

# Interpreting and managing a monolingual norm in an English-speaking class in Finland: When first and second graders contest the norm

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*This study explores the stances that multilingual learners adopt in the face of a monolingual, “English-only” norm in a primary English medium class in Finland. I examine classroom interaction focusing on three students and the ways in which they reinterpret, reformulate, and contest this norm. This research is informed by the perspective of language socialization and draws on methods of microethnographic discourse analysis. I find that the three focal students come into opposition when they interpret and manage the institutional monolingual norm differently, indexing issues of mother tongue expertise and group membership. Aleksis employs a variety of discursive practices in resisting the English language norm, conceptualizing it quite differently than Lucille who seeks to monitor language use among her peers. Ali operates on the border, revealing a surprising degree of metalinguistic awareness and interest in how languages are situated institutionally. All three students articulate different stances on the use of English and Finnish in their lives. Language use transcends institutional boundaries, and norms are reproduced in concert and in conflict with other members of the class. My findings speak to contested language practice everywhere, to institutional norms regarding language use, to the ways in which students respond, reproduce, and reject institutional linguistic ideologies, and the different roles students give to languages in their daily lives.*

**Keywords:** classroom interaction, language norms, multilingual learners, language socialization, ethnography

## Introduction

Language has often been conceptualized as a problem (Hymes 1977, 1996; Sapir 1951[1933]). It is in education where issues surrounding language use can become most visible, in that schools are known to be sites of struggle between

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local ideologies and state ideologies; between minority and majority groups (Heller 2006; Rampton 2006) wrestling with issues of language, culture and identity. This paper approaches these issues by exploring the stances which three multilingual children take in regards to language norms in an English speaking class in Finland.

In the classroom featured in this study, English becomes a tool for learning as well as a lingua franca between Finnish mother tongue students and students who are new to Finland. Often, the sociolinguistic resources these young children draw on reflect a highly mobile family life as many students have lived abroad or may live abroad in the future. An examination of micro-level interactions within the classroom gives insight to “the adaptation of languages and varieties to one another, and *their integration into specific roles and complex speech communities*” (Hymes 1996: 30). While this class is an “English speaking class,” the Finnish language also plays a vital role in the school experiences of students, regardless of linguistic repertoires. Finnish and English have different functions in this multilingual classroom, just as different styles of speech convey different social meanings in a monolingual speech community (Hymes 1966). English is the official language of instruction, but ethnographic data reveals frequent code switching in explanations of local or national phenomena, in peer conversation and in student narratives and school-wide communications, such as notices sent home. School and classroom practices dictate when and for what reasons children can use Finnish within this English class. Socialization to the norms of language use in this setting is found to result in both institutionally sanctioned and expected behaviours as well as alternate behaviours including subversion and resistance.

The aim of this paper is to show how a school practice, in this case a monolingual norm, positions three students differently. While the norm positions these students they are also active agents who reinterpret, reformulate, and contest this norm. I examine how this norm is invoked and maintained and in doing so, reveal the role of co-construction and socialization in peer enforcement of the norm. I also examine how positions are created and taken up differentially resulting in opposition and conflict. While students are socialized to use English in class unilaterally, there are also unexpected instances of conflict surrounding language choice. Looking at norms as they emerge in interaction between students and teachers negotiating code use in this setting, provides a point of entry for examining the implications of such norms within education – in this case within the education of multilingual children .

### **Ethnography and language socialization**

This paper draws primarily on interactional data collected as part of a broader ethnographic study involving active participation in classroom life and the collection of audio-visual recordings, interviews, notes, letters, samples of student work, drawings, and photographs over the first two years of compulsory education. Rather than viewing ethnography as a methodology of description, this study takes ethnography as a perspective requiring both description and analysis of situated language use (Blommaert 2007) whereby the process of collecting the data imbues it with the perspective of the ethnographer

(Hymes 1971). What transforms ethnography from methodology to perspective are the unifying fundamental assumptions it is grounded in, including the way in which “social events are contextualized, connected with other events, meaningful in a more-than-unique way, and functional to those who perform the practices that construct the event” (Blommaert 2007: 684). For Hymes, ethnography is “a description that is a theory – a theory of speech as a system of cultural behaviour” (1971: 51). Stemming from an understanding of interaction as socially and culturally embedded, my research is guided by the theory of language socialization and the theoretical and methodological process of microethnographic analysis.

Language socialization centres on the belief that children are novice members of society who are apprenticed through language to communicative identities (Ochs 2002). Language socialization occurs through interaction between more and less experienced participants. This perspective plays particular attention to the structure of such interactions as well as embedded cultural ideologies and norms (Ochs 2002). The social context of an interaction is constructed through speaker actions, stances, identities, and activities all of which are interdependent and fundamental to socialization (Ochs 2002). Research in language socialization focuses on linguistic practices and the way in which participants draw on these practices locally.

Recent work in this area has come to emphasize that socialization is “negotiated” rather than deterministic in nature and that there are any number of possible outcomes (Miller 1994: 159) which may be impacted by individual interest and experience (Garrett & Baquedano-López 2002). Language socialization research also examines “bad subjects” (Kulick & Schieffelin 2004: 354) who fail to take up normative behaviours, or as described by Talmy, instances of “unsuccessful” or “unexpected” socialization (2008). As such, this paper foregrounds the many ways in which participants respond to institutional norms. Students may act within or outside the normative practices of the school, creatively and contingently reproducing, re-creating and even rejecting ideologies. In examining language norms, we must also acknowledge that these norms originate in someone telling someone else how to use language in a given context. Issues of power and agency become integral because not everyone conforms; it is the participants who have the power to transform norms and practices (Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester 2000).

Because practices which socialize novices in a given setting often stem from cultural notions about language, ideologies are a visible aspect of many studies of language socialization (Garrett & Baquedano-López 2002). Language ideologies, as conceptualized in my work, are best defined by Heath as “self-evident ideas and objectives a group holds concerning roles of language in the social experiences of members as they contribute to the expression of the group” (1977: 255). Research in the field of language socialization recognizes that ideologies within a social group may conflict and are in fact “multiple, situated and ‘interested’” (Garrett & Baquedano-López 2002: 354). This is particularly evident in multilingual contexts (*ibid.*; Ochs & Schieffelin 1995).

