and someone "third the navel fluff!"

Annika calls out: Fourth the nigger!

Emma: Fourth the nigger!

I walk over to Annika and ask do they know where the expressions come from and where they've learned them, (the first is the *enkeli* (angel), second is the *neulansilmä* (needle's eye), third the *napa nöyhtä* (navel fluff) and the fourth the *neekeri* (nigger).

Annika: I don't know, we've just learned them. Katariina some-

times says “fourth the noodles!”¹¹⁹

Annika and Adele both comment “you shouldn’t call people names.” (Fieldnotes: May 2004, in Finnish)

The competition in this excerpt is that of being first in the class, and clearly being fourth and called a “nigger” is not the desired position: it is inferior to being a first and an angel. The pupils are aware of this connotation, as evident by the claim “you shouldn’t call people names,” but regardless, decide to adopt it for their play. Had their teacher been present, she may have condemned the use of the term “nigger.” However, while teachers in Sunny condemned the use of derogatory, racist terminology, the school had no formal policy on the use of racist or sexist language.

Finnishness

As Thomson, Hall and Russell (2007) observe, “School walls and the arts of primary display can (...) be seen as a cumulative cultural text” (p. 385) and likewise, in Sunny Lane School, symbols of Finnish nationality were exhibited in the school and included pictures of Finnish presidents hung up on the corridor wall opposite the staffroom, (although I not once observed pupils or teachers discussing these pictures). Alongside the pictures of Finnish presidents, symbols associated with other nationalities appeared, particularly inside bilingual classes. These included atlases, globes and other exhibits assembled by teachers, and sometimes by pupils on different countries, such as posters of animals from different parts of the world, and collections of objects from different parts of the world. These, also, elicited only the occasional informal discussion between pupils. Constructions of Finnish nationality and Finnish culture were rarely taken under critical examination by teachers during the lessons I participated in (cf. Gordon & Holland

¹¹⁹ The term “noodles” was used by pupils to refer to the coarse, plaited hair of some African Finnish pupils.

2003, p. 35). During a school assembly in which the bilingual sixth grade presented countries they have lived in or came from, most presenting details of the language, population or climate, Finnish nationality was introduced as self-evident:

Pasi: Hi, we're Finnish,

Petri: Everyone probably knows everything about Finland, so we're not telling any more.

The teachers sitting close to my laugh, as do many of the pupils. The class teacher at the front tells us, speaking into a mic, that the teachers will now lead us into class. (Fieldnotes: October 2003, in Finnish)

Laughter accompanies Petri's statement "not telling any more" about Finnish and underscores the familiarity associated with Finnish nationality – had the boys made a similar statement of, for example, Cambodia, it is unlikely that this would have elicited a similar response. As reflected by the flag raising ceremony at the beginning of this chapter, national identity is evoked to denote a sense of communal identity which is tied to belonging to a home country. As such, the construction of the nation is a nostalgic one, and appeals to the idea of an imagined authentic community (Anderson, 1991).

Bilingual teachers' narratives of Finnish nationality, as in the excerpt below from a lesson during the first week of December, sometimes took the form of a counter narrative in which Finnishness was defended as being equally valuable as other countries and cultures:

The teacher asks the pupils to come and sit in a ring, then asks them, in turn, to identify "fun things" about Finland.

Alan: I can't think of anything and I live here.

Teacher: Finland's a fun, small country, it's very different to Australia, for example.

Jasmin: Finland's a fun country.

Teacher: Why?

Jasmin: I don't know.

Teacher: There's snow and fun animals here.

Jasmin: Yes, there's snow in Finland.

Zeenat: Finland is a fun country because, because, there are these places here.

Annika: Because there are friends here.

Adele: I don't think there's anything nice about Finland. In Thailand everything is really nice.

Teacher: Adele, try again.

Adele: Well, in Finland we have winter.

Annabelle: We have winter.

Alan: We have winter.

Teacher: [Mine is the] same as many of you, we have four seasons. (Fieldnotes: December 2003, in Finnish)

The topic of the lesson is that of Finnish independence, which is introduced by the teacher through an exercise of identifying “fun things” about Finland with the teacher providing hints to the pupils for ideas of fun things. When Adele says she cannot think of anything fun, juxtaposing Finland with Thailand, the teacher asks her to “try again,” speaking to the importance the teacher attaches to instilling in pupils an appreciation for Finland. A couple of minutes later, the teacher moves the discussion to the theme of independence:

Teacher: Why do you think we talked about this?

Zeenat: Because we're going to write these in our notebooks.

Klaus: Because in five days it's Independence Day.

Teacher: Yes, and what does it mean that Finland is independent?

Klaus: That Finland is free, that nobody rules Finland. It used to belong to Sweden and in 1917 it fought for independence against the Russians and won.

Teacher: Yes, Finland has been independent for about one hundred years. Finnish people can decide themselves their language, money and president. Many people can have several home coun-

tries, but at this moment, all of us live here.

The pupils are instructed to write “at least three fun things about Finland” in their notebooks (...) Before they leave, the teacher says “I’d like to wish you all a really good Finland’s birthday, a good Independence Day.” (Fieldnotes: December 2003, in Finnish)

In research on education, the production of nationality has been identified as taking place through rememorizing the past, which is projected into the present, producing, as Gordon (2001) observes, “static meanings” about nationality (p. 31). In Finland, the past is often memorialised in school through narratives of the events of World War II. Lappalainen (2004, 2006) found that kindergarten children were well aware of the image of Finland as a “maid” whose arm and part of her dress were, one of the boys in her study announced, taken by Russia. Festivals, in particular Independence Day, have been identified as important rituals through which in the Finnishness is produced in school (Komulainen, 2001; Lappalainen, 2006). Interestingly, in the ways Finnish independence is spoken of by pupils as in the excerpt above, there is no clear distinction between the relative peace of the proclamation of independence in 1917 and the wars with Russia during WW II. As in Klaus’ comments, these events were often conflated by pupils and I did not observe teachers correcting this interpretation.¹²⁰

