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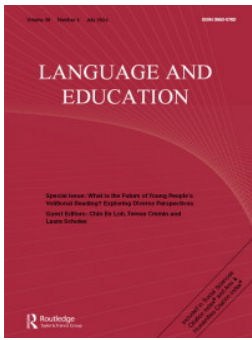
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Spatial ideologies on official bilingualism and co-located schools in Finland and South Tyrol, Italy

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ABSTRACT

In countries with several official languages, language separation often remains a structural principle in institutional education. Co-located schools, in which two autonomously administered schools with different languages of instruction share a physical space, may challenge this separation. Such schools have existed for a long time, but increasingly insert themselves into an architectural trend that leans toward multi-purpose spaces. In this paper, we utilize previous research to analyze policy discourses and educational practices that arise around bilingualism in Finland and the Italian province of South Tyrol. We introduce and analyze co-located schools through the notion of spatial ideologies, i.e. beliefs about the connection between language policies and the material organization of space. We show that in both contexts, the separation of the official languages – Finnish and Swedish in Finland and Italian and German in most of South Tyrol – is reconstructed through policy, public discourse, and material practices. The educational system maintains separate tracks for the recognized language groups. While attempts to deconstruct the parallel system are often deemed problematic, the premise of language separation is also increasingly questioned and renegotiated. Therefore, co-located schools can be viewed as contested spaces where discourses and practices promoting linguistic diversity but also parallel monolingualism circulate.

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1. Introduction

Monolingual ideologies remain a structuring principle of institutional education also in societies that have multiple official languages (e.g., Gorter and Cenoz 2017). This often means that schooling is based on separation by the language of instruction and organized in monolingual institutions. This applies to Finland, which is officially bilingual and where education is organized along the two monolingual tracks of Finnish and Swedish, as well as to the Italian province of South Tyrol, where three separate tracks secure the educational rights of Italian, German, and Ladin speakers. At the same time, there is a growing number

of cases in various countries in which two autonomously administered schools with different languages of instruction are co-located in a shared physical space primarily for economic reasons. We define co-located schools as shared learning environments that consist of two distinct schools that operate with different official languages for instruction and administration. Such schools appear as trivially bilingual educational environments where the principle of language separation is reproduced through practice but also increasingly questioned and renegotiated (From 2020a; Laihonen and Szabó 2023). While co-located schools share some characteristics with dual-track schools, in which two distinct programs in different languages of instruction are housed under the same roof (e.g. Kissau 2003), they also differ from such schools in their separate administration, which results in a series of consequences for social and educational practices. This conceptual division highlights the practical nature of co-located schools that has been influential in shaping their history and presence (see From 2020a; Laihonen and Szabó 2023). This article suggests that the case of co-located schools and related educational discourses provide novel possibilities for analyzing spatial ideologies (From 2020b) that shape and maintain the social and material premises of education. So far, the theoretical conceptualization of such ideologies has been employed to describe and analyze the cultural assumptions and dominant views related to the socially acceptable ways of education in bilingual Finland. By extending the notion of spatial ideologies to the South Tyrolean context, we intend to demonstrate its utility for wider discussions of social and material practices in education in officially multilingual contexts.

The conceptualization of co-located schools through and for research set off in Finland around the year 2010, when co-located Finnish and Swedish medium schools started to become more ubiquitous and began to appear in the public debate (Helakorpi et al. 2013; Sahlström et al. 2013). The term ‘co-located school’ (in Finnish *kieliparikoulu*, in Swedish *samlokaliserad skola*) was coined to describe this increasingly common phenomenon in the field of educational research (see Helakorpi et al. 2013; Sahlström et al. 2013). Several cases of co-located German- and Italian medium schools also exist in South Tyrol, even if not conceptualized as such. In both Finland and South Tyrol, at least a small number of co-located schools have existed since the 1970s. The current phenomenon of co-located schools, however, follows an architectural trend toward multipurpose spaces and a general preference to place several educational institutions in shared buildings. By representing the general ideal of the openness and flexibility of learning spaces, these buildings reflect contemporary paradigms of learning while also pursuing cost efficiency through the effective use of facilities (Laihonen and Szabó 2023). Since co-locations are primarily established on economic grounds without alignment to a specific educational model or multilingual pedagogy, research on similar arrangements in other countries is difficult to come by (From 2020a).

Broadened analytical interest in the spatiality and materiality of education has also enabled new ways of understanding how language policies and ideologies are connected to the use and organization of space in everyday educational practices (From 2020b; Laihonen and Szabó 2023). In this article, we seek connections between ideologies and practices in the context of official bilingualism in Finland and South Tyrol. Contributing to research on the educational systems in countries and regions with more than one official language, we employ a spatially informed understanding of language policies (cf. Halonen et al. 2015; From 2020a) to examine the case of co-located schools in Finland and South Tyrol and how the discourses of official bilingualism frame these cases in each context. By re-conceptualizing previous research from a comparative perspective, we ask how the discourses on

bilingualism and language separation play out in the public debates on Finnish and Swedish medium educational institutions in Finland and Italian and German medium institutions in South Tyrol and are manifested in the social and material practices of schools that are co-located under the same roof.