In the analysis, I take a microethnographic discourse perspective by utilizing methods aimed at examining the social organization of interaction (Erickson & Schultz 1981) in daily classroom life. Contextualization cues, boundaries of the interaction, the turns that participants take, the theme of talk, and how it is created and taken up by participants (Bloome et al. 2005) are significant markers

of how students contend with language choice and use in this setting. Microethnography highlights such situationally constructed identities and memberships (Hornberger 1996) and thus “dynamic and emergent speech in context” is significant (Creese 2005: 22). According to Erickson, factors such as identity, beliefs, cultural and societal forces do not wholly account for the ways people interact socially; it is important to acknowledge “wiggle room” and “improvisation” (1996: 283). For instance, the work of Kelleen Toohey (2000) considers how classroom practices facilitate or block student access to resources and to particular positions and identities; thus producing certain school identities. Toohey and Norton (2003: 58) consider both contextual factors in regards to access to resources, as well as student agency, thus allowing for an exploration of the “dialectic between the individual and the social practices” of a particular classroom community.

### **Research setting**

The teacher of this class is a thirty-year old female who is a mother tongue speaker of Finnish, fluent in English with previous teaching experience in the United Kingdom. This research spans two school years in a mixed grade classroom (first and second grade). As such, the composition of students changes from one year to the next; the total number of student participants over the course of the study is 16. At the time of the recordings used for this paper, however, there were 7 students in the class: 3 girls and 4 boys between the ages of 7 and 8. Four of these students speak Finnish as a mother tongue and the other three students speak Bangla, French and Italian as a mother tongue. The boundaries between the languages they encounter and use in and out of school are reinforced daily for these students as they move through the world. Each day they arrive at school, walk through the door of the classroom and are greeted by their classroom teacher in English. They are expected to leave behind the language of their homes and of the school yard as they enter a monolingual English language environment.

Over the course of my fieldwork, there were an ever shifting range of language repertoires; Finnish children who have lived abroad, children with one Finnish speaking parent and one English speaking parent, children who use only Finnish at home, and newcomers to Finland. Only one student fell into the category locally described as “New Finn” which is the “favoured term in Finland from the second generation onwards” (Koivunen & Marsio 2007). This student, “Ali” is a focal student in this paper. He appears frequently in the following extracts as a student with surprising metalinguistic awareness who navigates the space between two factions in this classroom; children with Finnish as a home language and children who are learning Finnish as a foreign language. The second focal student is Aleksi, who speaks Finnish as a mother tongue language but spent the first four years of his life in Australia. The third focal student is Lucille. She has lived in Finland for two years, speaks French at home and is learning Finnish as a foreign language. The interactions between these three students with diverse language backgrounds will illustrate the ways in which norms for language use emerge and are negotiated in the classroom.

There are two English speaking classes in this public Finnish school. The institutional name for these classes is “englannin kielen luokka” (English language class or “EKL”). “EKL” is the Finnish acronym which marks the door, the class schedule, notebooks and class notices. According to guidelines on the school website, English language classes are meant for children who come from abroad and also for Finnish children who come from families where English is also used. Furthermore, students are expected to work at grade level *in English*, so prospective students are tested prior to admittance. Students who do not have Finnish as a mother tongue spend 35-45 minutes daily learning “Finnish as a foreign language”. While none of these students are mother tongue speakers of English, they are all fluent speakers of English with at least some command of written and spoken Finnish. This school is situated among a cluster of apartment buildings, many of which are used for university housing, located several kilometres from the city centre. This neighbourhood has the reputation of being “international” due to the foreign student population but also is not generally considered a desirable location to live. Some of the students travel from other municipalities by taxi or public transit to attend this class and some families relocated during the course of my study in order to be closer to the school. While other cities in Finland have similar programs, there are no other primary level English speaking classes in this municipality or the surrounding region.

## Analysis of the English-language norm

### *Teacher-peer interaction and the norm*

The use of English in this classroom is a normative practice, however it requires daily maintenance, often through teacher talk. This section will analyse interactions between the teacher and students in regards to the English norm. The following short extract is exemplary of how the English language norm is succinctly addressed when there is not a unified floor and students freely converse with one another.

#### Extract 1

- 1 Teacher: boys boys boys
- 2 Elmo (.) Elmo (.) what is the language
- 3 Elmo: English
- 4 Teacher: thank you

Much of the time, students acquiesce and resume conversation in English until they slip back into Finnish and are reminded again by the teacher to use English. What is important to note, is that due to the young age of these students, periods of teacher talk with a unified floor are relatively short. Students move quickly from instruction to hands-on activities, seat work, or group work throughout the day. And as a split level class, subjects such as mathematics require half of the class to work independently, while the teacher works with the other half. This does not mean that peer talk is always encouraged, but it does mean that students spend significantly less time in teacher directed lessons than older children. When there is peer interaction language norms are difficult to

monitor, and in this classroom this kind of interaction accounts for the majority of time spent in school. In contrast, when there is a unified floor as shown in other research (Heller 2006) language norms are easier to uphold and maintain.

While the previous extract illustrates how the norm is invoked, we will now move on to analysing extended interactions surrounding the norm. All of the following extracts come from audio and/or visual recordings made during handicrafts. Students usually worked independently during these lessons and were always allowed to converse freely with one another, providing a rich source of interactional data.

The next extract will illustrate how the teacher enforces the English language norm and how a student resists. The teacher circulates the classroom monitoring progress and assisting individuals. Alekski and Eerik are working on a handicraft and discussing their progress.