In Sunny Lane School, representations of Finnish nationality and discussion on Finnish independence were particularly prominent in the days leading up to Independence Day, the 6th of December. The school hall was decorated with small white and blue flags and some teachers drew Finnish flags on their blackboards. Pupils were reminded to wear “clean, neat clothes,” and older pupils prepared a concert for younger pupils. However, nationality and independence were a recurrent theme throughout the school year and were a part of the fabric of everyday

¹²⁰ Finnish Independence was proclaimed by the Senate in Finland in 1917. At the time, the Bolshevik Revolution was taking place in Russia, and the proclamation of independence did not warrant an aggressive response. It was not until WW II that Russia initiated a war with Finland.

school ranging from lessons on science and geography to Finnish and Religion lessons. In the excerpt below, the discussion reverts from the names of cities in different part of Finland to Finnish Independence:

The teacher asks the pupils to identify the names of cities to the West of Finland.

Paula: Turku.

Teacher: Well, actually, that's a bit more to the South-West of Finland. Jyväskylä is in central Finland, Kotka to the South-East and Savonlinna to the-

Tuuve: Karelia was first in Finland.

Teacher: Karelia isn't actually a city. Can you explain about Karelia?

Tuuve explains that it belonged to Finland before the war with Russia.

Teacher: Yes, that's true, just like we discussed before, during the war, part of Karelia was lost to Russia. (She points to a map on the blackboard:) Part of Karelia is in Russia now, and part of Karelia is in Finland. During the war, people moved from Karelia to Finland.

Tuuve: My grandmother was from Karelia.

Teacher: We're studying this [topic] exceptionally in Finnish now. The text book is in Finnish and we're studying in Finnish, but also a little bit in English because if you're abroad and you're asked what your home country is like in English, you need to be able to answer.

Marcus: What's the thing, why did Finland lose its other arm?

Teacher (pointing to map): This is where the other arm was, but Finland lost it in the war.

Santtu: Huh! Why did they have to take that, too! (Fieldnotes: January 2004, in Finnish)

Central to national identity is its conceptualisation as the "shared possession of a culture and heritage within a bounded territory" (Nash,

2003, p. 181). Relatedly, learning Finnish geography was constructed by teachers as an important aspect of education. As the teacher comments to the pupils, they “need to be able to answer” questions concerning their “home country” in English, providing the example of travel overseas as an instance where pupils may be called on to describe Finland. From a perhaps unseemly subject during a Science lesson, the difference between opaque, transparent and translucent, the following discussion evolved on WW II in Finland:

Teacher: What’s the purpose of curtains, they look nice, but what else?

Joel: That the sunlight doesn’t come through too much and then like

Teacher: Get too hot?

Joel: Yeah, and like so that the sun doesn’t dazzle your eyes.

Teacher: And like in summer, the sun can dazzle your eyes, so curtains block out the light. During the Second World War, people covered their windows so that they could have their lights on inside. Do you know why they covered their windows?

Somebody whispers: They wanted to hide.

Teacher: Why did they want to hide?

Tommi: From those crazy people.

Teacher: Well, no, why were the soldiers there?

Kimi: On a mission, to kill.

Teacher: Yes, they were on a mission. If they saw a light somewhere, they would bomb or something. [Explains that different materials were used to block the windows]. I don’t think in those days they had curtains that blocked out the light very well.

Kimi: I would put cardboard. We have pretty thick curtains at home, but they let some light through. (Fieldnotes: April 2004, in English)

Direct references to Russia appeared particularly in boys’ comments, as in their negative projection of Russians above as “those crazy people.”

The teacher appears unsurprised and unperturbed by these comments. Later on, the boys continued discussing the theme of “outside enemies” during lunch, positioning themselves as capable of, even enjoying, responding to aggression with violence, with Tommi embarking on an imaginative charade of what he would do should somebody or some soldiers attack the part of town where he lived:

Samuel: Boy, weren't we crazy, can you remember (...) when we went to your place and we hit each other with sticks?

Tommi: Yes. (Pretends to hit Samuel with an imaginary stick). It was fun. It would be fun to do that again. We could maybe take our hockey gear with us.

Samuel: Yeah, we could take our hockey gear!

Tommi: We could put our hockey gear on and then pelt each other with sticks, all over!

Samuel: Yeah!

Tommi: And then if somebody attacked, if soldiers came to [part of town where he lives], I would take my bow and arrow and shoot them. [laughs]. I would take my bow and arrow and my pea shooter and my friend, Jussi [who is two years older than Tommi], he has an airpistol and then we'd shoot them with them!
(Fieldnotes: April 2004, in Finnish)

During the lessons I attended, boys dominated such discussions on Finnish independence, and the focus was on male rather than female experiences of war. Not all boys were similarly enthused, however. “I'm glad Finland doesn't belong to NATO,” as Harri expressed in a discussion which evolved on the war in Iraq, continuing “I'm a bit scared because Finland and Sweden are such small countries.”

9.4 School and the production of cultural belonging

In Sunny Lane School, the Finnish flag presided over the event that launched the beginning of a new school year, a ritual that carried a banal reminder of national identity (Billig, 1995), reflecting the importance attached by teachers to the maintenance and preservation of cultural belonging, constructing national identity as important to developing a sense of belonging in school and in society.

The dominant interpretation of ethnic majority teachers and parents was that compared with society in general, school is a neutral place which is mostly absent of raced, ethnicised and gendered exclusions (cf. Gordon et al., 2000b; Lahelma, 2004; see also Lappalainen, 2006). Sameness and difference were connected to cultural origin in the ideals teachers articulated of inclusiveness toward different cultural experiences and beliefs. Issues of racism and sexism were not construed as problems that warranted collective response, and the task of inclusion was positioned as the responsibility of individual teachers as progressive change-agents. While teachers articulated aspiring to broader, more international perspectives, they also articulated wanting parents and pupils to acquire a sense of belonging to Finland, maintaining the view of Finnishness as the core culture. Bilingual classes were described by teachers as premised on the values of national education system, and while maintaining that the policy of school choice had not adverted these commitments, teachers suggested it had increased the demands placed by more privileged groups of parents, such as those related to the educational achievement of their children. Such demands were spoken of as new and foreign, and the impulse was a melancholic one, to return to and preserve Finnish ways of schooling.

