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Creating a Bilingual Pre-school Classroom: The Multilayered Discourses of a Bilingual Teacher

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Creating a Bilingual Pre-school Classroom: The Multilayered Discourses of a Bilingual Teacher

Teachers have an agentive role as they interpret, evaluate and develop language policies and practices. In the current study we interviewed a bilingual pre-school teacher in Finland during the first year of implementing a new way of working bilingually with a class of monolingual children. Applying nexus analysis (Scollon and Scollon 2004), we explored the teacher discourses on the trajectory of the development of the new approach; the concepts, places and people that were circulating in her reflections; and how these connected with larger societal discourses. The analysis showed that the teacher's new bilingual language practices demanded the renegotiation of previously held personal and professional beliefs. The teacher reflections were aggregates of discourses presenting different perspectives and voices. While her bilingual practices challenged prevailing norms in society – especially those on separating languages in teaching – she also recycled discourses which confirmed the idea of Finland as a society built on parallel monolingualism. We argue that it is important to acknowledge the perspectives of teachers, and that there are all kinds of factors which drive and affect the work of a bilingual pre-school teacher. We also call for cross-cultural studies, as teachers' work is always embedded in a sociolinguistic setting.

Keywords: bilingual pre-school education; teacher reflections; bilingual teacher; nexus analysis; language policies, bilingual practices

Introduction

The current study responds to a call to examine teachers' agentive role as they interpret, evaluate and develop language policies and practices (e.g. Canaragajah 2005; Hornberger and Johnson 2007; Menken and García 2010). As Ricento and Hornberger (1996) stated in formulating their famous onion metaphor over educational language policy and planning processes, the classroom practitioner should be placed at the very centre of the onion. In order to get a complete understanding of how language policies in education are implemented it is, according to Ricento and Hornberger, necessary to take into account and "unpeel" the different and complex layers of agents, levels and processes involved in the policy-making.

At the centre of the onion in the current study we find a bilingual pre-school teacher in Finland who had recently implemented a bilingual approach to working with a class of monolingual children, using both Finnish and Swedish in her communication with them. The practice of using two languages concurrently was new to her, in both professional and private life, and diverged from common language practice within the educational field in Finland as well as from prevailing norms in society. It has already been shown that teachers do sometimes find themselves surrounded by competing and conflicting discourses on different levels, which they have to handle. By way of example, Dubetz and de Jong (2011) showed how teachers may find themselves in contested environments where their notions of best practices for emergent bilinguals contradict those expressed in state policies in education (see also Lemberger 1997).

The teacher was interviewed on three occasions during the first year of her implementation of the new bilingual teaching practices, initially described as *language showers in Swedish*. In the study we use nexus analysis (Scollon and Scollon 2004), a type of ethnographic discourse analysis, as a tool to unpack the complexities (i.e. to “unpeel” the onion layers) within the teacher discourses. Our goals were to identify what factors had a significant impact on her work, to see how she coped with conflicting discourses and expectations and, importantly, to explore how her ways of thinking and working developed in the course of implementing the language showers.

As a background to the empirical study, we present in the following sections previous research on bilingual teachers’ reflections and beliefs and existing gaps in research; nexus analysis as a framework; and the sociolinguistic and educational context of Finland.

Bilingual Teachers’ Reflections and Beliefs

The beliefs held by teachers are intrinsically related to their actions, which in turn guide and influence their beliefs, which thus play an important role in how they carry out their teaching (e.g. Barcelos and Kalaja 2012; Borg 2003). Teacher beliefs can show a complexity and even contradictoriness which pose challenges. For example, Vaish (2012) examined teacher beliefs

regarding bilingualism in an English-medium reading programme in Singapore. Using a combination of surveys, in-depth interviews with and observations of teachers, she found contradictions in beliefs such as that teachers believed in the strict separation of languages in the classroom (creating an English-only environment for non-English speaking students) at the same time as they believed that the use of the student's L1 in the classroom can aid in learning the L2 (English).

Teachers' reflections on second language teaching are regarded as being a critical element in their professional activity (Luttenberg and Bergen, 2008; Walsh 2013). Up to now, a limited number of studies have focused on bilingual teachers' reflections on their classroom practices and experiences (Conteh 2007; DePalma 2010; Lemberger 1997; Mård-Miettinen and Palviainen 2014; Schwartz and Asli 2013; Schwartz, Mor-Sommerfeld, and Leikin 2010). For example, Lemberger (1997) shed light on the complex nature of bilingual teaching. Through the narratives of eight bilingual teachers with diverse backgrounds and working in different educational settings and programmes in the US, Lemberger shared successful language strategies that the teachers applied, as well as challenges they experienced. Lemberger (1997, 137) described the teachers as being 'all fighters, persistent, with a strong sense of self and of their missions as bilingual teachers' and at the same time 'the teachers faced similar attitudes and misunderstandings about their language and culture because of the prevailing monolingual-monocultural societal norms'.

Some research has been done on teachers' bilingual language practices in pre-school contexts (e.g. Gort and Pointier 2012) but more rarely on pre-school teachers' reflections on their own professional activity. Schwartz, Mor-Sommerfeld, and Leikin (2010), however, showed how bilingual teachers in Russian-Hebrew speaking pre-schools in Israel became aware through reflection of a need for theoretical knowledge for teaching in a bilingual classroom, rather than simply relying on instinct and trial and error.

In the light of what has been said above, we can identify certain gaps in the research that need to be filled. First, we argue for the importance of research on teachers' reflections, experiences and beliefs, since these often contribute to educational and social change (e.g. Ricento and Hornberger 1996). In particular there is a lack of studies on bilingual teachers in this respect. Secondly, although the pre-school stage is one of the first important transitional steps from home to the social environment and socialization of the child, little is known about pre-school bilingual education. Indeed, pre-school bilingual education often falls between two more established areas of research: that on early bilingual language acquisition (e.g. De Houwer 2009) on the one hand, and that on bilingual education in primary and secondary schools (e.g. García 2009) on the other. Thirdly, we need to reconsider the methodologies to be used to map teacher beliefs and experiences within the larger sociolinguistic processes in which they are embedded. Vaish (2012), for example, pointed out the dominance of psychological studies of teacher beliefs, in which quantitative surveys typically are used as instruments, and called for more sociolinguistic approaches and methods. In the current ethnographic study we combine teacher observations and interviews and apply discourse analysis as a tool to understand the complexities.

Teacher discourse as a nexus

Nexus analysis is about identifying and understanding the various factors influencing a social action and mapping the relevant discourses that are circulating at a given moment (Scollon and Scollon 2004). As Lemberger (1997, 10–11) noted, numerous factors on different levels can affect the work of a bilingual teacher: society (e.g. policies on different levels, bilingual programme models, research, teacher certification); the community (e.g. parents, health and social services); the school (e.g. administration, the principal, teachers, the curriculum); and the classroom (e.g. students, teaching and assessment practices). In addition, the teacher's own personal experiences may be crucial: their family and childhood, pedagogical training, other work experiences, language skills, emotional and philosophical orientations, attitudes to bilingualism, and cultural identity issues, for

instance. By performing a nexus analysis, the researcher draws attention to the factors or discourses that are relevant or foregrounded in the data explored; in this case, the reflections of a bilingual teacher.