#### Extract 2

- 1 Alekski: hei eikö tää oo helppo!  
*hey isn't this easy!*
- 2 Eerik: [(xxx)]  
((turns to Alekski and holds up work))
- 3 Alekski: niitä ei pitänyt leikata  
*those weren't supposed to be cut*
- 4 Teacher: hey hey Alicia can't understand you
- 5 Alekski: no but I'm speaking for Eerik (2.0)
- 6 Teacher: what-what is the language that we use ↑here
- 7 Alekski: < I don't ↓remember >
- 8 Teacher: [ ↓oh ] (1.0)
- 9 Lucille: [↑English]
- 10 Teacher: it ↑is
- 11 Ali: n[u ah]
- 12 Teacher: [if ] we speak Finnish than (.) Alicia won't be able to understand
- 13 Ali: nu-
- 14 Teacher: Lucille can't understand
- 15 Ali: [na]
- 16 Teacher: [Ariel] can't understand so we have to
- 17 use the language that we all share
- 18 Alekski: but I'm not [speaking to them]
- 19 Ali: [ (x x) all (x ) ]ALL [have to und]  
((cell phone song begins))
- 20 Teacher: [NO Alekski]
- 21 we must only speak English in here (x)

The teachers' second loud and emphatic "hey" in line 4 captures the attention of the boys and communicates that she takes this matter seriously. While I, as a foreign researcher, am the first person that the teacher names (Alicia, line 12) the ideology of the teacher is expressed through the argument she constructs in the following turns, the use of repetition in giving evidence for using English. She states that English is "used here" (line 6) and that if one speaks Finnish, many different people "can't understand" (lines 12-16) so everyone must speak the "share[ed]" language (line 17). And finally, almost in exasperation after another turn from Alekski, the teacher gives a directive: "no Alekski we must only speak English in here" (lines 19 and 21) and then answers her cell phone. The use of

“we” in line 21 reveals an awareness of the other students who are listening and also emphasizes that this rule includes everyone, even herself. The teacher also indexes the context when she specifies what kind of language must be used “in here” (line 21). Teacher discourse in the classroom can also reference broader educational issues (Creese 2005). The school is attempting to offer a monolingual English learning environment, as opposed to a CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) class, which is also available in this school. Thus, this class is differentiated from others on the basis of language use, a practice that must be locally interpreted and maintained by the classroom teacher.

Aleksi clearly feels that private talk should not be subject to the English-only rule (lines 5 and 18). He does not intend to include other students in this conversation with Eerik. Even after an extensive explanation from the teacher, he reiterates his stance in line 18, uttering “speaking” emphatically, thus making himself heard *and* emphasizing a point he has already made (in line 5). In fact, Aleksi takes a stronger stance now, defining his actions by what he is *not* doing (speaking to the class) rather than what he is doing (speaking to Eerik). By doing so, he is drawing on a situated norm of language choice according to addressee. This interaction is not limited to Aleksi and the teacher, several other students actively engage, arguably in alignment with the norm. Lucille supplies an answer to the teacher’s question (line 9) and Ali persistently attempts to interject and parrot the teacher perhaps “embellishing” on this line of reasoning (lines 11, 13, 15, 19).

It is remarkable that Aleksi resists for so many turns (lines 5, 7, the silence that follows, and 18) as the teacher attempts to enforce the norm. The result is a prolonged interaction where the teacher must articulate a basis for the norm and where Aleksi is revealed to be in conflict with this norm. Not long after this episode, a staff member enters the room and speaks in Finnish to Sari, the classroom teacher. In this episode, Aleksi gives a directive to the teachers to speak in English and demands an explanation for their use of Finnish. And in doing so, he reveals underlying contradictions in the norm.

### Extract 3

- 1 Staff M: sä saat tän takas ((shakes paper and moves towards door))  
*yes you will get this back*
- 2 Teacher: noni joo  
*well yes*
- 3 siellä on niitä [muistiinpanoja [(.)] hyvä]  
*there are those notes (. ) good*
- 4 Staff M: [ =joo]  
*yes*
- 5 Aleksi: [ spe:ak ↑English ]
- 6 Staff M: <thanks Sari>
- 7 Teacher: no problem
- 8 Aleksi: why didn’t you speak English
- 9 Teacher: because she’s a Finnish speaking teacher
- 10 Aleksi: yes but sh-
- 11 Teacher: she doesn’t speak English
- 12 Aleksi: (but) she did first
- 13 Teacher: that’s why
- 14 like most teachers in our school (.) they only speak Finnish
- 15 Ali: aaah

- 16 Aleks: then why did our our Finnish teacher  
 17 Teacher: -Ali what you need to do now is sit down  
 18 Aleks: ha ha and put your bottom with glue

The classroom teacher does not directly acknowledge Aleks's directive in line 5. However, in the next turn the visiting staff member does acknowledge this utterance by switching to English, and consequently the classroom teacher responds in English. Although Aleks has successfully altered the language of discourse here, he takes it up by immediately asking the classroom teacher, "why didn't you speak English" (line 8).

Although it may appear that Aleks is orienting to the norm, based on the sequence of events in this classroom on this morning, he is actually resisting the norm. By investigating why she does not use English, Aleks is forcing the teacher to defend her actions and expose the fact that there are reasons for using Finnish within the classroom. His why-formatted question may be used here to reproach this action (Günthner 1996). Further, in Extract 2, the teacher has censured Aleks for using English in conversation with a peer, a scenario which is parallel to her use of Finnish with a colleague. Knowing full well that his directive falls outside of appropriate teacher-student interaction, Aleks is aware that his attempt to enforce the norm could be problematic. His actions are not as daring as they may seem because the teacher's conversation is drawing to a close as signalled by the way the staff member is beginning to turn towards and move towards the door. Aleks's actions do, however, chip away at the consistency of the norm, and thereby constitute an example of how enforcement of a norm can actually become an act of resisting the norm. Further, both teachers alter the language of their interaction in response to student enforcement, so this attempt is actually successful, thereby constituting an example, albeit a microscopic example, of the bi-directional nature of socialization to the norm.