2. Theoretical and methodological standpoints

Official language policies are powerful means to normalize ways of thinking and organizing education according to the hierarchies created in the interplay of policy and practice (see Johnson 2023). These hierarchies often take shape as a “political map characterized by neatly juxtaposed nation-states, where each nation possesses its distinct language, state, and territorially defined borders that separate it from others” (Mamadouh 2024: 133). Within these geographical entities that are influenced by political practices and language ideologies, political tension may arise when state boundaries and linguistic territories are at odds with each other (Gal 2010). This is often the case in officially multilingual states and territories. Declared language policies at different territorial levels emerge as efforts to manage these tensions and are also reconstructed in institutional education. These policies inherently possess a spatial dimension that shapes discursive representations of space and contributes to spatial practices, i.e. the design and use of physical space within institutional education (From 2020a).

From the perspective of language policy management in multilingual polities, the ways in which language policies are employed to manage the tension between monolingualism and linguistic diversity become relevant (see Godenhjelm 2023). We are not suggesting that there is a straightforward connection between official national or regional language policies and the organization of everyday educational practices. Rather, following Hult (2010), we emphasize the importance of considering different sociolinguistic scales in analyzing the entanglements of structure and agency in LPP processes (see also Godenhjelm 2023). Furthermore, we view language policies as multi-sited (Shohamy 2006; Spolsky 2021) and material (Pennycook 2018). This kind of spatially informed understanding implies that, first, language policies are understood as processes that operate across different scales of space including declared policies, common ideologies and everyday language practices (Spolsky 2021). These scales of space are intertwined, and they sometimes overlap (Halonen et al. 2015). Second, our approach implies that language policies, particularly in the form of language ideologies and language management, also have material consequences, such as the design of educational spaces (see also Brown 2012; Szabó 2015). Finally, language policies are shaped, contested and negotiated by the users of these spaces, who have a certain degree of agency in influencing their material and social surroundings (From 2020a; Laihonen and Szabó 2023). This kind of an approach enables the examination of the connections between policy processes, socio-historical discourses, and ideologies as well as linguistic and social power relations that are (re-)produced and contested in everyday educational practices. Moreover, it highlights the role of material space as the medium of language policies.

Monica Heller (2006) coined the term ‘parallel monolingualisms’ to refer to the manifestations of bilingualism that rely on two separate monolingual systems instead of contributing to bilingual structures that would question the policy of language separation. Such educational policies in which a monolingual ideology is transformed to an institutionalized

practice that reconstructs parallel monolingualisms can be seen to reflect the connection between a monolingual ideology and language management (see e.g. Shohamy 2006; Spolsky 2021), which inevitably has material consequences (From 2020b). Only very recently have new ideas for language education policy emerged that are based on the simultaneous and flexible use of multilingual resources, though their “implementation is not yet widespread” (Gorter and Cenoz 2017, 239; cf. Spolsky 2021, 200). Despite the gradual shift to multilingual paradigms in education, institutional education still tends to value bilingualism as the parallel use of and competence in two languages, which can be observed in the variety of spatial and temporal measures through which language separation is carried out. In this article, we focus on spatial ideologies, i.e. the common assumptions and views that are manifested in policies and spatial practices in relation to language (From 2020b). An example of spatial ideology is the belief that minority and majority language education should be organized in separate physical facilities to prevent the languages from mixing, a solution that has featured very prominently in the educational debates concerning Finnish and Swedish in Finland (see also Laihonen and Szabó 2023).

In analyzing the manifestations of language policies and ideologies as social and material practices of co-located schools, we draw from ethnographically oriented language policy studies, such as schoolscape studies (see e.g. Brown 2012; Laihonen and Szabó 2023). This enables us to illustrate how the official language policies and their materializations influence the everyday practices of education. Such an orientation offers tools for understanding the possibilities and limitations of the agency possessed by pupils, teachers, and other local agents in co-located schools to contest the dominant ideologies of schooling (see Troyer 2023).

For our analyses, we draw on previous research conducted on bilingualism and co-located schools in Finland, and we use previous research conducted more generally on educational language policies and language ideologies in South Tyrol. Our focus extends from 2010 to this day, which marks the period of active debate on the topic in Finland. Moreover, we utilize observations from our ethnographically informed pilot exploration of co-located schools in South Tyrol, which involved informal conversations with different institutional actors in education, checking lists of school addresses as well as visits to different co-located school sites and ensuing conversations with (head) students.