Alapuro (1998) notes ambivalencies in the ways Finnishness is identified, claiming: “At the moment, those who talk about Finnishness either say they are European and not a (*juntti*¹²¹) Finn, or encounter

¹²¹ *Juntti* is a word used to inscribe someone as lacking in appropriate, civilised manners and self conduct.

Europeanness with self-esteem, recognising their Finnishness”¹²² (p. 178). This thematic was reflected in parents’ discussion on Finnishness. Central assets to participation in a bilingual class identified by ethnic majority parents included those of knowledge of other people and the possibility to take distance from perceived flaws associated with Finnishness, such as narrow-mindedness. Most parents emphasised internationalism and appreciation for diversity, and construed these as a resource in discussing the bilingual classes, constructing attention to “race” as undesirable. Yet differences based on constructions of nationed belonging were not easily transgressed. Finnish traditions were discussed as a constant feature of schooling across parents’ narratives, in spite of and alongside the assertion by teachers of multiculturalism as a starting point of the school, and Finnish language and Finnish traditions were discussed by ethnic majority parents as attachments they were not willing to leave behind.

In the accounts of minority parents, appreciation for tolerance and respect were repeated themes, reflecting Les Back’s (2003) argument on “grids of immigration (...) set[ting] up relationships of debt and gratitude” (p. 351). For those parents and pupils positioned on the “wrong” side of the continuum, the “absent presences” (see Apple 2004, p. 80) of ethnic and class differences from representations of nationality functioned as frequent reminders of their marginal position school and in society (cf. Gordon, 2001; Hautaniemi, 1997; Komulainen, 2001, Lappalainen, 2006), for the idea of nationness, of Finnishness, continued to define the organisation the school’s principles and practices. As Brown (2003) writes, discourse of tolerance asserts an Other to be tolerated against a benevolent centre. This Other is construed as an object for reflection, and is, as Sara Ahmed (2000) writes:

¹²² Tällä hetkellä suomalaisuudesta puhuva sanoo joko olevansa eurooppalainen eikä junti(suomalainen tai kohtaavansa eurooppalaisuuden omanarvontuntoisesti, suomalaisuuksensa tunnustaen.

already recognized in the very event of being named as ‘the other’¹²³ (...) To name others as ‘the other’ and as being characterised by otherness is, in a contradictory or paradoxical way, to contain the other within ontology. (p. 142)

In bilingual classrooms, while there was discussion that challenged cultural homogeneity, the imaginary, also present in pupils’ self representations, was one of fixed cultural belonging rather than the endorsement of more fluid, transitory senses of belonging. Emphasis on Finnishness did not appear to conflict with the ideals of inclusiveness or the pedagogy of liberal multiculturalism in Sunny Lane School, but rather lived on alongside these (cf. Lappalainen, 2006). Teachers welcomed discussion on cultural and national differences, but preferred to avoid discussions on ethnicised, raced and classed differences among pupils (cf. Suurpää, 2002; see also Rastas, 2004).

¹²³ By comparison Derrida (2003) reflects in relation to Levinas’ thinking, “[t]he “unknown” is not the negative limit of knowledge. This non-knowledge is the element of friendship or hospitality for the transcendence of the stranger, the infinite distance of the other.” (p. 205.)

10

Conclusions

We know that our analysis is not finished, only over
(Van Maanen 1988, p. 120).

In this ethnography, I have taken up the question of citizenship and difference, pursuing the policy and practice of school choice to how differences are produced by teachers, parents and pupils, and how processes of differentiation take shape in primary school. I have pursued the perspective that it is in the nexus of interactive processes and relational practices of teachers, parents and pupils that different experiences and understandings of schooling are effectuated. The value of an ethnographic approach is often attached to its ability to provide complex, nuanced analyses of the effects of policy-making, connecting the global with the local, the novel with the historical, and the personal with the political (cf. Ball, 2006; Beach et al., 2003; Popkewitz, 1998). Pursuing these perspectives, I have sought to provide a complicated analysis of school choice, interpreting the meanings teachers, parents and pupils attach to school choice, analysing that which is spoken and that which is acted on.

The data that I have generated moves between ethnographic moments, between representations and meanings produced in classrooms and through ethnographic interviews and conversations with teachers' and parents. Much of the time spent working on this ethnog-

raphy has been spent immersed in translation, mediating between Finnish and English, but also between the differences and rhizomatic crossings between the perceptions and experiences of school and school choice articulated by the teachers, parents and pupils who participated in my study; between everyday practices and the discourses through which teachers and parents made sense of school and school choice; and between what was spoken and silences and topics that were averted.

I began my study by tracing the emergence of specialised Content Language Integrated Classes, or bilingual classes as they were referred to in Sunny Lane School, outlining their connection both to the history of schooling in Finland and to recent discursive shifts informing educational reform: neo-liberalism and new managerialism. Since the 1990s, these discourses have had a powerful hold over education policy and practice, influencing the specialisation of schools into different aspects of the curriculum and the expansion of opportunities for school choice in Finland. Education policy has shifted toward greater investment in “gifted” pupils, construing education as a commodity or service. (Cf. Jauhainen et al., 2001; Rinne et al., 2002; Rätty et al., 1995; Sepänen, 2003, 2006.) All this has had consequences for what it means to be a teacher, parent and student.