In nexus analysis, social action, i.e. ‘any action taken by an individual with reference to a social network’ (Scollon and Scollon, 2004, 11), is at the core and is examined as a *nexus*. It is nested and multilayered in both time and space; broader social issues and micro-actions, as well as discourses emanating from different points in time, come together in one and the same nexus (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 14). The nexus is found at the intersection of *the historical body* of the participant(s) – the personal experience, habits, beliefs and attitudes within an individual; *the interaction order* – social arrangements, interactional rules and the setting; and *the discourses in place* – discourses of all kinds that circulate through the nexus (see Figure 1). That is, all the elements are always involved and affect the nexus.

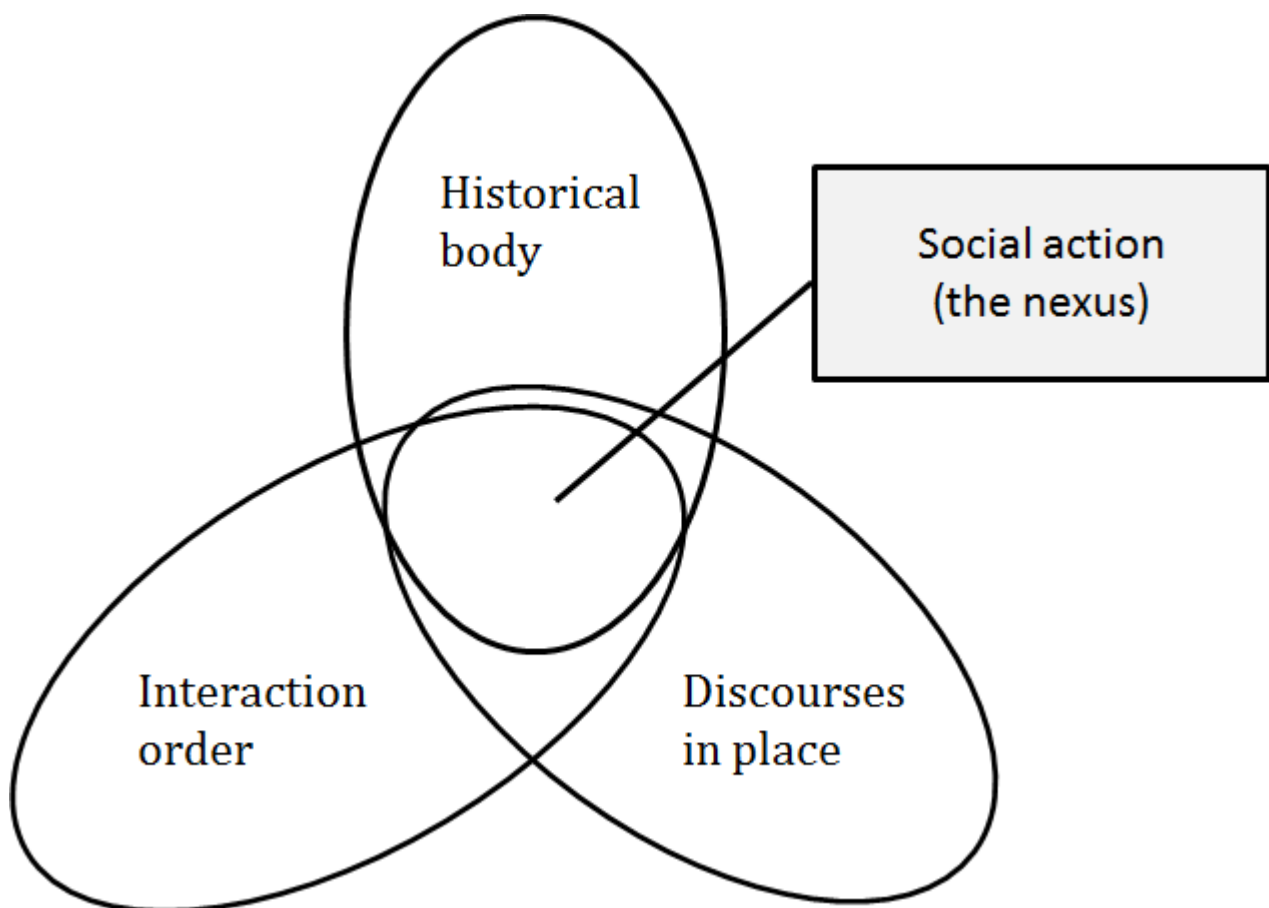


Figure 1: The three elements of social action. (Adapted from Scollon and Scollon [2004, 154].)

In the current study, the teacher and her reflections constitute the nexus. The focus is on identifying the discourses in place, i.e. the concepts, places and people the teacher mentions as critical elements in her process of implementing the new bilingual practices in her pre-school classroom. We also examine the role of the historical body, such as the beliefs held, in this process.

In the current study, we connect the micro-actions of the teacher on the one hand with large-scale social discourses on the other. This perspective is often lacking (see however e.g. Johnson 2009; Johnson and Freeman 2010; Ricento 2000). Within a nexus analysis framework, Hult (2012) has shown how pre-service English language teachers in Sweden during their teacher training recycled and negotiated language policy discourses from the national curricula. Lane (2010) used conversations and sociolinguistic interviews as the basis for an analysis of a language shift in a Kven community in northern Norway. She was able to show how large-scale discourses, such as national language policies and language attitudes, over time became internalised and forced action in terms of language choice in individuals. In a study on family language policies, Palviainen and Boyd (2013) combined interviews and video-recorded observations of three bilingual Finnish-Swedish families in Finland which all included children between 3 and 4 years of age. The nexus analysis showed how family language policies were co-constructed and negotiated by the family members through their everyday practices. Moreover, certain societal discourses were recycled by the parents, such as that bilingualism is inherently good and natural, and that for children bilingual simultaneous acquisition is effortless.

Despite its applicability in connecting discourses from interviews with larger societal discourse cycles, nexus analysis has, however, seldom been applied to language teacher discourse. To our knowledge, the current study is the first one to apply nexus analysis in a pre-school teacher context.

The Socio-political and Educational Context of Finland

In order to situate the teacher's reflections in a broader context, let us now turn briefly to a description of the history and status of Finnish and Swedish in Finland, and of the Finnish educational system.

The Status of Finnish and Swedish

Finland was an integral part of Sweden for six centuries until in 1809 it became an autonomous Grand Duchy under the Russian tsars. It gained its independence from Russia in 1917. Swedish was an important language throughout these times and the Constitution of Finland, drawn up in 1919, declares that Finnish and Swedish are the official languages of Finland. Swedish is formally an official language equal to Finnish, but it is a minority language in terms of number of speakers: in 2013, of the total Finnish population of 5.5 million people, 89.3 % were registered as Finnish speakers and 5.3 % as Swedish speakers (Official Statistics of Finland 2013). A majority of the municipalities or local authorities are officially monolingual Finnish-speaking; the remainder are either bilingual or monolingual Swedish-speaking. Although many citizens are bilingual, the Finnish societal system is to a large extent built on separate Swedish- and Finnish-speaking institutions, which can be described as a system of parallel monolingualism (Heller 1999). Following these principles, Finnish-medium as well as Swedish-medium pre-schools and schools use one main language as the medium of instruction and all other languages are taught as separate subjects.