What this extract also highlights, is the reality of an English class which is situated within a Finnish language public school. In Extract 2 the teacher sums up her argument with the statement, "we must *only* speak English in here" [emphasis added]. This extract further underlines how this class is set apart from others, in a school where "most teachers" in fact "only speak Finnish." Thus, it is not surprising that the institutional label for this group, "EKL" becomes an important marker of group identity in a later extract.

Thematically, the use of English and Finnish, inside and outside the school is also picked up in the next extract. While the previous extract reveals that one teacher does "not" speak English, the next extract reveals that another teacher does "not" speak Finnish. In this extract, Ali is standing next to his desk cutting a piece of paper during handicrafts. When there is a momentary lull in the various peer conversations taking place in the class, he addresses the teacher who is seated at her desk at the front of the room.

#### Extract 4

- 1 Ali: is Ms -is Mrs. K (.) is from England or Finland?  
 2 Students: Engla:and.  
 3 Teacher: Mrs. K comes from Eng↓land (.) yes.  
 4 Ali: ah uh was she ↑born in Eng↓land



- 5 Teacher: she was born in ↓England  
 6 Ali: o::h (2.0) did he know Finnish?  
 7 Teacher: not much↓ (.) no.  
 8 Ali: a:h (1.20) now I ( xx )  
 9 how can [ she be a teacher ] in here?  
 10 Ariel: [Ms. S. erh hh does-]  
 11 Teacher: because (.) < what is the language (.) that she uses > in her ↑teaching↑  
 12 Lucille: ((hand up))  
 13 Ariel: ((hand up))  
 14 Ali: (1.0) english↑  
 15 Teacher: that's right  
 16 Ariel: Ms. S. is this good↑  
 17 Teacher: very good  
 18 bea:utiful cutting↓ well done↓  
 19 Aleks: she use it when she is going like erh those shopping  
 20 things she uses too because I did see once and  
 21 she did use that (.) and she was shopping and  
 22 °she did say that in English (1.20) (she did speak) English°  
 23 Ali: (2.0) a:h that's why he °didn't use° =  
 24 Students: =SHE (.)  
 25 Lucille: she  
 26 Ali: ° speak English (aha ah) °

Ali wishes to know where Mrs. K is “from” and even more specifically, where she was “born”. Lines 1 through 8 reveal that Ali associates languages with one’s nationality or homeland. In line 10 Ali further questions how Ms. K can “belong” in the school as a non-Finnish speaker. Ali’s questioning indicates concern about how one can function without Finnish. During fieldwork visits, Ali often tested my ability to understand Finnish words and phrases. After poor performances on more than one occasion he exclaimed to me; “but how can you live?” Thus, for Ali language is both socially situated and tied to specific places. When he was entering the first grade, his family moved to East London where they had some family contacts, but due to difficulties finding work they returned to Finland after 6 months. The likely bewildering experience of entering the first grade in London with very little English in his repertoire, may shape Ali’s view of how one can function in any society without the language of the majority.

Language use is also monitored in this extract, but in a less explicit manner than in the previous. In line 11, the teacher responds to Ali’s question with a display question. Two students recognize the display question as an institutional activity and begin bidding to answer. The teacher makes eloquent use of Ali’s questioning to remind students of the English language norm. What also emerges here is the issue of monitoring the usage of English. When Ali mistakenly (and not for the first time in this extract) calls a female teacher “he” (line 23) a number of students correct him. Lucille in particular is vocal with her emphasis, her utterance a moment behind the others, performing the behaviour of language monitoring so often attributed to her. Ali’s frequent mistake of interchanging ‘he’ and ‘she’ relates to the fact that the Finnish language does not differentiate between “he” and “she”.

In line 19, Aleks: takes up this interest in what languages people use by offering a narrative account of seeing Ms K shopping and using English. He relates the context (“shopping”) and establishes the truth of this story in

marking it as an eyewitness account of a specific event (“I did see it once”). Subsequently Ali displays alignment by incorporating Aleksí’s story into his new understanding of how Ms K uses language (line 23). Aleksí has only ever witnessed Ms K using English, because that is the language of instruction in her respective EKL classroom. It is not hearing her speak English that catches his attention, it is the fact that she speaks it *outside* the school that makes this incident memorable. Just as in the last extract where Aleksí disputed the necessity of speaking English during personal conversations, he is revealing a stance that English belongs in school.

For a student to ask a teacher about the circumstance of a colleagues employment would in many cases be considered inappropriate, but in this case Ali is following up on an interest; as indicated by the utterances “a:h” and “now I” (line 8) and “a:h that’s why” (line 23) signalling his comprehension of something new. Ali’s questions reveal an interest not so much in an individual teacher, but in the institution as a whole; “how can she be a teacher in here” (line 9). This interaction initiated by Ali furthers the group understanding of language in use, both inside and outside the institution. This extract also reveals how ideologically constructed boundaries between languages are manifested in student perceptions.

### *Peer enforcement of the norm and resistance*

Thus far, the analysis has illustrated how the language norm is maintained by the teacher, how a student resists teacher enforcement of the norm and how English is conceived by these students as intertwined with the classroom setting. The next two extracts will show multi-layered instances of enforcement and resistance surrounding the English language in *peer* interactions. In the next extract, the teacher is out of the classroom and the students have just returned from a break and are settling back to work on their handicraft projects. As the students return to class they are continuing their conversations in Finnish, however, Lucille has taken her seat and is silently working. When this extract begins, Eerik, Juha, and Aleksí have been discussing how they have walked through a ditch pipe (*ojanputken läpi*) during an outdoor club that meets afterschool.