Foreign language learning in Finland, as I have demonstrated, is imbricated in these discourses in interesting ways. Finland became a member of the European Union in 1995, and Europeanisation and internationalisation came to considerably influence educational policy-making in Finland in the 1990s (Alasuutari & Ruuska, 1998; Rinne, 2000). While proficiency in English has for quite some time been constructed as “an asset, a resource to be developed, and an individual, social and professional advantage” (Hruska 2006, p. 349), foreign language learning, which takes the form of classes specialising into Content Language Integrated Learning in this study, has also been reshaped to reflect a policy environment which places emphasis on individual choice and self-responsibility, marking a move away from the notion of education as a social good or “welfare service” (Gordon, Lahelma &

Beach, 2003, p. 3; see also Jauhiainen & Rinne, 2001; Rätty et al., 1995). In official discourse, emphasis has been placed on CLIL as a language learning approach opportune to all pupils, but as with neo-liberalist educational reform in general, the attributes of individual pupils are posed as the lynchpin of pupils' success.

Of particular interest to my study is the underlying rationale of school choice – a rationale which suggests not all schools are equally suitable for all pupils, and conversely, not all pupils are equally qualified for all schools (cf. Ball, 2003; Kenway & Bullen, 2001). A significant aspect of modern spatiality, Löw (2006) argues, is the ways in which space is figured as inhabited by “unbroken identities” (p. 119). Notions of boundaries, I argue, are essential to the rationale underpinning school choice for teachers and parents, and these boundaries are constituted in part through discourses of ethnicity and class. Schools, as discussed by teachers and parents, are influenced by the kinds of pupils and parents that inhabit them, and discourses of class and ethnicity are carried into the ways teachers and parents negotiate understandings of what constitutes desirable education, for whom, and how.

In Sunny Lane School, school choice, as a spatial practice, implied various parental actions related to school selection at particular moments, and tactics such as school enrollment and entrance tests were employed by teachers to monitor and regulate the flow of pupils, ultimately to “name” or identify particular pupils for participation in a bilingual class. It is clear from the data I have generated that the maintenance and production of who counts as an appropriate pupil, parent and teacher was reinforced by the procedure of testing pupils. Each year, the teachers in Sunny Lane School conducted entrance tests to establish which pupils qualified as having the required Finnish and English skills for the bilingual first grade (and sometimes for higher grades). In the absence of clear national or municipal directives, teachers had almost total responsibility for identifying the criteria for pupil admission. A recurrent discourse adopted by many of the teachers was that of the entrance tests as being a means to “just test their language,” construing the selection (and disqualification) of pupils for bilingual

classes as both sensible and inclusive. Teachers elaborated that not all children have sufficient language skills to succeed in a bilingual class, and that each year there were more applicants than there were placements for the bilingual first grade.

While teachers denied the tests have meaning beyond establishing children's Finnish and English, the entrance tests functioned as a time and place for teachers, parents and pupils to reflect on the pupil populace, helping "produce what it means to be a child at school – what behaviors 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, p. 210). Despite the inclusive rhetoric adopted by teachers, the tests exacerbated various hierarchies and oppositions – such as those between teachers and parents, teachers and pupils, and migrants versus Finns – sedimenting rather than rupturing these oppositions, reinforcing the boundaries between desirable and undesirable qualities in parents and pupils. As I demonstrate in the chapter *Naming and Claiming*, parents' and children's behaviour during school enrollment and entrance tests was characterised by the will to conduct themselves in such a manner that expressed respect for teachers and a responsible disposition toward their children's education. It was important for parents to "get things right" during the initial stages of school, to use the correct terminology. Yet it was easier for some parents to position themselves as appropriate subjects. Being able to pass as socially acceptable was not a "given" for those marked as different, and when minority parents came to enroll in school, clearly identity mattered to them and affected the positions they assumed toward home language and religion.

In tracing pupils' passage into bilingual classes, I have drawn attention to the knowledge children put forward of school and of themselves as pupils when they come to school, influenced as this is by the subject positions available to them by teachers and parents during the initial stages of school. As Davies (2000b) asserts, to become a subject within a particular social order, one must be able to signify oneself as an individual of continuity and specificity which requires, she writes:

being able to read situations correctly such that what is obvious to everyone else is also obvious to you. It involves knowing how to be positioned and positioning oneself as a member of the group who knows and takes for granted what other people know and take for granted. (p. 22)

Both the enrollment and the testing of children for bilingual classes were significant moments for normalising certain kinds of pupil behaviors and abilities, inducting children into a specific set of expectations regarding what it means to be a bilingual pupil. As reflected in the brief encounters between teachers, parents and children during school enrollment and the entrance tests, emphasis was placed on individual ability, on establishing oneself as able and competent, framing the subject position of a successful pupil against the silent backdrop of pupils who fail to perform to similar standard and who lack the commitment to do so (cf. Laws & Davies, 2000, pp. 209–210).

What it meant to be a bilingual teacher, parents and pupil was inextricably intertwined with the practice of selecting pupils, which put into motion and shaped understandings of desirable schools and pupils that were not easily converted. Teachers construed the tests as an instance of school life, making available to these children the subject position of a good pupil, which was connected to attributes such as listening to and following instructions, moving in a straight line and waiting for one's turn. While teachers put effort into presenting the school tests as a little school day, teachers, parents and the applicants themselves were aware of the discursive associations of "little school day" and the consequences of failure. The children participating in the tests demonstrated keen awareness of expectations toward appropriate conduct in school, the hierarchical relationship between teachers and pupils, and the demand to perform well in the entrance tests. While the children engaged in acts that could be classified as resistance, they were not in the position where they could decide to opt out, nor was it possible to overcome the norms related to what constitutes the good pupil, reflecting Popkewitz' (1998) observation that the "power' of testing lies not in its telling what is

cognitively achieved or in its critiques about biases toward certain social groups. The power in testing and evaluation is its disciplining effect” (p. 109).