Debates about Language Education

Although the fact that Finland is a bilingual country is most often regarded as positive and enriching, there are certain political movements arguing for reducing the status and space of Swedish in Finland (Palviainen 2013). Since the late 1960s there has been an ongoing debate on the

fact that Swedish is a mandatory subject in all Finnish-medium schools (and Finnish in Swedish-medium schools) (see e.g. Hult and Pietikäinen 2014). The Finnish word *pakkoruotsi*, which literally means 'compulsory Swedish', now has inseparable connotations of resentment and hostility to the subject.

In recent years, a new debate has emerged as to whether bilingual Finnish-Swedish schools should be established in addition to the current Finnish or Swedish ones, to serve the fast-growing number of children from bilingual families. Those arguing against bilingual schools often refer to the need to protect the minority language (Swedish) and, over time, see a risk of a language shift: monolingual use of the majority language (Finnish). Proponents of bilingual Finnish-Swedish schools tend to see bilingual schools as a means of increasing contact between the two distinct language groups and of encouraging individuals to learn the other language. (See Boyd and Palviainen 2015 for a comprehensive analysis of the debate.)

Educational language debates in Finland are only rarely and implicitly concerned with pre-school education. For early bilingual language development, however, there is a consensus that the best way to raise bilingual children in families where parents have different first languages is by using a one person – one language (OPOL) strategy (e.g. Ronjat 1913; Barron-Hauwaert 2004) and by consistency in language use (Palviainen and Boyd 2013). The ideology of separating languages in both educational and family contexts is thus strong in Finland, especially as regards Finnish and Swedish.

Pre-primary Education

In Finland, the municipalities are obliged to provide early childhood education and care (ECEC) for all children under school age (<7 years). ECEC comprises day care for children under the age of six and pre-school for six-year-olds. In this article, however, we use 'pre-school' to refer to the pre-primary education provided for children aged 1-6 years. Governed by legislation, ECEC must be provided in the official languages of Finland: Finnish, Swedish and Sámi (mainly offered in the Sámi region in northern Finland in government-funded language nests). ECEC should also support

the language and culture of children with a Romany background or an immigrant background, as well as of those using sign language (NCCPE 2010). Most of the ECEC units in Finland are, however, either Finnish-medium or Swedish-medium units targeting monolingual Finnish- and Swedish-speaking children, respectively. A typical ECEC group in Finland has 20–25 children and 3–4 staff members (kindergarten teachers, social educators, nurses, day care assistants, etc.). Children are either grouped by age, or placed in mixed age groups.

Language Immersion and Foreign Language ECEC

The most established form of provision of ECEC in the children's L2 in Finland is early total Swedish immersion for monolingual Finnish-speaking children starting from the age of three years (see e.g. Björklund, Mård-Miettinen, and Savijärvi 2014). Immersion ECEC is a programme-based approach with certain internationally acknowledged core features for language allocation, language use and pedagogy. With regard to language use, immersion education strongly builds on the teachers functioning as monolingual language models applying the principle of one person – one language; this is to maximise L2 input and to motivate the children to start using the immersion language (for a comprehensive discussion, see Swain and Lapkin 2013). In addition to Swedish immersion for Finnish speakers, some ECEC units in Finland operate entirely or partly in a foreign language. There are some private ECEC units (partly subsidised by the local authorities) that operate e.g. in Russian, French and German, mainly in the Helsinki region. However, most of the ECEC units that operate in a foreign language in Finland use English and adopt a CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach (Lehti, Järvinen, and Suomela-Salmi 2006). The framework of CLIL ranges from immersion-like high-intensity long-term programmes to low-intensity short-term forms which are in Finland called 'language showers'. The concept of 'language showers' is central to the study we will present below. According to Nikula and Marsh (1997, 24-26) and Mehistö, Marsh, and Frigols (2008, 13), language showers are weekly or daily foreign language activities intended to familiarise children with a foreign language and to develop

positive attitudes to language learning. Language showers include the use of the foreign language in games, songs, visuals, the handling of objects, and movement, for 30 to 60 minutes per day, or less. Although some research has been carried out on the connections between teacher beliefs and the implementation of e.g. CLIL (see e.g. Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer, and Smit 2013), little is known about teachers' experiences of and reflections on language showers.

The Study

Study Design

The current study was part of a larger, ethnographically informed research project in which a new and original way of providing language showers in Swedish for Finnish-speaking pre-school children was monitored over a period of two years. The idea of providing language showers was first put forward by the head of a pre-school unit and they were then implemented and developed by a bilingual teacher.

Following the procedures of nexus analysis (Scollon and Scollon 2004), ethnographic data were collected in order to *engage*, i.e. to recognise and identify, the full research nexus (153-159): video-recordings of teacher-child classroom interaction; field observations; interviews with the teacher, superior, parents and children; parental questionnaires; and text documents (pre-school curricula, meeting protocols and newspaper advertisements). These data are used to describe the study context below. To *navigate* the nexus of the current study (i.e. the bilingual teacher and her discourses), however, the focus and analysis moved to the teacher interview data collected during the first year of the implementation of the new language showers (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 159-177).

Research Questions

The research questions guiding the analyses of the teacher interview data in the current study were:

- 1) How can the process of implementing the language showers be described?
- 2) What concepts, places and people circulate in the teacher's discourses and stand out as important in her work? and
- 3) How are the teacher's micro-actions related to larger sociolinguistic macro-discourses?

The participant

The teacher, Johanna, was a bilingual kindergarten teacher with 20 years' experience of Swedish-medium and Finnish-medium ECEC in Finland and in Sweden, as well as Swedish immersion ECEC in Finland. She grew up in Sweden in a Finnish-speaking family and went to an ordinary Swedish school. She completed a lower degree in childcare in Sweden, moved to Finland, and completed a Bachelor's degree in the field of childhood education in Swedish in Finland. She also did a module in pre-primary and primary education for pre-school teachers in a Finnish-medium university, and she enrolled in in-service courses on immersion education. By the time of the interviews she had lived and worked in a Finnish-dominated area of Finland for over 15 years. She was married to a Finnish speaker and they had raised their two children bilingually implementing the one person – one language principle.

The Pre-school Setting

The ECEC unit studied was situated in an official Finnish-speaking municipality, inland. The municipality had around 130,000 inhabitants, of whom around 300 were registered as Swedish speakers. The ECEC unit housed two sections: a Finnish-medium section – the class under study – with room for 22 Finnish-speaking children aged 1-6, and a Swedish-medium section for 25 children from Swedish-speaking (or Swedish/Finnish-speaking bilingual) families. The two sections operated separately but were led by the same director, a Finnish speaker with some skills in Swedish. The Finnish-medium section had a staff of three at the time of the study: one bilingual pre-school teacher, one Finnish-speaking pre-school teacher and one Finnish-speaking nurse.