#### Extract 5

- |   |          |  |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | Aleksí:  | siinä voi vähän kyllä kastua<br><i>you can become a little yeah wet</i>  |
| 2 |          | pitää olla kuravaatteet<br><i>you have to have rain clothes</i>  |
| 3 | Eerik:   | niin se mun sillin purkki matkalaukku pitää tuoda senkin läpi<br><i>yeah my fish jar suitcase you have to bring it also through that</i> |
| 4 | Aleksí:  | x x  |
| 5 | Ali:     | onks tää (.) on-onks<br><i>is this (.) i-is</i>  |
| 6 | Juha:    | x jos haluat x x perjantai illan<br><i>x if you want to x x Friday evening</i>   |
| 7 | Lucille: | SPEAK ↑IN ENGLISH↓   |
| 8 | Ali:     | what ah Ms S. is not come (.)  |

- 9                   when Ms S. [co↑me then] we (see)  
 10 Lucille:                   [but STILL] (1.0)  
 11                   STILL  
 12 Juha:               -hey (.) look that forest ah I mean (they will play) that forest  
 13 Ali:               fore:st↑  
 14 Juha:               =yeah  
 15 Eerik:             x x x  
 16 Student:         (x)  
 17 Eerik:             and Nakke Nakuttaja  
                       *and Woody Woodpecker*  
 18 Juhu:             and I did that (other one)  
                       ((walks towards paintings pointing))  
 19                   x x he he x  
 20 Eerik:             I did make that  
 21 Juha:             and I did make that  
 22 Aleksi:            -who did make that Nakke Nakuttaja  
   *Woody Woodpecker*  
 23 Juha:             -ha  
 24 Eerik:             Aleksi did make that  
 25                   and I did make that  
                       ((teacher enters the classroom))

Lucille uses the phrase “speak in English” repeatedly in my data. This concise directive is usually spoken sharply and loudly. The increased volume of her voice is unnecessary because she is seated near Aleksi, but in this interaction it allows her to break into the conversation between the boys. Ali immediately calls her enforcement into question with the repair initiator, “what” (line 8) and cites the fact that the teacher is not present, but also acknowledges that when the teacher returns they will switch to English. Lucille responds forcefully, her “but still” overlapping with Ali’s utterance (line 10). She pauses and repeats “still” in a loud and emphatic voice. Lucille has appropriated a teacher turn by giving a directive, although as we have seen in earlier extracts, the teacher most often enforces the norm by reminding students of the context. Lucille is more explicit and this interaction employs a directive as well as a reproach.

Ali resists Lucille’s forceful directive despite the fact that he has been unsuccessful in entering into the interaction between the other boys (line 5). He affiliates with the other boys, who are mother tongue speakers of Finnish, and in this instance he also marks his solidarity with them by using “we” (line 9). In contesting the norm, Ali positions himself as speaking on behalf of the other boys. Ali’s rationale for using Finnish in this instance is the absence of the teacher from the classroom. He does however, acknowledge that “when Ms. S come” they will “see”; while the audio is difficult to hear, it is clear that despite resisting the use of English at the present time, the situation will change with the arrival of the teacher. This explanation reveals how the norm is understood in relation to the participants and the institutional framework of the setting. While resisting the norm, Ali is also orienting to it as are the others in the following turns. Juha switches to English, in fact, cutting Lucille off with his utterance (line 12). What makes this switch even more powerful is that Juha is the least proficient speaker of English in the class. Lucille’s voice is powerful in this context because the students are aware, particularly after Ali’s reminder, that the teacher will soon return and while resisting the norm they are also orienting to it.

Another layer to this interaction, however, is how Ali straddles the space between mother tongue speakers of Finnish (those who speak Finnish at every opportunity) and non-speakers of Finnish. He is negotiating language use on behalf of others as a silent participant in the interaction. Also interesting, is that the subsequent switch to English also marks a topic change. When the boys attend to the English norm, the topic of exploring ditch pipes is dropped and a new topic is taken up which concerns student paintings on the wall of the classroom. It may not be a coincidence that the use of English marks a shift to a topic that is present in the here and now; in the classroom. This attests to the socialized functions of English in this space. The use of Finnish creates solidarity among certain peers, excludes others, and allows for fluent and vivid accounts of out of school activities. When Juha speaks in English in line 12, he is referring to a forest in a painting created by another student and put on display in the classroom. The use of English signals school talk and in turn school is signalled with the use of English.

In the next extract, Lucille again enforces the norm with a different outcome. Lucille is seated at her desk silently braiding a bracelet with fine threads. The desks are organized in a “U” shape and Aleksis is seated on the floor in the middle of the desks. Juha is seated on the opposite side of the “U” from Lucille. When this extract begins, Aleksis calls out to his friend Juha in Finnish and subsequently Lucille gives a directive, which he contests by drawing on mother tongue expertise.

## Extract 6

- 01 Aleksis: (Juha) ↑tuu↓ ((looking toward Juha))  
 ((seated on floor, rises slightly))
- 02 Lucille: speak in English↓ (1.0) ((gaze directed at Aleksis))
- 03 Aleksis: (wh-) what is tuu
- 04 Lucille: come
- 05 Aleksis: no (3.0)  
 ((shakes head emphatically))
- 06 tu (doesn't) mean anything (.)
- 07 [tuu]
- 08 Lucille: [then] >why do you say that<
- 09 Aleksis: well tuu means come (.) but tu doesn't mean anything
- 10 Lucille: than why do you say
- 11 Aleksis: Juha come (I xx for you)
- 12 Teacher: ↑Lu↓cille's sort of a lan↓guage police↓man (1.0)
- 13 °mmhm° ma↑king sure that everyone uses↑
- 14 Katri: English
- 15 Teacher: that's right
- 16 Aleksis: and then (.) in playschool (.) you did (al) uh (the ways)
- 17 make sure that everybody speaks (.) Finnish
- 18 Lucille: (°did not°)
- 19 Student: ((snort))
- 20 Aleksis: (because you didn't even) know (5.0)
- 21 Lucille: (what x x) can I take this off Ms. S
- 22 Teacher: no (.) you hook these through

When Lucille gives a directive to “speak in English” (line 2) she recognizes that “tuu” is a Finnish utterance. In the next turn, Aleksi asks “what is tuu” challenging her interpretation and forcing her to explicate what he has actually said in Finnish. Lucille provides the answer: “come” which is accurate. However, Aleksi utilizes vowel length to deny that “tu” means anything. By denying Lucille’s adequate understanding of what he has said in Finnish, and asserting a superior understanding of his mother tongue, Aleksi reduces Lucille’s authoritative stance. Aleksi resists the enforcement of the English norm here by drawing on his identity as a mother tongue speaker of Finnish and Lucille’s identity as a non-speaker of Finnish. It is her “not knowing” that he uses against her (lines 3-10). He denies her knowledge of Finnish, despite her well grounded assumptions. In spoken Finnish “tuu” with a long vowel means come, just as “tule” means come in written Finnish. An interaction surrounding the enforcement of an English language norm, becomes an interaction about Finnish, and furthermore, an issue of expertise and membership.