As Ball and Vincent (2003/2006) claim, “the education market ‘calls up’ and legitimates a certain sort of ethics in the practices and perspectives of education providers” (p. 199; see also Ball & Goodson 2003), and while teachers identified parents as making decisions regarding school choice, the practice of selecting pupils cast teachers, also, as making choices: choosing pupils and identifying the desired skills for participation in a bilingual class, disqualifying other children from participation. The qualities and dispositions teachers required of pupils in bilingual classes pointed to the stability and centrality of academic ability and supportive family background to school achievement. Bilingual classes were represented by teachers as challenging and as requiring hard work, and teachers emphasised and expected self-responsibility and commitment to school achievement of bilingual pupils. Pupils’ participation in a bilingual class was suggested as depending on parents’ support for their children and their school work, with teachers positioning themselves as professionals who are able to see and know parents as they do pupils. Parents were frequently reminded and strongly advised by teachers on their responsibilities for their children during the school year.

Teachers identified the school’s social landscape as being much the same as it had been in the past, despite the increased flow of pupils coming from other school districts, from different backgrounds and from overseas. There were, however, competing discourses as to the kinds of pupils and parents that teachers associated with bilingual classes, which pointed to conflicts between ideals of inclusiveness and the process of selecting pupils. On the one hand, teachers suggested bilingual pupils were predominantly good pupils. Attributes such as goal-directedness and school-orientatedness were attached to bilingual pupils and their parents. Bilingual pupils, most of who came from outside the school district, were spoken of as fitting in remarkably well with the hard-working ethos which the school was presented as symbolising,

and bilingual classes, as teachers explained, fitted in particularly well with the kinds of families in the school locale. On the other hand, in what could be described a defensive move, some bilingual teachers emphasised that bilingual classes have all kinds of pupils, introducing a discourse in which normality was signified through reference to pupils' heterogeneous backgrounds and abilities. "No special skills are required" of bilingual pupils, teachers emphasised – only good skills in Finnish and English. The idea "all kinds," however, contained within it the categorisation of pupils into different groups, and while the discourse was one of language skills, pupils with strong language skills were often described as academically orientated, which was also the preferred position in school.

Parents, across teachers' different narratives, appeared most often in terms of their selection of a bilingual class, as having invested in their children's education and having particular demands and expectations regarding their children's schooling. While teachers took distance from the consumerist ethic and elitist ambitions they identified many parents as pursuing, they maintained the worth of having such parents in their school. Such parents were positioned as desirable to the school, for as articulated by both teachers and parents they attached importance to good education and were prepared to undertake the necessary efforts for their children to achieve well in school, contributing to the academic atmosphere of the school.

Parents also recognised school-orientatedness in each other and identified school achievement as a characteristic of bilingual pupils. Supporting children with homework and school achievement were identified as characteristics of good, responsible parents. School was identified by parents as a place where pupils come to work, where teachers are in charge and where there is a sense of common purpose and belonging, although there were also disruptions to this storyline.

In parents' discussion, school choice was construed as a means for parental involvement, reflective of their commitment to ensuring enhanced future opportunities for their children, maintaining a principle according to which schools should allow pupils to pursue their

individual abilities and giftedness (cf. Rätty et al., 1995; Rinne, 2000). To quote Reay (1998), parents' choice of the bilingual classes "did not indicate an unthinking process" (p. 47). School choice was spoken of as something good, responsible parents give careful consideration to. Parents' choice was inextricably linked to the possibility of acquiring fluency English and improving their children's future opportunities. Some parents explicitly connected their school choice to the possibility of studying in a select environment, framing their decision around instrumental concerns associated with differences in pupils' learning outcomes between different schools. Their selection of a bilingual class was thus connected to the assumption that Sunny Lane School presented a more advantageous learning environment to their children than other schools.

Parents' ideas of movement into a bilingual class were linked to the kind of pupils they associate with bilingual classes, and the justifications parents provided for school choice spoke to the kinds of persons they are or hoped to be, with parents positioning themselves in relation to categories that were discursively constituted as prized, valuable and desirable (cf. Ball, 2006, pp. 215–236; Walkerdine et al., 2001; Kehily & Pattman, 2006). In the narratives of minority parents, the selection of the bilingual classes appeared as a means to recreate themselves as desirable and worthy individualities, as a means to escape the limiting effects of categories of social difference. In ethnic majority parents' discourse, discussion on school choice more often took place within concerns about the poor educational standards linked to particular schools and (fear of) the presence of undesired others.

"[E]ducational politics and policies," Gordon (2003) argues, "do have impact" (p. 89), and it is also true that the institutional culture of a school influences pupils' dispositions toward learning (cf. Hodkinson & Bloomer, 2000; see also Reay, 1998). For pupils, school choice was, to quote Ball (2006), about "becoming, about the developmental self, about making something of yourself, realizing yourself, realizing your potential" (p. 273). Pupils were recognised for their efforts and diligence by their teachers, and the preferred position in bilingual classes

was that of being a successful, well-achieving pupil. As Laws and Davies (2002) posit, choice is closely related to the concept of consequences, which is used “by teachers and [pupils] to ‘manage’ classroom order”. This order, they note, is achieved through the active collaboration of teachers and pupils which requires pupils “take up as their own a desire for the sort of order the teacher wants,” involving a process of submission and mastery. (p. 209; see also Davies, 2006.) This process was well illustrated during lessons in bilingual classes as teachers emphasised the principles of hard work and self-improvement, and supported pupils to establish themselves in relation to these principles, which they did. “Children’s work is to play,” as I quote one of the bilingual pupils as announcing. These principles were also applied to learning English and Finnish. The expectation was for pupils to constantly apply themselves to language learning, adding to the competitive atmosphere in bilingual classes. Teachers regularly monitored pupils’ achievement, keeping score of pupils’ homework and of their test results, reminding pupils of the effort required to achieve well in school. The position of the good pupil was achieved, in part, through comparisons made with pupils in Finnish and special education classes, reflecting Burns’ (2004) observation that “‘Making it known’ is a crucial aspect of *making it*, both as showing one’s success and as creating or constituting the fact of one’s intelligence” (pp. 380–381).