Launching the Language Showers

In 2012, the head of the ECEC suggested that a bilingual teacher should arrange some Swedish activities for and with the Finnish-speaking children in the Finnish-medium section, starting out from the language shower idea. The underlying idea was to promote the minority language, Swedish, among the majority Finnish speakers, and to raise the Swedish profile of the whole ECEC unit. In the spring an advertisement was therefore published in a local Finnish newspaper inviting Finnish-speaking families to apply for 'language shower activities' in Swedish. The activities were described to families as a form of ECEC inspired by early immersion but in a 'less intensive' version (text translated from Finnish):

Language shower activities mean a less intensive approach than language immersion, just to become familiar with Swedish. In a language shower kindergarten, at least one Swedish-speaking kindergarten teacher organises different types of learning activities in Swedish as part of the Finnish-medium early childhood education and care. In a language immersion kindergarten, all the learning and activities take place in Swedish and children are gradually introduced to Swedish through a scaffolding approach.

Several families responded to the call and Johanna was appointed to plan and implement the activities. As is evident from the advertisement, the aims, goals and scope of the language showers were rather vague to begin with. At the planning stage, Johanna thought about how to work with the language showers and what methods to employ in them. Her own teaching background was in classes in which she had acted only as a monolingual language model. During the planning phase, she visited other ECEC units (including one English CLIL pre-school classroom) and read about language showers in Finland. Johanna and the head of the ECEC unit also had an informal meeting with an expert in bilingualism in order to discuss ideas. When Johanna introduced the new approach in the early autumn, she used Swedish and Finnish throughout the day and in all types of ECEC

activities, thus abandoning the traditional ways of implementing language showers. She eventually abandoned the very label ‘language shower’ and instead referred to the approach as ‘bilingual pedagogy’ – ‘pedagogy implemented through two languages’ (in Swedish: ‘pedagogik på två språk’). The approach was an example of what García (2009, 310) would call a ‘flexible multiple bilingual arrangement’, mainly based on responsible code-switching. Johanna monitored her own language use and chose which language to use according to certain principles: for example, she used Finnish when engaging in abstract discussions, calling for attention, and in emotionally loaded situations, and Swedish when discussing concrete topics and topics she knew the children could follow. Below is a transcript¹ from one of the video-recordings where she is instructing a group of three-year-olds on how to bake gingerbread biscuits (example translated and adapted from Mård-Miettinen and Palviainen [2014, 328]).

now we’ll bake gingerbread biscuits wait a moment I will put out a share of dough (.) **let’s put it there to rest** (.) **and knives these knives are only for adult use what do I need that knife for do you think?** (.) **wait do you know?** (a child speaks) wait **everyone will get to bake and will get to bake in peace but mmm let me first tell you how we are going to do this** (.) I’ll take out a knife (takes a knife) and then I’ll cut like this (cuts the dough in half) okay hey wait now I have two pieces one and two and there are one two three four kids (gently taps the children’s heads while counting) **hey** now I’ll do it this way (cutting) one two three and four (.) now it’s enough isn’t it?

The methods included plenty of contextual and linguistic support (scaffolding structures) (see e.g. García 2009, 329–336).

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary data for the current discourse analysis were three teacher interviews carried out during the first year of the implementation of the language showers. The first one took place when the teacher had been applying her bilingual language practices for 4 months. The interview was of the

stimulated recall type: a videotape showing her interacting with children in the classroom functioned as a stimulus for the teacher to recall her “motivations and thought processes during the original event” (Gass and Mackey 2000, 25). Although the focus of the stimulus recall event was on the teacher explaining her bilingual use in the actual recording, she often digressed into other topics related to the implementation of the language showers. In conducting interviews and interpreting data, the researcher is a social actor and a part of the nexus examined (cf. Scollon and Scollon 2004, 156). In the stimulated recall situation, however, the researcher who was present had a fairly passive role as a listener and mainly only spoke to ask for clarification. As the time allowed for this first interview was too limited, the interview was resumed a month later (the delay caused by the intervening Christmas holidays). The last interview was conducted soon after the second; it was semi-structured, focusing particularly on the teacher’s reflections on her role as an educator (see Lahtinen [2013] for details). The interviews lasted for approximately three hours in total, were transcribed and have in this article been translated into English.

In analysing (i.e., navigating) the data, we employed an inductive approach (Lane 2010). We first identified two major and recurring discourses in the teacher’s accounts: one was about language separation and the other about the objectives of the way of working with the language showers. In the next stage, following nexus analysis procedures and responding to the research questions, we mapped and unpacked the complexities of the relevant discourses on the historical trajectories within these two major discourses, as well as on the concepts, places and people that stood out as significant in them (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 159-160). We further mapped the teacher discourses (micro) with larger societal discourses (macro) to show how they circulated through the same nexus. In what follows, after analysis of the two discourses we zoom out and provide a summary of the development we found in the process of implementing the language showers .

Nexus Analysis of the Two Teacher Discourses

The Language Separation Discourse

Johanna stressed as important principles in her new language practices the equal use of the two languages and the avoidance of direct translation between them (Mård-Miettinen and Palviainen 2014). She frequently addressed the issue of how she had changed her language practices from language separation (i.e., the monolingual use of either Finnish or Swedish) to alternation between the two languages. From the following extract from one of the interviews it becomes clear not only that the teacher previously used to practise language separation in both her professional and her private life, but also that the change of practices involved a quite radical change of beliefs for her (the teacher quotes are available in the original language as a supplementary file to the online article at <http://www.tandfonline.com/rlae>):

this [=moving back and forth between the two languages] is something I used to have huge problems with because I always thought one person one language one place one language I am bilingual myself I have always spoken Swedish to my children and I have worked in Swedish-medium pre-schools and I have worked in language immersion pre-schools so it has been completely (.) for me to understand that this is *allowed* (.) [---] I had *such* big trouble [with it]

The quotation illustrates that the means she had used before to separate Finnish from Swedish had been deeply submerged in her practice (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 163); it was not something she had questioned at all until she was appointed to give children language showers, and she needed to think about how to do it. In the passage she refers to three different roles she had had (as a bilingual speaker, as a parent, and as a teacher) and to three different contexts in which she had been active in the past (her family, a Swedish-medium pre-school, and an immersion pre-school). In all these roles and contexts, Johanna says, she had adhered to principles of language separation (i.e. ‘one person–one language’ or ‘one place–one language’). She had then found out that there was an alternative to

the strict separation of languages and reported that this change in practices and ways of thinking was, to begin with, quite hard to accept ('for me to understand that this is allowed ... I had such big trouble').

In nexus analysis terms, what Johanna described here were radical changes in her historical body. She metaphorically described her process of changing attitudes as 'having to put other glasses on'; she had to deconstruct old beliefs and open the way for new ones to be constructed (Woods 1996). In the following extract, Johanna made explicit her shift from a belief that the concurrent use of two languages confuses children to the view that children can manage and understand quite well when one speaker uses multiple languages:

for sure I had, to begin with, that kind of thought that one person one language that how could I speak two languages two languages so that it doesn't cause confusion or anything like that but then I got these things turned around in my head by [name of expert] that 'for today's children it's completely normal that a person may speak two or why not three languages and make him-/herself understood' [---] it has really turned out that the children don't find it strange at all that I speak Finnish and Swedish [---] 'oh my, it works this way too (.) in this way too if we think of language learning'

In describing how the shift happened, she reproduced an authoritative voice – an utterance from the expert she met before launching the language shower – and pointed out its importance for changing the direction of her thinking (cf. 'I got these things turned around'). A similar voice was heard in the previous quotation; someone or something had mediated that bilingual practices in the classroom are 'allowed'. It becomes further evident that, contrary to her presuppositions, these monolingual children did not find her bilingual language practices awkward or difficult. Her last expressive statement – 'oh my, it works this way too' – reflects her surprise as well as the insight that the

bilingual language practices she began to use worked out as a perfectly viable alternative to a monolingual approach.