3. Language education policies in Finland and South Tyrol

A central premise of this article is that co-located schools need to be understood as part of their political and societal contexts. As pointed out by Zanasi et al. (2023), Finland’s bilingual regions and South Tyrol share a number of features: they are bi- or trilingual border regions with a long history of multilingualism; they have a legal framework in place that regulates issues concerning language and language use; language policies in both contexts have been based on language separation; and this also concerns education in both contexts in that the officially recognized language groups have separate educational institutions from preschool up to tertiary education. What is more, both contexts are not uniform as far as their sociolinguistic situation is concerned. Their majority-minority relations in terms of numbers and power dynamics differ according to localities. In this section, we give a brief overview of the sociolinguistic environments and language policies in both contexts.

Finland, according to its 1919 constitution (reformed in 1999), is an officially bilingual country with two national languages, Finnish and Swedish (see Saarinen 2020). In Finland,

every person is registered at birth or immigration with one “mother tongue,” either Finnish, Swedish or other. Despite the official status of Swedish in Finland, the number of inhabitants registered as Swedish speakers has steadily declined. At present, Swedish is the registered “mother tongue” for 5.2 percent of the population, which constitutes a decline from 11 percent in 1920, and Finnish is the mother tongue for 85.9 percent (Saarela 2021; OSF 2022). However, these registers fail to acknowledge cases in which two or more languages are spoken in the family and/or in the local community. Despite the percentage decline, those who speak Swedish as their mother tongue are still relatively well represented as a minority group in Finnish society in terms of cultural capital and political influence, for instance through The Swedish People’s Party (SFP), a political party that is represented in the Finnish Parliament (Henning-Lindblom 2012). The numeric power relations between Finnish and Swedish speakers vary by region, with the majority of Swedish speakers living in the Helsinki metropolitan area and on the west coast. The municipalities are labeled as monolingually Finnish, Swedish or bilingual depending on their demographics, but this status does not affect the educational rights of their inhabitants. Therefore, compared to many other officially multilingual polities, Finland’s approach can be described as centralized: Swedish-speaking individuals have the absolute right to be educated in Swedish regardless of their local numbers and their municipality’s status as monolingual or bilingual (Henning-Lindblom 2012).

Aligned with the Basic Education Act 628/1998 (1998), comprehensive education in Finland is organized separately for both national languages:

“The local authority in a municipality which has both Finnish and Swedish-speaking residents shall be responsible for arranging basic and pre-primary education separately for both linguistic groups.” (Basic Education Act 628/1998 1998, 4§, amendment 1288/1999).

Furthermore, the educational administration in bilingual municipalities is divided into separate Finnish and Swedish-speaking sections (Local Government Act 410/2015, 30§). Thus, the institutional separation of the two official languages penetrates the Finnish educational system from the administrative level to local school institutions. In educational practice, the separation of the national languages means that Finnish and Swedish medium schools function as parallel monolingual institutions (Boyd and Palviainen 2015; From 2020a). Only in language immersion programs are Finnish and Swedish used in instruction in the same institution. However, as such programs have typically been initiated and attended by the Finnish-speaking numerical majority (Sjöberg et al. 2018), their bottom line is also that students in the Finnish and Swedish programs do not mix. Learning the other national language, i.e. Finnish or Swedish, is compulsory for all students (see e.g., Salo 2012; Saarinen 2020).

South Tyrol is the northernmost Italian province, located at the border to Switzerland and Austria. Due to its status as an autonomous province with German- and Ladin-speaking communities that are recognized as linguistic minorities, South Tyrol has considerable legislative and executive powers and financial autonomy. Similar to the Finnish context, residents of the province are registered as belonging to one “language group,” although unlike in the Finnish case, this self-declaration is possible only from the age of 18. Analogous to these declarations, a census conducted every 10 years establishes the proportion of residents of each language group (Alber 2012; Platzgummer 2021). According to the last census conducted in 2011 (the 2021 census has been delayed by the pandemic), 69.4 percent of

Italian citizens residing in the province are affiliated with the German language group, 26 percent with the Italian language group, and 4.5 percent with the Ladin language group (ASTAT 2012). The German language group, recognized nationally as a linguistic minority, holds numerical majority in the province. However, these percentages, too, can be problematized for not allowing identifications beyond these three categories.

The Second Autonomy Statute (*Il nuovo Statuto di Autonomia 1972*), which conferred autonomy to the province, also regulates matters of education:

“In the Province of Bolzano/Bozen, teaching in pre-schools, primary and secondary schools is carried out in the pupils’ mother tongue, i.e., in Italian or German, by teachers for whom the respective language is also their mother tongue.” (*Il nuovo Statuto di Autonomia: Art. 19, translation Platzgummer 2021*)

This article stipulates that students need to be educated in their ‘mother tongue’ by teachers for whom the language is also their ‘mother tongue,’ restricting the options to Italian and German (see Platzgummer 2021 for a critical discussion). It also specifies that students need to learn the respective other language, and that education in the Ladin municipalities includes Italian, German, and Ladin. As in the Finnish context, it is also regulated that there is to be three separate school administrations that direct three separate tracks of schooling (*Il nuovo Statuto di Autonomia 1972*), although this responsibility pertains to the provincial and not the municipal level. Therefore, we can conclude that despite differences in historical and administrative structures (centralization versus regional governance), Finland and South Tyrol follow the same principles of equal status and autonomy as well as linguistic separation and parallel monolingualism in managing their official bi/multilingualism in institutional education. In the following section, we illustrate and analyze the spatial ideologies that are co-constructed with educational language policies and practices in both contexts.