In producing or fashioning themselves as appropriate pupils, bilingual pupils negotiated their identities also through norms related to masculinity and femininity, class-ness and nation-ness. Teachers’, parents’ and pupils’ discussion on cultural pluralism reflected their positionings in relation to categories of nationality, class and race. The stance commonly adopted by teachers was often that of reworking ideas of Finnishness to be more inclusive of diversity while maintaining the importance of nationality, which limiting their engagement with more fluid understandings of belonging. A central objective put forward by the female teachers whose lessons I participated in was that bilingual classes should be more appreciative of the diverse aspects of pupils’ backgrounds. Bilingual classes were signified by teachers and parents as

sites that are more open to diverse, international perspectives, and this was connected to the diverse backgrounds of pupils, the commitments of teachers and parents, and the greater freedom in defining pedagogical content in the absence of strict text book adherence, for instance. Alongside representations of Finnishness, those associated with internationalism appeared in the narratives of bilingual classes put forward by teachers and parents, and during lessons. Whereas Huttunen (2004), for example, notes how people described as foreigners, immigrants and refugees in Finland are designated as belonging to the cultural margins of society, internationalism in the bilingual classes of Sunny Lane School was often defined positively, as a cultural resource. Teachers preferred to circumvent the influence of ethnicised and classed advantage among with their pupils, and the posture teachers and parents assumed was often one which assumed bilingual pupils' are incapable of being racist or of intentionally applying racist terminology.

Participation in a bilingual class was often interpreted by parents as preparing children for adulthood in a plural and increasingly interdependent world demanding open-mindedness, in addition to good language skills and a self-responsible disposition to school work. Many parents connected Finnishness to negative attributes such as narrow-mindedness, and interpreted Finnishness as self-evidently incorporating a degree of racism (cf. Apo, 1998; Gordon, 2001; Suurpää, 2001). Relatedly, the approach ethnic majority parents assumed toward cultural differences appeared as a cosmopolitan orientation that sought to overcome such negative attributes and assume a color-blind, tolerant approach to cultural and national differences.

Interpreting education as embracing cultural pluralism encountered a paradox in the importance attached to Finnishness by ethnic majority teachers and parents. While troubling the perimeters of belonging, progressive notions of change expressed by these teachers and parents maintained a symbolic structure central to which was the idea of nationness, constructing cultural difference as oppositeness and producing school as a space that is symbolically affiliated with nationhood. Some bilingual parents were interpreted by teachers as placing particu-

lar value on internationalism, and in what could be termed a defensive move, teachers emphasised that school is a national enterprise with common values, common purpose. In adopting discourses of Finnishness, teachers thus positioned themselves vis-à-vis parents, emphasising that school is a Finnish space, defined by Finnish standards, norms and school practices and the adherence to the national curriculum. Despite the introduction of English as an instructional language and in response to cultural flows and a diverse pupil composition, importance was attached to Finnish traditions, such as those related to Evangelical Lutheranism, and to Finnish as the national language. These, teachers and parents described, continued to organise the ways in which schooling takes place. School was construed by ethnic majority teachers as a homely space, as reflected by the statement “*talo elää tavallaan*” put forward by one of the teachers.

By now, it should be apparent that the pseudonym “Sunny Lane School” is intentional, for as configured by both teachers and parents of pupils in bilingual classes, these classes were, indeed, approached in positive terms, in their ability to include rather than exclude. The discourse adopted by teachers and reflected in the curriculum documents I analysed, was one designating the equal and inclusive nature of school and of the bilingual classes. The dominant interpretation of teachers was that Sunny Lane School, as a Finnish public school, was not elitist by orientation. Parents, rather than teachers, were suggested as pursuing a select, advantaged education for their children, and elitism was associated with private schools. Most teachers distanced themselves from self-assertive parents keen to ensure advantage for their children in a competitive society, and spoke of school as a place for all pupils. While their school had introduced bilingual classes, selecting pupils for these classes, teachers’ perception was that of Finnish education as perhaps struggling, but still unwavering in its purpose to provide good education to all pupils.

The preoccupation of teachers with being inclusive, coupled with a posture claiming the inclusiveness and equal nature of Finnish schools, meant that their commitments to such ideals did not extend to critical

engagement – beyond recognition – with how school choice allows some parents to advance personal interests more so than other parents. The teachers' preoccupation with inclusiveness, I argue, placed limitations to their engagement with how the demands of school choice were experienced by parents and teachers; with alternative experiences, truths, and ways of being a pupil, parent or teacher; and with the ways classed, raced, ethnicised and gendered positionality affected the ways pupils and parents were included in school.

As Gordon notes (2006) notes, in education “Relationships among those posited as equals are (...) embedded in structures and practices of power” (p. 3). Reflecting this claim, the choice involved in school and pupil selection, I posit, spoke less to mobility and respect for difference and variety, and more to distinction and differentiation and the influence of fixed locations. The name of the present research which begins “School *and* Choice” is thus intentional. In liberal democracies, the promise of choice has self-evidently been linked to increasing opportunities, and choice has become part of the “common-sense for how the world should be organised” (Forsey et al., 2008, p. 10). School choice is appealing for, as Forsey et al. write, the “idea of choice offers alluring promises of equality, freedom, democracy and pleasure that traverses political and social boundaries” (pp. 9–10). These ideals were implicit in parents' narratives of school choice, in the knowledge and skills they suggested bilingual classes as providing their children, and in their designation of bilingual classes as appreciative of cultural diversity. Yet the positionings school choice offered to teachers, parents and pupils were not of the kind based on mutual trust or collective good, and each in their own way struggled to meet the high demands they expected of each other.