The concept of ‘one person–one language’ (see e.g. Barron-Hauwaert 2004) was frequently repeated. In the extract below, the teacher refers to colleagues working in the Swedish-medium minority language section in the same ECEC building and presents their voice to show their strong commitment to the OPOL principle:

but I know that even within our building that it is (.) [colleagues think] that ‘no (.) that no [it should be] one language one person’

Johanna presented the voice of her colleagues (‘no it should be one language one person’) to illustrate their objections to her bilingual practices. In this short quotation we thus find a shared physical space (i.e. the pre-school building), shared by people (colleagues) who have divergent beliefs about the most appropriate language practice in pedagogical contexts (i.e. OPOL or the concurrent use of two languages by one teacher). These conflicting discourses have also been described elsewhere in contexts of bilingual education (see e.g. Creese and Blackledge 2010). Language separation as a pedagogy and practice have long traditions – as discussed earlier, it is also firmly established in Finnish societal and educational contexts – and have proven to be effective in many contexts (see e.g. Björklund, Mård-Miettinen, and Savijärvi 2014). However, more recently practitioners and researchers have come to question language separation as the only pedagogy and practice and have called for more flexible, hybrid, multilingual approaches in the classroom (e.g. García 2009; Weber 2014). This kind of ideological clash, which is richly represented in Johanna’s accounts, thus circulated through the same nexus as larger cycles of social organisation and discourse.

The teacher had worked earlier in the Swedish-medium section of this same ECEC unit, and in the passage below she reflects on the different language policies and practices in these two environments:

actually I notice that I kind of think that the two languages are *equal* that they (.) that on the *Swedish* [pre-school] side one had that kind of that one tries to make that language [=Swedish] as active as possible that one kind of really tries to *draw* it out so that you get responses in Swedish but *here* [=in this classroom] that is cool (.) it is equally correct whether you respond in Finnish or in Swedish (.) and the *calmness* that you find in yourself in doing that

The teacher refers to the different roles she has had in these two environments and to two different interaction orders (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 13). The teacher says in the quotation that when working in the minority-language context she needed to use certain strategies and even (mildly) force the children in order to have them respond in and use the minority language, Swedish (cf. ‘draw ... out ... responses’, the word ‘draw’ phonologically stressed). At the same time as she made it clear that she found it an important principle that both languages were equal, she also said that she felt that they did not have the same status in the Swedish-medium section. In the new teaching context (‘here [in this classroom]’) she was not responsible for developing productive language skills in Swedish and preparing the children for a Swedish-medium school. She declared that in that context, ‘it is equally correct whether you respond in Finnish or in Swedish’. In referring to an inner state (‘the calmness you find in yourself’) she showed an acceptance of and satisfaction with a language policy that admits bilingual practices on the part of both the teacher and the children. Still, she was aware of different contexts and needs (i.e. interaction orders): ‘but I do understand that the objectives are completely different here [in the Finnish-medium majority language section] than they are there [in the Swedish-medium minority language section]’. These comments show how her everyday work on a micro level connected with sociolinguistic and sociopolitical issues on a macro level. She realised that a minority language needs to be protected and supported in a region where

the dominance of the majority language is overwhelming, whereas adding some knowledge of a minority language to the repertoire of speakers of a majority language is not subject to the same kind of pressures. Thus, working as a pre-school teacher of (bilingual) minority language-speaking children offers different challenges and pedagogical demands from working bilingually with (monolingual) majority language speakers who are going to continue their schooling in the majority language.

The Objectives Discourse

Another major teacher discourse was about the objectives of the language shower activities. The original description of the language showers and their aims was rather vague and superficial and the interviews revealed that for Johanna, forming the objectives and identifying how to achieve them were on-going preoccupations. Two significant objectives kept recurring in her discourses; *to familiarise the children with Swedish* and *to develop positive language attitudes*, both core characteristics of language shower practices (Mehistö, Marsh, and Frigols 2008; Nikula and Marsh 1997). We will start by analysing the first of these two objectives and by presenting an extract from our interviews that is truly multi-layered (bold text originally in Finnish):

it is like this **definition** we agreed on **familiarising the children with Swedish** and not that I just sing a song or make a rhyme but it is more functional

Several minor discourses and recycled concepts are embedded in this short quote. Firstly, the teacher defined the objectives of the language shower activities ('familiarising the children with Swedish') using Finnish formulations although the interview was otherwise carried out in Swedish. The Finnish wording – *ruotsin kieleen tutustuminen* – was reproduced and recycled from the advertisement (written in Finnish) directed at Finnish-speaking families before the new way of working was introduced (see previous section). This objective, also literally translated into Swedish (*att bli bekant med svenskan*), frequently recurred in the interviews, evidencing its importance to

her own language practices. It also showed how the teacher's discourses about classroom practices intertwine with written language policy texts (cf. Hult 2012).

Secondly, in referring to the goal-setting process, Johanna used the inclusive pronominal reference 'we' to signal that there were other people involved besides Johanna herself. Later in the interview she explained who these people were:

those were the objectives we put up *together* they were not *my* objectives but that it (.) well on behalf of the ECEC unit my boss and then in turn her boss [said] that 'if to *start* this [activity] you have to have some kind of *goal* for it' (.) but it was kind of diffuse and that was actually good

The goal-setting was thus a joint venture and the formulation of an explicit goal a requirement set by her superiors in order for the language showers to get started in the first place. The quote shows that the implementation process involved several layers, as in the onion metaphor of Ricento and Hornberger (1996): the teacher, the head of the ECEC unit and the director of all ECEC units in the area all needed to agree on the objectives. Johanna further admitted vagueness in the goals, but at the same time she appreciated the independence and flexibility this gave her to develop her own methods, practices and means to achieve the goals.

Thirdly, Johanna recycled content which is at the very core of language shower practices: learning a language through the singing of songs and saying of rhymes. To be more exact, she made use of these formulations in order to define what she was *not* doing (see also Lahtinen 2013). Instead, she argued for the application of a 'more functional' approach. Later in the interview, she elaborated on what she meant by 'functional' (Finnish original speech bolded):

it is more like **becoming familiar [with Swedish] through everyday activities** (.) but to start with it was a lot of you know **rhymes and songs** and I had some problems with that because when you are kind of supposed to *learn* a language (.) that it becomes mechanical when it is

kind of only through songs and jingles and rhymes because they will not have any *meaning* [to the child] that I have been more into their *understanding* what the words mean

To her, 'functional' meant 'becoming familiar [with Swedish] through everyday activities' which led to the children coming round to 'understanding what the words mean' (the word 'understanding' phonologically stressed). Again, she expressed her doubts about using rhymes and songs as a means, because she found them too mechanical and thought that they did not make sense to the children. The quote also shows a time trajectory in which methods typical of language showers were the point of departure ('to start with it was a lot of'), through a phase of questioning ('but I had some problems') to current practices ('I have been more into').