Lucille however persists in questioning why he would say something that has no meaning (lines 7-9). One could speculate that it is Lucille’s dogged determination to not be silenced with “unknowing” that extends the interaction, thus drawing the attention of the teacher as she helps another student. At this point, from the other side of the room the teacher directs her comments to me, the researcher, observing that Lucille is “sort of a language policeman” (line 11). The teacher’s upward intonation at the end of “making sure that everyone uses” (line 13) elicits participation from another student (line 14). Lucille’s has been cast in a particular role, and this has been done collaboratively by the teacher and another student to the extent that Aleksi begins the next line with “and then” as though building upon the teacher’s utterance. When Aleksi tells the others that Lucille also monitored language use in preschool, he states that she would “make sure that everybody speak (.) Finnish” (line 17). This is a reformulation of the teacher’s description of what Lucille does in line 12: “making sure that everyone uses”. Instead of producing a description of how Lucille has enforced English, he claims she has enforced the use of Finnish. He offers an account of her actions in preschool, just as the teacher offers an account of her current actions. Although Aleksi’s account of Lucille’s actions is from another earlier context, they make use of the same framework as the teacher, the framework used for explaining Lucille’s actions. This turn functions as an ironic echo, perhaps intended to be humorous, as well as a criticism of Lucille’s activity as a language monitor. Aleksi finishes this account of Lucille’s activities in preschool by stating that she “didn’t even know” (line 19). While this last part of the extract isn’t perfectly clear on audio, it is consistent with the kind of humour Aleksi often employs, stories of the impossible or of the opposite. What is pivotal in the conclusion of this episode however, is the issue of *knowing*. This issue of knowing is the tool that Aleksi uses in resisting Lucille’s enforcement of the norm.

Lucille is collaborating with the teacher to enforce this particular classroom practice. Her role is institutionally co-constructed, in that the teacher does not discourage her from monitoring her peers and in fact calls her, “a language policeman” (line 11). This finding is in line with the work of Toohey (2000) which shows that classroom practices “produce” students as specific kinds of members, such as “ESL” learners, a marker which has varying degrees of importance in particular settings. In this extract we see a reciprocal relationship

between the norm and Lucille, which also contributes to her situated identity in this interaction as not only a “policeman” but as a non-speaker of Finnish. Ironically Lucille demonstrates some knowledge of Finnish in order to monitor its use here, and reportedly she had made excellent progress in her studies at the time. And yet by enforcing the English norm, she inadvertently positions herself as a non-speaker of Finnish, a position that is also attributed to her interactionally by Aleksi. Thus, the inherent contradictions of identity and language choice are revealed. The preface for the norm rests upon an ideology of inclusivity, which conflicts with the social reality of *all* students spending 35-45 minutes daily in either mother tongue, or foreign language Finnish class. Inclusivity as a notion also increases stratification among class members because monitors such as Lucille are required to maintain the norm.

Alexsi uses Finnish as his mother tongue despite spending more years of his life in English speaking countries than in Finland. And yet, and perhaps because of this, he is keenly aware that this English speaking class is a ruse, an exercise, a pocket of monolingual English surrounded by Finnish. English is only used by Aleksi during lessons when there is a unified floor, not when speaking with friends or going outside to the playground, or playing sports.

The next extract features all three focal students during a handicrafts lesson. In the beginning of the extract Lucille attempts to enforce the English norm, and Aleksi resists. Both students employ a number of practices to enforce and to resist the norm, but when Lucille draws on the context, reminding Aleski that they are in “English speaking class,” Ali enters the interaction by playfully coining an English acronym for this term. What follows is much more serious in tone however, as Aleksi and Eerik contest his formulations of the acronym, jointly drawing on mother tongue expertise.

## Extract 7

- 1 Juha: I’m taking yo-ur honey
- 2 Aleksi: (6.0) *musta Alilla olis tommonen parempi ampianen=*  
*I think Ali has a better bee like that*
- 3 Lucille: =SPEAK IN ENGLISH
- 4 Aleksi: (2.0) ° be quiet °  
((turns to Lucille))
- 5 Lucille: =↑what >you have to speak in English<
- 6 Aleksi: ° na I know that °
- 7 Lucille: why do you speak it in ↑Finnish
- 8 Aleksi: why did you say a Finnish word?
- 9 Lucille: (I didn’t)
- 10 Aleksi: hey yo:u did to:o (6.0)
- 11 Juha: (x kind of xx move tape) ((directed at teacher))
- 12 Teacher: okay yeah (1.0) (move the tape)
- 13 Aleksi: hei Juha eiks ooki hyvä ajatus  
*hey Juha isn’t that a good idea*
- 14 Lucille: -speak in English Aleksi  
((Eerik looks up from work to gaze at Lucille))
- 15 Aleksi: (xx)
- 16 Ali: ooh↓ (.) ooh (.) ooooh↑ (6.0)  
((Aleksi looks at Eerik who has turned to face him and they pretend to whisper))
- 17 Lucille: speak in ↑English Aleksi
- 18 this is English (.) s-speaking class