Weiner (2006) observes that translating ideals regarding teaching into practice is one “One of the most difficult tasks of teachers” (p. 87). In the data I have generated, school choice posed significant paradoxes for teachers and parents. While there was recognition and emphasis placed on ideals of inclusiveness and appreciation for diversity in teachers' and parents' narratives, and in the discursive practices that unfolded

in school, the consequences of school choice to social stratification or the questions school choice poses to ideals of egalitarianism were rarely discussed and perhaps intentionally evaded (cf. Fine & Weis 2005, pp. 66–67). Teachers and parents connected the bilingual classes with children from bilingual families and with families who had lived abroad, yet teachers as well as most parents did not question the possibility for pupils with English as a home language to be excluded from bilingual classes, nor critique the possibility of social splitting which they recognised school choice as presenting. Both teachers and parents preferred to avoid addressing the influence of classed advantage, construing school success primarily as a matter of individual achievement. While some parents wished to identify themselves otherwise, the pursuit of a specialised education, despite discourses of tolerance and open-mindedness, did not detach from parents' concerns to ensure greater mobility for their children, and the belief that there are greater opportunities for this in a select environment (cf. Crozier et al., 2008). Likewise, while teachers adopted an inclusive discourse to discuss the kinds of pupils in their classes, this did not defer from the perception that caution should be administered to ensure the pupil body does not become too heterogeneous in terms on pupils' abilities to succeed in school.

Poststructural analyses suggest that once a discourse is naturalised, it has the effect of constraining the emergence other possibilities of meaning – the production of shared understanding or its social effects are left unquestioned (cf. St. Pierre 2000, p. 478). Some discourses gain more legitimacy than others, but it is important to recognise that there are competing discourses which each shape the ways people make sense of and live their lives. In Sunny Lane School this resulted in conflicts and paradoxes between proposed inclusive ideals and the practice of selecting pupils; between constructions of normality and the importance attached to social differences; and between pluralist perspectives and the production of school as a Finnish space.

The statements, reflections and practices adopted by the research participants of this ethnography present the voices of particular people in a particular setting. However, they have an importance that also

extends beyond Sunny Lane School, speaking to the effects of school choice on the relationships between teachers, parents and pupils, but also on the relationship between individual citizens and education as an institution of the state. Inclusive ideals – despite repeated rhetoric – had little legitimacy, for the assumption that schools, teachers, parents and pupils have different worth was braided into the ways school choice was discussed and pursued in Sunny Lane School. As Davies (2005) writes:

valuing difference requires more of us than a willingness to see that the *other* has some good qualities. It involves a deconstruction of one's investment in one's own powerful position and an opening up to multiple ways of seeing. (p. 149)

As suggested by the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, I end this study feeling my work of analysis “is not finished, only over” (Van Maanen 1988, p. 120). The discussion on and practice of school choice continues (in Finland, Nepal, Cambodia, and many more countries), unfolding, undoubtedly, in new ways, affected by fragile contingencies and changing commitments to social justice. The challenge is to defamiliarise rhetorics of inclusiveness and appreciation which have become the common sense of education, examining the diverse purposes they serve in schools. School choice poses education as a private rather than collective good for which parents and pupils are to compete, as this research relates. If anything, the pursuit of school choice intensifies social differentiation, isolating teachers, parents and pupils from each other, neglecting questions of reciprocity and solidarity without which the question of equality makes little sense.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Introductory letter (to teachers, adapted version to 'home class' parents)

Hei!

Olen Silja Rajander, kasvatustieteen jatko-opiskelija. Olen mukana tutkijana koulullanne tulevana keväänä kaksikielisten luokkien pääsytestejä seuraten – sekä mahdollisesti muutaman kerran sijaisena. Ensi lukuvuonna (2003–2004) kerään etnografista aineistoa koulullanne, eli olen mukana havainnoimassa koulunne arkea ja siihen liittyviä käytänteitä, toimintatapoja ja erilaisia asiakirjoja. Tutkimuskohteenani ovat erityisesti kaksikieliset luokat, ja keskityn seuraamaan X X'n luokan toimintaa, eli olen sopinut X'n kanssa tutkijana mukanaolosta hänen luokallaan. Tutustuisin mielelläni myös muiden luokkien toimintaan!

Koululla nähdään!

Silja Rajander

(with email address)

Hi!

I am Silja Rajander and am working on postgraduate studies in education. This spring you will probably see me at your school as I will be observing the entrance tests of the bilingual classes and will perhaps working as a substitute teacher a couple of times. Next school year (2003–2004) I will be collecting ethnographic data at your school by observing the everyday life of your school as implicit in school practices, procedures and documents. I am particularly interested in your school's bilingual classes and I will focus on observing one class, thus I have arranged to come and follow the work of X X's class. I would very much like to come and have a look at classwork in other classes, too!

See you at school!

Silja Rajander

(with email address)

APPENDIX 2: Questionnaire for those enrolling into school

Hi! The following questionnaire is linked to my Phd. research where I am studying educational processes and practices connected to starting school. All information is confidential and collected only for the purposes of research.

1. Fill in

Name of child starting school: _____

Class child is enrolling in: _____

Language/s spoken in child's family: _____

2. Describe

– your expectations regarding school

– your hopes regarding school

Many thanks for answering!

Silja Rajander

(with email address)

APPENDIX 3: Letter to ‘home class’ parents in autumn 2003

Hyvät XX luokan vanhemmat!

Keväällä lähetin lyhyen tiedotteen Xn kautta teille väitöskirjatutkimuksestani joka koskee kansallisuuden ja kansainvälisyyden kohtaamista kaksikielisessä opetuksessa. Olen erityisen kiinnostunut siitä, miten kansalaiseksi kasvattaminen määrittyy/tapahtuu, mitä merkityksiä sille muotoutuu opetuksessa sekä aikuisten (lähinnä opettajien ja vanhempien) puheessa ja toiminnassa. Xn ala-aste on tutkimuskouluni ja XX on toiminut ‘kotiluokkani’, joskin olen seurannut myös muita luokkia.