4. Spatial ideologies on educational bilingualism in Finland and South Tyrol

In Finland, the position of Swedish as a national language and Swedish-language institutions have remained a source of controversy within language political debates particularly since the rise of Finnish (new) nationalist tendencies (Hult and Pietikäinen 2014; Saarinen 2020, Ihalainen and Saarinen 2015). In recent years, controversies have sparked around Swedish as a compulsory subject in Finnish-medium basic schools (grades 1–9) in the monolingually Finnish regions (Salo 2012). The parallel school system has received little attention among populist voices even though monolingual Swedish-medium schools have been insisted on especially by the Swedish-speakers’ side in the debates that reflect a protectionist stance (Slotte-Lüttge et al. 2013; Boyd and Palviainen 2015; From and Sahlström 2019). In this sense, the desire for parallel monolingualisms works both ways in the new nationalist and protectionist discourses as there seems to be mutual interest in restricting the presence of the respective ‘other’ national language in educational spaces. In the public and political debates on Finnish official bilingualism, monolingual Swedish-medium schools are seen as crucial for the maintenance of the Swedish-speaking numerical minority in Finland (Sahlström et al. 2013; Boyd and Palviainen 2015). In this debate, the notion of *svenska rum*, i.e., monolingual Swedish spaces, has not only been used metaphorically but has also stood for the physical integrity of Swedish medium schools and school buildings as minority

language “shelters,” “oases,” or “islands” (e.g., Heller 2006, Lönnroth 2011). Also for South Tyrol, education has been described “as one of the pillars of language and identity politics used for minority protection” (Wisthaler 2013: 358). In other words, an essentialist perspective on language as the foundation for group identity, and a recognition of the role of educational institutions in maintaining this identity, is strongly present in the region and typically understood to be best supported through language separation and monolingual arrangements (Brannick 2016).

In both contexts, the justification for monolingual practices is reconstructed through a variety of discursive mechanisms. The separation of Finnish and Swedish in educational institutions is supported by a rather established understanding commonly named after the former minister of education and justice in Finland, Christoffer Taxell. Taxell stated in his speech in 1986 that the country’s official bilingualism is best secured through separate monolingual institutions in education and elsewhere in society. ‘The basis for bilingualism is monolingual solutions. Bilingual solutions in general lead to monolingualism,’ Taxell (1986) stated.¹ According to this principle, termed as Taxell’s paradox in the public debate, there was plenty of evidence of transitional bilingual solutions that had ended up as sites for monolingual Finnish language practices as the numerical majority language had eventually taken over. As a real-life example, Taxell referred to the regional shortcomings in access to medical care and social services in Swedish and concluded that this was because these services were not organized in parallel monolingual sections (see also Herberts 2006). Following this example, Taxell’s paradox has been consistently referred to in opposition to plans of co-locating Finnish and Swedish medium schools and especially political initiatives for establishing bilingual schools in which instruction would be given in both national languages for students from both language groups (Boyd and Palviainen 2015; From and Sahlström 2019). This can be termed a spatial ideology, where the idea of a monolingual space is reproduced both as a mental and material construct in support of the premise that Swedish medium schools should remain monolingual both as institutions and everyday spaces (From 2020a). Moreover, this ideology categorically treats all bilingual solutions as non-desirable without further debate on potentially successful policies for contributing to a bilingual society beyond parallel monolingualisms.

These kinds of discourses are not restricted to Finland but echo a rather established, and today also challenged, understanding of language separation as a means of protecting a lesser-used language in a given context (see Cenoz and Gorter 2017). Similar discursive traits can be found in South Tyrol, up to an eerie similarity to Taxell’s paradox in one of the political principles of Anton Zelger, a long-time provincial councilor for German culture and education up until 1989: ‘The better we separate ourselves, the better we understand each other’ (Schröder 2002: 179).² It has been well documented that potential changes to this principle of separation are politically argued against by drawing on discourses of threat and endangerment (Brannick 2016; Thoma 2022), which is very similar to the Finnish context. These kinds of discourses often reflect other kinds of struggles, such as threats to the prevailing social order that take place on the terrain of language (Duchêne and Heller 2007). In South Tyrol, the discourses of endangerment are also often linked to the experience of assimilationist policies under Fascism (Wisthaler 2013; Brannick 2016), through which, as Thoma (2022) argues, a continuity of minorization is constructed.