- 19 Ali: E S- E S C yes it is E S C (11.0)  
 ((teacher-student talk in background))  
 20 but in Finnish it is E K ↑L  
 21 Eerik: ee koo äI  
 22 Ali: yes ee koo äI  
 23 Alekski: ee koo al (3.20)  
 24 it's in English it's EKL  
 25 Ali: ee koo äI it's englannin kielen luokka  
 26 Alekski: or EKL  
 27 Ali: yes EKL means that englannin kielen luokka  
 28 Alekski: no that's it is just like that EKL (.) it just is

In lines 1-18 Lucille attempts to enforce the monolingual norm. Lucille gives her first directive in line 3 in a loud sharp voice. Alekski tells her to “be quiet” (line 4) and her response, “what you have to” references the “English only” rule which he must follow in the classroom. Not only does Lucille direct Alekski to use English, she rebukes him for using Finnish (line 7). Alekski’s response: “why did you say a Finnish word” (line 8) echoes her previous utterance “why did you speak it in Finnish.” Lucille treats Alekski’s question as an accusation and denies speaking Finnish. Alekski returns to his conversation with Juha in Finnish in line 13. His actions reiterate his stance that English has no place in his personal conversations (as in Extract 2) while Lucille constructs an authoritative stance based on socialized norms for language use. However, that authority is contested by others as her directives draw the gaze of Eerik (line 14) and other participants become active in the interaction. Eerik pretends to whisper with Alekski, presumably about her and Ali emits an astonished and playful “ooh ooh ooh ooh.” This is either meant to tease or to draw attention to this heated interaction.

In lines 17 and 18 Lucille gives a reason for speaking English, the institutional context; “this is English speaking class”. Lucille’s use of “this is” also conveys *what she knows* and an accompanying degree of certainty, what might be called an epistemic stance on English in this context (Ochs 2002). Two years earlier, when Lucille’s family moved to Finland for work purposes she was placed in an English preschool, the only French speaking student there. She is now one of the most proficient English speakers in this class. Because Lucille invokes the institutional context (line 18), Ali has an opportunity to create an English version of the class’s intuitional label. He playfully creates an acronym for English speaking class, “ESC” (line 19), which is a creation of his own and an alternative to EKL. With this turn, it is possible that Ali is simply thinking aloud or alternatively he may be responding to Lucille and the institutional ideology with a bit of mockery. EKL, the acronym so integral to the identity of the class, is used to label their space and their objects, and it stands in place of a Finnish term for a group of students expected to use only English at school. After an 11 second pause Ali gives the standard acronym used in school, “EKL” and states that this is “in Finnish” (line 20). There is uptake from Eerik, who corrects Ali on what the acronym is in Finnish (line 21). Ali agrees and repeats the acronym with Finnish pronunciation, his display of alignment rejecting the correction. Then Alekski corrects Ali in regards to what is English and what is Finnish (lines 23 and 24). Ali responds with a display of his Finnish knowledge, “ee koo äI it’s englannin kielen luokka” embedded in English syntax thus complying with Lucille and displaying movement between codes. He knows both how to

pronounce the acronym in Finnish *and* what it stands for in Finnish. For two more turns, however, Aleksi makes corrections.

Lines 19 to 28 may be read as a proliferation of language play or an instance of misunderstanding surrounding ESC and EKL and identifying what is English and what is Finnish. The fact that this is a concern and further, a concern that is held for so many turns, is notable. Whereas Ali views English and Finnish as interchangeable and meaning the same thing, Eerik and Aleksi disagree, and draw on their mother tongue expertise in correcting Ali. Ali experiences many languages in many different places. As touched on earlier, Ali's diverse experiences with language use, as one who uses English, Finnish, Bangla, and Arabic for different purposes in daily life, mean that for him the boundaries between languages are less clear, choices are more fluid and varied, and English has uses outside of the school context. One might speculate that for the mother tongue speakers of Finnish in this exchange, English remains and institutional language apart and separate from what things actually mean in Finnish.

## Discussion

This discussion will begin with a summary of the stances of the three focal students in relation to the English norm: Lucille, Aleksi and Ali. I will then touch upon the broader social implications of this monolingual policy and discuss how nuanced peer interpretations of this norm lead to the development of a local framework for interaction. I will conclude with a description of how we might visualize these students as metaphorically positioned in relation to this norm, displaying different degrees of investment in the ideological underpinnings of "EKL".

These students come into opposition when they interpret and manage the institutional monolingual norm differently. The first focal student, Lucille has an interest in promoting the English norm, which gives her resources for communication and inclusion in classroom activities and peer talk. Whereas the teacher enforces the norm by reminding students of the context, "what is the language that we use here," Lucille employs control acts, by giving the directive "speak in English". When Lucille's delivery of the directive does not produce the desired response she then moves to index the context: "this is English speaking class". This is one way that the teacher manages the norm as well, by referencing the setting. The second focal student, Aleksi, views private talk as outside of institutional control. While he is willing to participate in English during lessons, he rejects the use of English in personal talk. Even when a friend addresses him in English as Juha does the final extract, Aleksi initiates a code-switch to Finnish. Aleksi employs a range of creative interactional devices in rejecting both peer and teacher monitoring which include: overt refusal, ignoring enforcement, rejecting the use of English in personal conversation, denying that he has spoken Finnish, and by very boldly attempting to enforce the norm upon teacher interactions. The third focal student, Ali, can be seen as metaphorically situated somewhere between Lucille and Aleksi, who polarize the issue of language use. Only once, does Ali resist Lucille's enforcement of the norm. Code was a non-issue for him in most cases. As a second language speaker of both English and Finnish, neither code comes as easily as his mother



tongue. He moves seamlessly between English and Finnish. His reliance on making contextual choices for code use, may account for his curiosity. What Ali does in these extracts is seek a greater understanding of how and why people use the codes that they do. This active engagement with how language is used by others is shown in this data in several ways; from his expressed interest in the language background of a particular teacher, to the way he parrots the teacher as she enforces a language norm in the classroom.