Finally, the objective of the language shower activities, 'to familiarise the children with Swedish', shows that Johanna had only modest expectations for the children's language learning. In the previous quotation, above, she expressed hesitation about the very concept of learning, at least when it comes to using rhymes and songs as a method. Whether the activities should just be about getting the children familiar with Swedish or whether they should go further so that they actually learnt the language became a subject of increased inner negotiation at a certain point in time. Johanna described a period after the language shower had been running for about two months when she experienced a sense of losing control over the situation. She said that many parents had started enthusiastically reporting to her about their children's fast progress in producing some Swedish at home, and some parents had even asked if the language shower outcomes would mean that their children could enter a Swedish-medium school. The positive feedback led to the ECEC unit director encouraging Johanna to develop her methods to enhance the learning of Swedish even more, and these increased expectations at this stage caused her some stress. The quote below illustrates this process and also how she finally coped with the situation:

but then they [=the children] got to know some Swedish so *fast* so then it was like ‘okay they *understand* what the word “mjölk” [=milk] means’ [---] (.) but also *learning* Swedish (.) *but* ‘we are not to make them bilinguals or Swedish-speakers’ that then kind of ‘hey (makes a clicking sound with her tongue) now get back here’ and that was a great relief when you got back on the ground again

The quote richly represents the teacher’s inner speech and it illustrates the negotiation she had with herself about whether she should expand the initial modest goals of the language shower activities to include more ambitious ones: ‘okay they understand what the word “mjölk” means ... but also learning Swedish’ (the latter phrase uttered with a questioning tone of voice and the word ‘learning’ stressed). Then, as it seems from her inner dialogue, a turning point occurred when she states: ‘but we are not to make them bilinguals or Swedish-speakers’. By the use of the inclusive pronoun ‘we’, she reminded herself that the language goal set up by her and her superiors for the language shower activities was not to teach the Finnish children enough Swedish to become bilingual speakers or to prepare them for a Swedish-medium school. In uttering ‘hey now get back here’ she directed herself mentally to the more modest, original goals of the language shower activities. The end result of the negotiation with herself was a sense of relief, and the feeling that she was in control of the situation again.

By reminding herself that the children were to continue in a Finnish-medium school – in contrast to the bilingual/Swedish-speaking children in her previous class in the Swedish-medium section, who were being prepared for a Swedish-medium school – she managed to adhere to the curriculum and the Finnish system of structural parallel monolingualism. We can notice here the ‘ethnification’ and explicit division of individuals into different language groups (‘Swedish-speakers’, ‘Finnish-speakers’, ‘bilinguals’ etc.) which are characteristic of the Finnish context (cf. Boyd and Palviainen 2015).

The second objective recurring in her discourse was the shaping of positive language attitudes:

and that thing about two languages on an *equal* footing (.) I think I have a vague intention somewhere in the back of my head (.) that the languages must not become *negative* that it should be more of a fun and positive thing that ‘oh one can speak like this as well’ that ‘there is something called Sweden and Swedish’ (.) to make a *positive* impact

In this quote, we find a repetition of the discourse *equality between languages* (cf. previous section). Finnish and Swedish should be ‘on an equal footing’ and neither of them should be emphasised at the expense of the other. She wanted to raise the children’s awareness about the country Sweden and the language spoken there. In doing this, she used her personal historical body – brought up in Sweden in a Finnish-speaking family – as the frame of reference rather than Finland and the Swedish spoken by Swedish-speaking Finns. Johanna wanted to work against negative attitudes and instead promote languages (in the plural) as something ‘fun and positive’ and she wanted to ‘make a positive impact’. As discussed previously, some societal discourses on language learning in Finland – especially in connection with Swedish as a compulsory school subject for Finnish speakers – tend to throw up negative views, ‘compulsion’, ‘uselessness’ and ‘lack of motivation’. In the quote, Johanna stresses the words ‘negative’ and ‘positive’. This is an example of how broader social issues appear in the teacher’s discourse and how they serve as a driving force for her to aim for social change (Scollon and Scollon 2004).

A closer analysis of the key concepts which appeared in Johanna’s discourses reveals that she generally discussed concepts as opposites (e.g. ‘languages must not become negative ... it should be ... a positive thing’; or languages as ‘equal’ in contrast to ‘unequal’). This was also true for her descriptions of her way of working, as we will see in the following section. Hence, to define to herself what she *was* doing, it seemed important to her to clarify what she was *not* doing.

Trajectory of Development

The teacher's accounts of the process of implementation of the language shower activities reveal two main, interrelated trajectories of development. The first one concerns how the initial objectives and the scope were adjusted over time, and the second one describes how the teacher's language practices developed. In both trajectories, the teacher's renegotiation of her beliefs served as a force for change (Barcelos and Kalaja 2012).

With regard to the first trajectory, the initial objectives that were set up were to familiarise monolingual Finnish-speaking children with a minority language – Swedish – and to create positive attitudes towards Swedish. While the objective of familiarisation was maintained all through the language shower project, the ways of achieving this changed. The teacher believed that sticking only to songs and rhymes means that the children do not really grasp the language ('it becomes mechanical') whereas an immersion-like functional learning-by-doing approach ('through every day activities') makes sense to them (see e.g. Björklund, Mård-Miettinen, and Savijärvi 2014). She therefore started to use Finnish and Swedish to a similar extent throughout the day. At one point she began to ask herself whether the objectives should be adjusted to be about her teaching (and the children learning) Swedish, but she decided to stick to the initial, more modest objectives (familiarisation and mediating understanding) agreed upon at the start. It was important to her to stress that both languages – Finnish and Swedish – were equally important, so it can be argued that the initial objective of creating positive attitudes towards and foregrounding the new language (Swedish) was adjusted to be about mediating positive attitudes to and consciousness about languages in general. Figure 2 shows how the goals and scope of the approach initially labelled as a 'language shower' over time changed to implementation of 'bilingual pedagogy'.