Despite Italian not being the majority language in many parts of South Tyrol, it is perceived as a potential problem to the German schools, necessitating careful management of

its access in both spatial and temporal dimensions (Alber 2012). Italian medium schools, on the other hand, have invested much more heavily in German language teaching. This was initially opposed by the political forces in the German language group. For instance, proposals to introduce German immersion programs under the Italian education administration – similar to Canadian or Finnish examples – were rejected on a political level. According to Atz (1999), this decision was born of fears that introducing German immersion within the Italian school administration might open the door to calls for Italian immersion in German schools, which in turn was perceived as a threat to the position of the German language group. This can be considered an example of language management that is informed by a monolingual ideology, relying on the absolute separation of not only the languages but also their speakers, indicating an essentialist understanding of language groups. This differs from the Finnish discourses, where Swedish language immersion in Finnish schools has mainly been regarded as an unproblematic way to respond to the interest of Finnish speakers in the Swedish language. Therefore, delimiting Swedish as the language of instruction in the Finnish track to immersion programs also appears as a language management policy that has spatial implications (see also From 2023). Today, Italian-speaking schools in South Tyrol have found a compromise by introducing CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), whereby some subjects are taught in German and, marginally, in English (Vettori et al. 2021). CLIL is now increasingly being piloted also at secondary schools of the German track. As a conclusion of the spatial ideologies in Finland and South Tyrol, it is fair to state that in both contexts, specific language groups are constructed as linguistic minorities in need of protection, and language separation is constructed as a means to achieve this aim. We now move on to analyze how these ideologies shape the material and social practices of co-located schools and how the recent discursive shift in debating bilingualism in education can be observed in the discourses concerning co-located schools.

5. A discursive shift and co-located schools contesting language separation in educational practices

While identifying the fundamental ideology of language separation as a basis for educational policies and practices in both Finland and South Tyrol with regard to their official languages, we can also witness a discursive shift taking place in more recent debates of educational bilingualism. This shift is mediated in debates that concern the material arrangements of schooling in particular. In 2009, the first critical voices toward the co-location of Swedish and Finnish medium schools in the same buildings appeared in the Swedish-speaking media in Finland. A major concern was the perceived threat of co-located schools to the Swedish medium schools as monolingual physical spaces separated from the Finnish medium schools (Slotte-Lüttge et al. 2013). Finnish was believed to easily prevail among the pupils attending the Swedish medium schools due to shared everyday spaces such as school yards (Hansell et al. 2016; Hansell and Pilke 2016). This concern was voiced particularly in bilingual areas where Finnish held a strong numerical majority, such as in the capital region (see From and Sahlström 2017; From 2020a). In the notably Swedish-speaking parts of Finland, such as the western coast, bilingual solutions have typically been regarded as more favorable choices than elsewhere in the country. This has been based on the perception that the linguistic power relations in the community outside the school provide more support for Swedish

than in the areas where the Swedish-speaking population is dwindling (e.g., Huss, 2013; Sahlström et al. 2013; Sundman 2013). Around 2011, the media debate proceeded to propose the establishment of actual Finnish-Swedish medium bilingual schools in which instruction would be given in both languages in merged groups of Finnish- and Swedish-registered pupils. Again, the potential threats to the less widely spoken official language were highlighted, and a claimed necessity to shelter a monolingual minority language space was involved in the argumentation against such a school. However, with the exception of the previous debate on co-locating schools, this proposal also provoked positive reactions particularly among Finnish-speaking and bilingual families, and it sparked a two-year debate in which a variety of motives related to both identity and linguistic repertoires were raised (see Slotte-Lüttge et al. 2013; Boyd and Palviainen 2015). This debate on bilingual schools marks the watershed that pushed the boundary of viable bilingual solutions in the Finnish education system.

According to Alber's (2012) analysis, a similar development has been on-going in South Tyrol. Demands and expectations to abandon monolingualism as a pedagogical principle and to opt for plurilingual practices in teaching and cooperation between schools with different languages of instruction have increased (Alber 2012, p. 411–412, see also Brannick 2016; Colombo et al. 2020; Vettori et al. 2021). On a political level, a model in which both Italian and German would serve as languages of instruction has repeatedly been proposed to the provincial parliament by the representatives of the Green party. This model would serve as an optional alternative for those who wish to receive their education in both German and Italian (e.g. draft bill nr. 67/15-XV; nr. 2/18-XVI; nr. 700/23-XVI; nr. 2/23-XVII), along the same lines as the proposal in Finland. Since these proposals foresee bilingual education as an additional alternative that parents could opt for, arguments in favor have largely centered on their introduction in bilingual urban areas. Thus, it is justified to consider these debates in their sociolinguistic and sociohistorical contexts as being shaped in specific spatial circumstances. This points to the contextuality of spatial ideologies and the agency of local actors in interpreting the national language policy.