While these students navigate classroom language norms in diverse and agentive ways, institutional norms are powerful forces which create school practices that regulate what “material, linguistic, social and other mediating resources” are available to students (Toohey 2000: 78). While the English norm is intended to promote inclusivity and use of the target language, it also limits the social functions of language in school. Newcomers to Finland, such as Lucille, have little access to purposeful interactions using Finnish at school with peers. Code choice hence becomes an issue of communicative competence. The use of Finnish in school also becomes a subversive act, giving rise to peer monitoring and further stratifying members of this class. Further, the ways in which Lucille upholds the norm for language use transforms the norm itself. Peer monitoring of language use means that even when the teacher is not present or is otherwise engaged, normative language use is still enforced. This, along with the choices Lucille makes about when to enforce the norm, alters when and how Finnish is acceptable in this class. Alekski also subverts the language norm when peer enforcement is attempted. In some instances he utilizes Finnish language expertise and yet by doing so he orients to the norm and in fact co-constructs (Jacoby & Ochs 1995) Lucille’s role as a “language policeman,” a role which has possible implications for her, including marginalizing her access to membership, and acquiring an undesirable status among peers.

In regards to the institutional role of this language norm, a monolingual English norm in the classroom presents an institutional view of languages as distinct entities. Such norms reinforce linguistic homogeneity and the boundaries between languages (Makoni & Pennycook 2007; Pietikäinen et al. 2008). Much like the Canadian French language high school examined in Heller’s work, institutional linguistic norms may manage a “monolingual public discourse” while ignoring “bilingual marginal discursive spaces” (2006: 17). Further, the normative institutional enforcement of a particular code, conceptualizes the “ideal bilingual” as a “double monolingual” (ibid.: 83). The localized framework for communication in this primary classroom however is more nuanced than the mandated use of English in the classroom. The abundance of multilingual activity in these extracts, culminating in the contested use of an acronym in the final extract, reveal that students deploy linguistic resources at will and that no amount of language monitoring can truly hinder this. Students treat languages as distinct, but only in regards to differentiating which codes should be used where and with whom. Examining Lucille’s role in talk-in-interaction also highlights the skill with which young learners structure the “moral and social order” through the use of language (Goodwin & Kyratzis 2007: 280). Lucille’s use of directives to change the behaviours of others also results in the articulation of underlying norms. For instance, Alekski reveals a stance that personal conversation is exempt from the norm and Ali takes the stance that the use of English is not necessary when the

teacher leaves the room. The resistance of peers offers insight as to how the norm is interpreted and why it is resisted.

Aleksi demonstrates agency in the many ways he contests the English norm. However, one may question if Lucille's enforcement of the norm is agentive. Agency is sometimes equated with action, in that intervention results in an alternate outcome (Giddens 1993) in which case Lucille certainly acts. But more importantly, enforcing the norm is an 'interested' move which gives Lucille voice in this context, both by literally allowing her to participate and figuratively as a learner who can use language agentively (see Canagarajah 2004: 268). The social life of the larger community, the school, and for most of the students operates in Finnish. Code choice is a fundamental aspect of navigating classroom life, one which Lucille is contending with. Ali's use of Finnish in the final extract reveals that despite the English monolingual norm of this classroom, Finnish has a place in this class. While Lucille is characterized as a non-speaker of Finnish institutionally and by her peers, doubt is also cast on Ali in regards to his expertise in Finnish.

In drawing upon multilingual resources in a way that is both agentive and indicative of the sociocultural context, students both take up positions and are positioned in relation to the English norm. If one envisions EKL as a metaphorical sphere, Lucille is positioned at the heart of what "EKL" stands for, Aleksi is not. Lucille is explicitly characterized as a "language policeman" and she is also interactionally positioned as such. She has invested in the norms of this class to the extent that she actively monitors language use. Ali's position on the periphery of this sphere indexes his identity as someone who is not foreign and at the same time, not entirely accepted as "Finnish" by the other students. Ali's inquisitive nature and questioning may mark his quest for full membership, while Aleksi's subversive actions and creative resistance of the norm mark his awareness of how the EKL language program fits into the larger community. Aleksi takes a position outside the sphere as a student who views English as an institutional language and is innately aware of the placement of this class in a Finnish school and a Finnish society. Ali's quest for full-membership can also be seen as an apprenticeship to greater understanding of the context and how language functions here and also to membership among members of a particular group (the Finnish boys). Irrespective, such positions mark only moments in time as the use of language is contextually negotiated by participants in interaction, but such positions shed light on the impact of institutional language ideologies on young learners.

## **Conclusion**

Taking a microethnographic approach has allowed for a detailed investigation of how three learners are positioned and position themselves within interaction in one classroom, in one school, in one community. Diverse personal trajectories of learning and locality intersect in this setting, producing sometimes conflicting reformulations of institutional ideologies of language use among students. Such micro instances of language conflict highlight the way in which institutional norms are not necessarily universally accepted; and exist only in the ways in which they are reproduced continually through interaction. Students reproduce

norms in ways which are compatible with their situated social identity as an individual and as a member of one of many groups in and across this temporal context. Finnish mother-tongue speakers in this setting, such as Alekski, may be seen to hold the legitimate code despite peer sanctions. The tenuous and shifting alliances drawn upon in these interactions extend beyond mother tongue and may also include age, gender and friendship. All three focal students, Alekski, Lucille and Ali, "locate" this English language class differently, struggling with individual and collective understandings of how, when and where English is used.

While this research is conducted in a Finnish-English learning environment, the applications are broader, for "multilingual situations are but special situations of a general situation" (Hymes 1966: 158). This data speaks to contested language practice everywhere, to institutional norms regarding language use, to the ways in which students respond, reproduce, and reject institutional linguistic ideologies, and the different roles students give to languages in their daily lives.

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### **Appendix 1. Transcription conventions**

↓	Falling intonation
↑	Rising intonation
-	Cut-off
> <	Faster tempo
< >	Slower tempo
:	Lengthened vowel
<u>stress</u>	Stressed
LOUD	Loud
(.)	Pause, less than 1s
(1.5)	Length of pause
.hh/hh.	Out-breath/In-breath
[ ]	Overlap
=	Latching turns

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