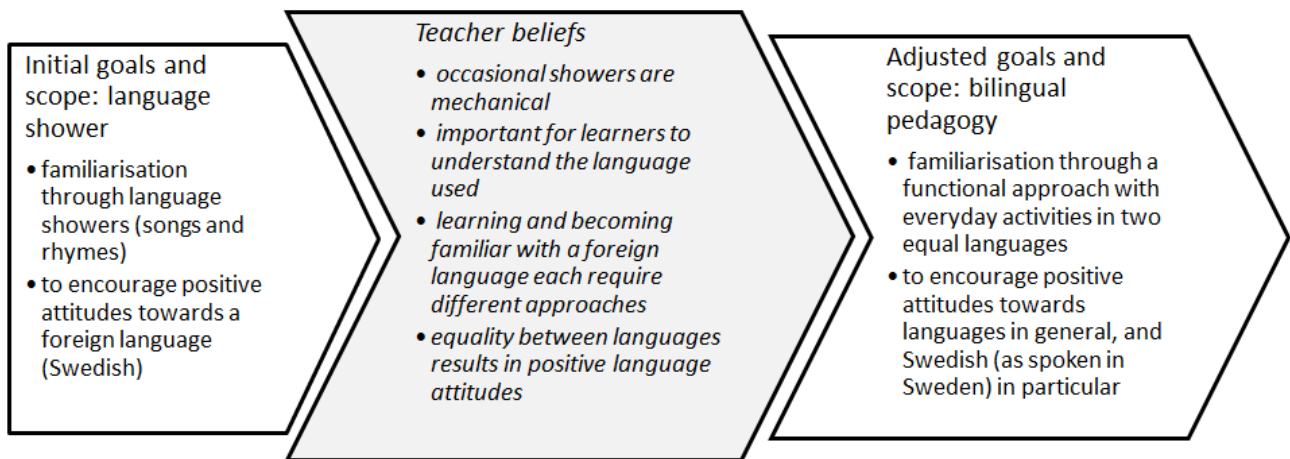


Figure 2: Trajectory of goals and scope of the approach initially labelled as a *language shower in Swedish*.

Intertwined with the objectives trajectory, we see how the teacher's discourses about her language *practices* radically changed over time (see Figure 3). Before she embarked on her new way of working she had a firm belief in and personal as well as professional experience of the importance of keeping languages separate in order to maximise children's language learning and prevent confusion. However, once she began the new way of working, she found herself faced with a practical dilemma: it would not be easy to maintain language separation by person (OPOL) either with the language shower ideas or with the functional approach she wanted to use. She thus had to reconsider her previously established beliefs and practices in order to start using two languages in the classroom. In this phase, she had ideological struggles with herself (and expressed a need to 'put

other glasses on') and only after getting the green light from an expert on bilingualism did she find her way of working bilingually and experience any relief.

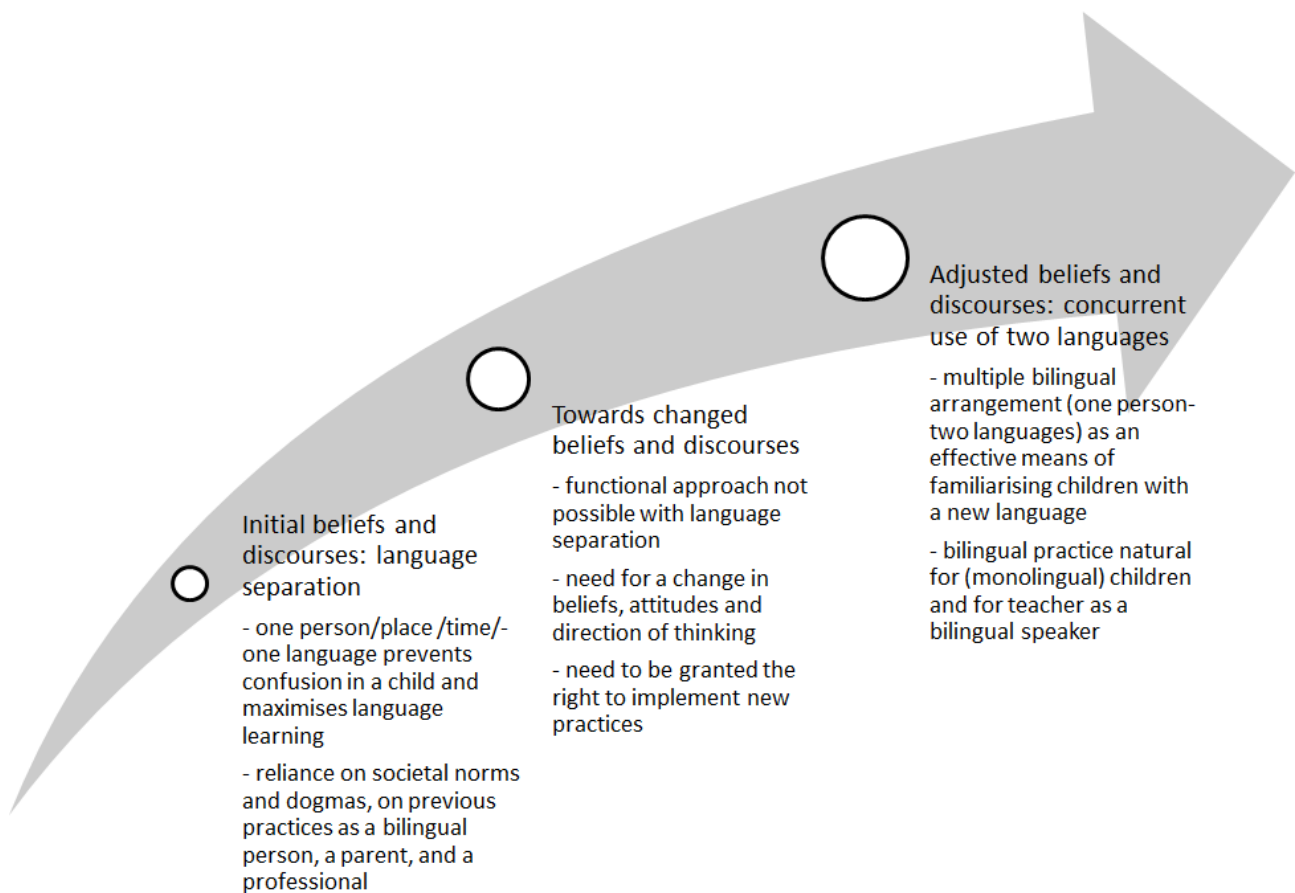


Figure 3: Trajectory of development in the teacher's discourses about her language practices and the beliefs attached to them.

Different people appeared in her accounts and stood out as significant in the process of implementing the language shower activities. Superiors (the director of the ECEC unit and her superior) surfaced in the accounts since they formulated and supported the original objectives of the new approach. The language expert who was consulted before the implementation of the language

shower activities played a significant part as she/he authorised the teacher to use bilingual practices. Former colleagues appeared in the accounts to illustrate different ways of working bilingually and to point out differences in beliefs. Also children and parents circulated through the accounts; the children were presented as unfazed by the bilingual practices of the teacher and as fast learners of Swedish, and the parents were reported as positive – but also to some extent demanding – givers of feedback.

Widening the lens, we can see that she challenged some current Finnish societal discourses on Swedish as a ‘useless’ and ‘compulsory’ language by instead aiming to create positive attitudes towards Swedish among the Finnish children. With her bilingual practices of using both the languages with the children she also challenged the prevailing norms of language separation (such as applying a one person-one language strategy) in educational contexts, and even challenged the Finnish system of ‘parallel monolingualism’ (Heller 1999). In other respects, however, she adhered to and recycled discourses confirming Finland as a society comprised of distinct language groups (‘Finnish-speakers’ and ‘Swedish-speakers’), attending different (Finnish-medium or Swedish-medium) schools. She also saw a need to ‘protect’ and ‘support’ a minority language (Swedish) in a majority language (Finnish) setting. Johanna’s discourses thus clearly reveal that ‘broader social issues are ultimately grounded in the micro-actions of social interaction and, conversely, the most mundane of micro-actions are the nexus through which the largest cycles of social organization and activity circulate’ (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 8).