Against the backdrop of spatial separation as an explicit principle in language policy, co-located schools are a remarkable educational phenomenon both in Finland and South Tyrol. According to the first official statistics on co-located schools in Finland, every sixth Swedish comprehensive school now shares facilities with a Finnish school, the proportion having been on a steep rise during the past decade. From preschool to upper secondary, altogether 83 Swedish-medium institutions share their building with a Finnish-medium institution (Regional State Administrative Agency in Finland 2023). Discussions about introducing new co-located schools are underway in numerous bilingual regional administrations. In many instances, the critical debates they spark are largely tied to local disputes and do not reflect broad opposition to such educational solutions (From 2020a).

In South Tyrol, we identified 40 Italian and German medium institutions, from pre-primary to upper secondary level, that share facilities. The scope of these co-locations varies widely, from those initially designed to share facilities to ad-hoc arrangements made in response to fluctuating enrollment figures at the respective institutions within a specific area. Like the Finnish context in the past, co-locations have not been extensively studied or discussed in terms of research. Co-locations in South Tyrol have faced less opposition compared to the resistance encountered by proposals for immersion education in the past (Alber 2012; Brannick 2016), and they continue to face less pushback than

current calls for bilingual or multilingual education in South Tyrol (Colombo et al. 2020; Thoma 2022). What makes the situation in South Tyrol stand out from the Finnish media-driven debates on co-located schools is that it has been recognized in broader policy debates than in Finland, where mainly individual cases have been discussed on the municipal level. In 2014, the provincial council of South Tyrol passed motion no. 25/13 endorsing the “establishment of joint educational facilities for both language groups” (Südtiroler Landtag 2014, p. 2, translated by the authors) as a goal for the construction or renovation of schools. The aim of the motion was to enhance ongoing interactions among students from different language mediums. The Green party, known for initiating bilingual education models in South Tyrol, has kept “jointly used school buildings” on their agenda for more than a decade. In a recent report on the previously mentioned draft bills, the possibility of co-located schools to “bring about more encounters and linguistic exchange” is raised. The report emphasizes the influence of the shared school building as significant for language learning and community building (Report on the draft bill 2/23-XVII, 2023). Even if we lack systematic analyses of this debate, interesting differences unfold when compared to Finland. The policy initiatives indicate that co-located schools were promoted as potential language learning environments much earlier than the beginning of this debate in Finland. Reflecting on the surrounding debates on language ideology in both contexts, we can assume that the spatial ideology that promotes *svenska rum* in Finland might have restricted the space for political initiatives around co-located schools. Moreover, in a manner akin to the Finnish scenario, educational and linguistic policy considerations have increasingly informed the planning of more recent co-locations. This may be cautiously viewed as an indication of shifting spatial ideologies in South Tyrol, which are now gaining some traction for informal language learning if not yet fully embracing multilingual pedagogies.

The architecture and material design of co-located schools can be perceived as the materialization of language policies, the analysis of which also reveals certain paradigm shifts in relation to official bilingualism in education. Moreover, more general educational trends toward multipurpose spaces can be observed here (Laihonen and Szabó 2023; From et al. 2023). Both in Finland and South Tyrol, a distinction can be made between facilities that were originally built for one school but extended or spatially divided later to accommodate another and facilities that were built for the purposes of housing two schools to start with. In the latter category, we can observe an interesting architectural development that also reflects the overall shift in language ideology from strict separation toward more flexible language policies and practices. The two campuses we focused on in Finland and South Tyrol in a recent project were established in the early 1980s and 1970s respectively. Originally, they both represent an architectural model according to which the school building is divided into two identical parts with separate entrances for both schools. Considering the power of material school design to govern social and language practices (Brown 2012), this model has enabled the intentional separation of the two language groups from each other and hindered spontaneous meetings in the schools’ spaces. In some cases, a similar mode of language management has been reconstructed outdoors by also dividing the school yard (From 2020a). This design can be understood as a prime example of materializing parallel monolingualisms (Heller 2006).

A closer look needs to be taken at the everyday practices of these co-located schools to fully understand how declared language policies and ideologies shape them. Ethnographic

studies carried out in co-located Finnish schools have enriched our understanding of how school staff and pupils exercise their agency in challenging official policies and redefining spatial ideologies (see From and Sahlström 2017; From and Holm 2019; From 2020b; Laihonen and Szabó 2023). Such research has, for instance, documented co-located schools where the borders between two institutions are dispelled by teaching some of the subjects in bilingual groups (see Helakorpi et al. 2013). This can be seen as a temporal practice that contests the traditional means of language separation (cf. Gorter and Cenoz 2017). In relation to the above-mentioned field schools in Finland and South Tyrol, we have observed that language practices were notably distinct from one another despite architectural similarities. The two schools in Finland started to integrate their activities in the 1990s, aiming to foster a bilingual community. The spatial practices in the school building were reorganized in a way that dispelled the division between the two schools and two language groups. Today, the building houses two administratively separate monolingual schools that organize some of their teaching in bilingual groups that consist of pupils from both schools (From et al. 2023; Helakorpi et al. 2013). In contrast, the everyday practices in the two schools in South Tyrol are still aligned with the buildings' architectural design, remaining largely in isolation from each other. This indicates that official policies have the power to shape the social and language practices of the schools but also that the users of these spaces sometimes have a notable degree of agency in contesting them (see Troyer 2023).