Olen kerännyt/kerään aineistoa havainnoimalla ‘kouluelämää’ eletynä ja kirjattuna: olemalla mukana ja seuraamalla oppitunteja, erilaisia tilaisuuksia, tempauksia ja retkiä, sekä erilaisiin kouluun liittyviin asiakirjoihin, kirjeisiin ja luokkanne sähköpostissa tapahtuvaan ajatustenvaihtoon perehtyen. Käsittelen kaiken tiedon, mitä kerään, tietysti luottamuksellisesti.

Luokassanne on ollut todella mielenkiintoista ja mukavaa olla mukana. Olemme Xn kanssa keskustelleet mahdollisuudesta myös äänittää/videoida joitakin oppitunteja.

Keväällä tulen lähestymään teitä haastattelupyynnöillä. Sitä ennen tapaamme ehkä koulussa tai koulun jälkeen erilaisissa luokan/koulun tilaisuuksista. Olen mukana myös luokkanne sähköpostilistalla. Paitsi että olen mukana tutkijana, olen määritellyt paikkani koulussa myös ‘aikuisena mukanaolijana’, henkilönä joka toimii muiden koulun aikuisten mukana koulun arjessa.

Dear Parents of XX class!

Last spring I sent you a letter through X about my Phd. study in which I examine nationality and internationalism in the context of bilingual classes. I am particularly interested in how education toward citizenship is defined/takes place, and what meanings are attached to it in school in what is said and done by adults (teachers and parents). X X School has been my research school and XX class has been my 'home class', although I have also followed others classes.

I have collected/collect data by observing 'school life' as it is lived and written: by participating in and following lessons, different school and special events and outings, and by familiarising with a variety of documents connected to school, letters and the email exchange of parents in your class. All information that I collect, I will, of course, treat confidentially.

It has been really interesting and pleasurable to participate in your class. We have also discussed the possibility of videotaping/recording lessons with X.

Come Spring, I will approach you with requests for interviews. Before that, we will maybe meet in school or after school at some of the class'/school's events. I am included in your class' email list. I have defined my place in school as being, in addition to a researcher, also that of an 'adult participator', a person who participates, with other adults in the school, in every day school.

Sincerely,

Silja Rajander

APPENDIX 4: Research Agreement

(Adapted from Research Agreement developed by the collective ethnographic project “Ciizenship, Marginality and Difference in School – With Special Reference to Gender” led by Professors Tuula Gordon and Elina Lahelma)

The undersigned interviewee will participate in Silja Rajander’s Phd study ‘Citizenship and Nationality in School’ with an interview, and agrees to the interview data being used on the following terms to which the undersigned researcher also commits herself:

The interviews will only be used for research purposes. The names of those interviewed will not be shown in any of the research reports published on the study or any of the presentations or lectures held by the researcher. If any of the data is used in research for which the researcher is not accountable, all the identifying information will first be removed before lending the data.

Date and place: ___/___ 2003 _____

Interviewee: _____

Researcher: _____

Silja Rajander

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APPENDIX 5

Dear XX Parents!

24.3.2004

It has been a pleasure to be a part of school life at X and particularly in class XX. As I wrote to you in a letter last autumn, this spring I will approach you with interview requests.

In my research I focus on data collected at school through observation and participation. However, I would very much like to interview you because your experiences and thoughts are valuable to my study.

Your participation in the interview is voluntary and you can withdraw from the interview at any time. Should you wish to participate in the study but are unable to meet me for the interview, we can agree together on some other way for you to take part.

The interviews will be semi-structured conversations that will progress from some questions and topics I have in mind. You are also welcome to bring along 'memories' linked to your child's school or different phases of your life in the form of photographs, letters or different objects, for example.

I will treat the interviews confidentially. No mention will be made to anyone by name, nor will any identifying information be included in the various research reports, seminar and conference papers that I will be presenting and publishing.

The interviews will take about an hour. We can decide together where to conduct the interview so that it will cause as little inconvenience to you as possible. It would be helpful if you could look through your

calendar for suitable times to schedule the interview before I call you next week. Should you wish to contact me before that, I have included my phone number and email address below.

I hope that the interview will be a positive experience for you where you can share your thoughts on school and on life in general.

Yours sincerely,

Silja Rajander

APPENDIX 6

Parents' interview

Name/s of children in Sunny Lane School and their classes

Remembering the past: the beginning of school

- kindergarten and the transition from kindergarten to school
- factors leading to decision to apply for bilingual class
- initial stages of school and how the beginning of school effected everyday life at home

Parents' reflections:

- When you think about your child/ren's school, what kind of things come to mind?
- The school's curriculum states that the school is multicultural and international – how is this visible /should it be visible?
- What are your of experiences of the school like? (pleasant / unpleasant experiences)
- What kind of things would you like to preserve about your child/ren's school? (events, practices, what's learned in school)
- What kind of things would you like to change about your child/ren's school? (events, practices, what's learned in school)

Vanhempien haastattelu:

X koulussa olevan lapsen/lasten nimet ja millä luokalla/luokilla ovat

Muistellen'menneitä: koulun aloitus

- päiväkotiki ja päiväkodista kouluun siirtyminen
- kouluvalinnan perusteet
- koulun aloituksen vaikutus perheen arkeen

Vanhempien mietteitä:

- Kun ajattelet lapsesi koulua, minkälaisia asioita tulee mieleen?
- Koulun opetussuunnitelmassa kerrotaan, että koulu on monikulttuurinen ja kansainväinen– miten tämä mielestäsi näkyy / tulisi näkyä?
- Kokemukset, jotka ovat jääneet mieleen lapsen koulusta (mukavia / ikäviä kokemuksia)
- Mitä asioita koulussa haluaisit säilyttää X koulussa? (tapahtumia, käytänteitä, mitä koulussa opitaan)
- Mitä asioita koulussa haluaisit muuttaa X koulussa? (tapahtumia, käytänteitä, mitä koulussa opitaan)