Conclusion

Although the onion metaphor for language policies might imply distributed layers with processes moving vertically from one layer to the next, layers do ‘permeate and interact with each other in multiple and complex ways’ (Ricento and Hornberger 1996, 419; c.f. García and Menken’s [2010] call for ‘stirring the onion’). The reflections of the bilingual pre-school teacher, Johanna, on the implementation of the new way of working with language showers made up a true aggregate of

discourses (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 14) and presented ‘different perspectives, or voices in (...) inner reality (...) bearing traces of different social and historical contexts’ (Pietikäinen and Dufva 2006, 211). We found that Johanna had to renegotiate her beliefs – intrinsically connected with the renegotiation of personal and professional identities and practices – and that she took risks and faced periods of confusion and frustration (cf. Barcelos and Kalaja 2012), but also that the process of change led to a way of working bilingually in the classroom with which she felt confident and in which she believed. At the same time, she showed a sensitivity to contextual factors, such as that the concurrent bilingual practices might work in a majority, but not necessarily in a minority, language classroom.

In future research, we need to examine teacher nexuses as the complexities they are and acknowledge that there are myriads of factors which drive and affect the work of the bilingual teacher (Lemberger 1997). In this respect, we also need cross-cultural research on pre-school teachers working bilingually, since the work of education is not only dependent on personal experience but is also deeply embedded in unique social, historical and political contexts. Finally, we need to acknowledge the active role of teachers in bringing about development and social change (Ricento and Hornberger 1996). In the case of Johanna, she changed the nexus of practice and broke new ground as an educator in Finland by preparing young Finnish-speaking children for flexible bilingualism (Creese et al. 2011): ‘it has really turned out that the children don’t find it strange at all that I speak Finnish and Swedish [concurrently]’.

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Supplementary file: Original teacher quotations

Creating a Bilingual Pre-school Classroom: The Multilayered Discourses of a Bilingual Teacher

Åsa Palviainen

Karita Mård-Miettinen

Transcription keys: Text in normal font uttered in Swedish, **bold face** in Finnish; words in *italics* phonologically stressed; (.) a brief pause; [---] stretches of speech have been omitted; [=] clarification; text within [] added to complete an utterance syntactically or semantically; extra-linguistic information given within (); and ‘text within single quotation marks’ represent reported speech/thought.

Launching the Language Showers

nu ska vi baka pepparkakor väntas nu lite ja ska ta fram lite deg (.) **laitetaas tuo tuonne odottamaan (.) ja veitset näitä veitsiä käyttää vaan aikuinen mihinkähän mä tarvin sitä veitsee? (.) odota tiedätkö?** (något av barnen pratar) vänta **jokainen saa leipoo ja saa leipoo ihan rauhassa mutta totaniin mäpä kerron ensin miten me tehään tää homma (.)** ja ska ta fram en kniv (tar en kniv i handen) och så skär ja lite här såhär (skär degen i bitar) okej väntas nu nu har ja två bitar ett å två å vi är ett två tre fyra barn (rör vid barnens huvud medan hon räknar) **hyh** nu gör ja såhär ett två tre å fyra (.) nu räcker det eller hur?

The Language Separation Discourse

å de här va nånting som jag hade jättestort problem med för att jag e liksom på de viset har alltid tänkt en person ett språk ett ställe ett språk alltså jag e liksom själv tvåspråkig jag har alltid talat svenska åt mina barn å jag har jobbat på svenskt dagis och jag har jobbat på språkbadsdagis så de så de ha varit helt här (.) så det här för mej att förstå det här är helt *tillåtet* (.) ja att jag hade så svårt [att förstå det]

et varmaan mulla itellä oli alussa se että mä olin ite tavallaan ajatellu että on yks henkilö yksi kieli että miten mä voin puhua kahta kieltä kahta kieltä niin että eiks se luo hämmennystä tai tämmöstä näin mut sit mun pää saatiin käännettyä tuolta kieltenlaitokselta että 'tämän päivän lapsille se on hyvin tavallista että on ihminen joka voi puhua kahta tai peräti kolmee eri kieltä ja tehdä itensä ymmärretyksi' [---] se on ihan oikeesti toiminu niin, että ei se oo mitään ihmeellistä että mä puhun suomee ja ruotsia lasten mielestä [---] 'täähän onnistuu hyvänen aika näinkin (.) näinkin jos ajatellaan niinkun kielten oppimista'

men jag vet att tillåme i vårt hus så de e (.) [tycker kollegor] att 'näe (.) att nej ett språk liksom en människa'

egentligen märker jag liksom att jag tänker så att de är *jämlika* båda språken att dom liksom (.) att på *svenska* sidan hade man den där liksom att man försöker göra det där språket så aktivt som möjligt att man liksom (.) riktigt liksom försöker *dra* att det kommer liksom

svenska svar men *här* är det liksom lugnt på den fronten att det är lika rätt (.) oberoende om du svarar på finska eller liksom svenska (.) å det där *lugnet* som man har själv liksom

The Objectives Discourse

det är liksom som den här **määritelmä** som vi hade **tutustuminen ruotsin kieleen** å inte bara att jag sjunger nån sång eller nån ramsa utan den här det är mera funktionellt

de var ju målsättningarna vi hade *tillsammans* det var ju inte *min* målsättning men att de (.) ja alltså på dagissidan att chefen å sen hennes chef att det här att man fick *börja* med det här så ska man liksom ha en *målsättning* med de (.) men att den var lite diffus det var ju bra att den var

mera sådär att **tutustuminen arjenkeinoin** men från början var det ju mycket så där **loruja ja laulua** å de hade jag lite svårt med att ska man liksom *lära* sig ett språk (.) att det blir mera mekaniskt att det är liksom bara via sånger å rim å ramsor att de får liksom inge *innebörd* att de jag har väl haft mer av de så där att de ska *förstå* va orden betyder

men sen blev de ju så *snabbt* bekanta med svenskan så sen så blev det ju sådär att okej de *förstår* va ordet mjölk betyder [---] men att också liksom *lära* sig svenskan *men* vi e junte dom tvåspråkiga eller dom svenskspråkiga att just den liksom att 'hej (klickar med tungan) nu tillbaks hit' å de lätta väldigt mycket det där när man sen kom ner på jorden på något sätt igen

å just det där med två *jämställda* språk (.) ja tror jag har en liten sån tanke där bak (.) språken får inte bli en sån där *negativ* grej att de ska va mera en såndär rolig och positiv grej att 'åh, man kan prata så här också' (.) att ' de finns nåt som heter Sverige å svenska' (.) att göra en sån här *positiv* inverkan

ⁱ Transcription keys: Text in normal font uttered in Swedish, **bold face** in Finnish; words in *italics* phonologically stressed; (.) a brief pause; [---] stretches of speech have been omitted; [=] clarification; text within [] added to complete an utterance syntactically or semantically; extra-linguistic information given within (); and ‘text within single quotation marks’ represent reported speech/thought.