The current trends in school architecture have been influential also for new co-located schools. In line with the recent trend of constructing large, multipurpose campuses, the practice of co-locating Finnish and Swedish medium schools has gained popularity (Laihonen and Szabó 2023). New co-located schools present a variety of architectural solutions and have many common spatial characteristics. On the one hand, these architectural features reinforce the policy of language separation by allocating specific parts of the buildings for the exclusive use of one school. On the other hand, they challenge and renegotiate this policy by designating certain areas for shared use, thereby facilitating a more integrated approach (From 2023, Laihonen and Szabó 2023). Typically, the shared spaces include school yards, cafeterias, gyms, auditoriums, and classrooms with special equipment, whereas regular classrooms are separate and often placed in different parts of the building. So far, no systematic research has been conducted on how language policy informs the design processes of these schools, but a basic paradigm of separation does unfold in the planning documents (From 2023). When two schools with separate administrations and different languages of instruction are co-located, space becomes a tool for language policy both in a material and symbolic sense (Brown 2012; From 2020a, see also Szabó 2015).

The rise and swift expansion of co-located Finnish and Swedish medium schools have significantly challenged and necessitated the reevaluation of the ideology of spatial separation. The construction of new co-located campuses has prompted a rethinking of spatial organization and the ideologies surrounding the national languages in education, fostering new discourses on bilingualism in Finland (Laihonen and Szabó 2023). The discussions surrounding co-located schools have also sparked broader debates on common ideologies and practices of bilingual education. Although pedagogical collaboration was not the primary aim of these co-locations, the new coexistence has compelled schools as well as politicians and media representatives to respond to this change in some manner (see From 2020b). Consequently, this physical transformation appears to be catalyzing a gradual

ideological shift toward a more open and adaptable approach to Finnish-Swedish bilingualism in education. This shift often originates from the daily practices of co-located schools that have ventured to challenge the traditional notion of language separation in education.

Despite ongoing concerns about language endangerment associated with co-located schools in Finland, there is no evidence to suggest that co-location compromises the capacity of Swedish medium schools to cultivate language proficiency or to nurture a unique cultural identity (Sahlström et al. 2013; Hansell et al. 2016). Nevertheless, the social spaces in co-located schools are still largely separated according to the languages of the institutions even in buildings that facilitate a great share of common areas (Helakorpi et al. 2013; Kajander et al. 2015). At the same time, the possibility of sharing linguistic and pedagogical resources across language boundaries is also starting to be recognized, especially by head teachers and students (see Hansell et al. 2016; Szabó et al. 2018). Although co-located schools have garnered limited attention in public debates in South Tyrol, there have been two notable instances of such schools being planned and subsequently highlighted in media reports. The first example is the Alexander Langer School in Bolzano, where the provincial press office declared at the start of the 2014/15 school year that "for the first time, German and Italian school classes are housed under the same roof" (Ufficio Stampa 2014, translated by the authors). This announcement was somewhat inaccurate as there clearly had been earlier cases of co-location in South Tyrol, but it proves the point of co-located schools being an underrecognized phenomenon in the field of education. Another campus, planned for construction starting in 2024, is intentionally designed to accommodate both German and Italian medium schools. This initiative aims to foster exchange and interaction between the schools (Vettori et al. 2021). To sum up, co-located schools both in Finland and South Tyrol can be considered contested spaces that are shaped by a multitude of educational and language political discourses and that are also increasingly reframed as spaces for language learning and community building.

7. Discussion

Despite the heated debates provoked by bilingual educational solutions, the past ten years have been game-changing with regard to how the public opinion of what can be considered as feasible options have been reshaped in Finland. A climax was reached in March 2023, when it was announced that a Nordic bilingual school will be established in Helsinki in 2024 (see From 2023). The school is designed to cater to both Finnish and Swedish-speakers, marking the first time these pupils will be educated together in a shared classroom. Unlike the immersion programs in Finnish and Swedish, the school does not require 'native' proficiency in one of the national languages, which makes the model more inclusive than the previous ones. Other Nordic languages will also be included in the curriculum (City of Helsinki 2020). Although the specific pedagogical practices of the school are yet to be defined, the political decision that has been made and its favorable reception across both language groups indicate a notable transformation in the discourse over the past decade. To a degree, the discourse highlights the emergence of neo-liberal and elite multilingualism (Barakos and Selleck 2019; Saarinen 2020), suggesting that access to additional languages, seen as a resource provided through education, depends on the choices parents make regarding their children's schooling (see From 2023). However, we can also witness some evidence of the spatial ideology in

the discourses and practices that concern the Nordic school. First, the concept and political process that relate to the new school have been initiated by the Swedish People's Party in Finland under the following conditions: the school must be administered by the municipality's Finnish speaking educational department to eliminate any potential influence on the number of monolingual Swedish schools in Helsinki. Second, the profile of the school is *Nordic* rather than Finnish-Swedish bilingual, emphasizing Nordic cooperation and Nordic languages. These delineations can be interpreted as an aim to manage the educational discourses and practices that surround Finnish-Swedish bilingualism in a way that enables the continuum of *svenska rum* parallel to new bilingual openings. Furthermore, the Nordic label conveys the impression that the new model extends beyond the confines of the Finnish national space and does not seek to reform the existing educational system that stresses the separation of the national languages (From 2023).

Similarly to the debates regarding the Nordic school, the discourse of language separation has increasingly been challenged by perspectives of neo-liberalism and elite multilingualism that promote internationalism and the instrumental value of language also in South Tyrol (Brannick 2016). Italian-German bilingualism, which can be considered an elite multilingualism (Barakos and Selleck 2019) is highly valued as an individual competence in South Tyrol, more recently in particular from an economic perspective (Alber 2012; Brannick 2016). Brannick (2016) demonstrates that arguments favoring language separation have predominantly been grounded in historical views on language that advocate for significant levels of monolingualism in education to preserve identity. In contrast, the prevailing arguments for expanding bi/multilingual education have primarily been based on contemporary neo-liberal perspectives on language that focus on adapting to global market conditions. The recent Finnish debate on bilingualism, also beyond the case of the Nordic school, has witnessed a similar development towards the instrumental value of language, where particularly Swedish has been promoted as an asset that should be distributed through bilingual education (Slotte-Lüttge et al. 2013; Boyd and Palviainen 2015; From 2023). Therefore, we can see how the current emphasis on language as a neo-liberal commodity also challenges the spatial ideologies and practices that rely on (new) nationalist language separation as a basis for language management.

Even if the main reason for co-located schools in Finland has been first and foremost economic, pedagogical and language educational reasons are gaining a foothold in the planning of new co-locations (Helakorpi et al. 2013; Sahlström et al. 2013; Kajander et al. 2015; From and Sahlström 2019). Both in Finland and in South Tyrol, co-locating schools with different (official) languages of instruction have largely been ad hoc, non-regulated, local solutions and have therefore remained out of sight of broader policies and research efforts for a significant time. In South Tyrol, co-locations went somewhat unnoticed in the public debate for a long time despite the political initiatives that promoted them as language learning environments. In Finland, they have provoked intense discussion since they fundamentally question the idea of *svenska rum* and stand in contrast with established policies and practices of language separation. This difference might be linked to the fact that minority-majority relations in South Tyrol are somewhat more balanced than in Finland, with German speakers being in a numerical majority in the province. However, it might also be that pragmatic, neo-liberal views in favor of economically beneficial elite multilingualism can override nationalistic ideologies that promote the idealization of separate language groups.

8. Conclusion

In this article, we have addressed the recent discourses on educational bilingualism in Finland and South Tyrol. We have focused on co-located schools as a phenomenon that increasingly challenges the ideology of language separation, and around which discourses that promote the value of bilingualism in education have gained ground in both contexts. In analyzing these contexts, we have presented the theoretical notion of spatial ideologies as useful in illustrating how language ideologies and policies shape the material practices of education and are shaped by them (see From 2020a). We conclude that the discourses on co-locating monolingual schools in officially bilingual contexts have made visible the beliefs that concern official bilingualism in the spatial practices of education. Moreover, the policy of separation is reflected in the material design of co-located schools, reconstructing physical and symbolic borders but also being increasingly challenged in everyday social practices.

In both contexts, the current socio-political trends of new nationalism and neo-liberalism have affected the language policies related to co-located schools (see Saarinen 2020). Despite the differences in the national and regional policies of power-sharing between the different language groups in Finland and in South Tyrol in Italy, similar discursive connections between language separation, language endangerment and spatial practices have been prominent when discussing bilingualism in institutional education. However, a shared trend in both Finland and South Tyrol is the gradual questioning of language separation as the main approach to managing bilingualism, often informed by a notion of bilingualism as a neoliberal commodity. Further research is needed to gain a more nuanced understanding of how this shift plays out in the policy discourses and practices concerning co-located schools in Finland, South Tyrol and beyond.

Notes

1. “Grunden för tvåspråkigheten är enspråkiga lösningar. Tvåspråkiga lösningar leder i allmänhet till enspråkighet.”
2. “Je besser wir uns trennen, desto besser verstehen wir uns.”

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