

# Explorations in Ethnography, Language and Communication

Capturing linguistic and cultural diversities

Edited by  
Stina Hållsten  
Zoe Nikolaidou



Södertörn Discourse Studies



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Capturing linguistic and cultural diversities

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*Stina Hällsten & Zoe Nikolaidou*

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# The Linguistic Ethnography Forum

*Karin Tusting*

This volume represents a range of work from scholars associated with the Linguistic Ethnography Forum (LEF). LEF is a large, international community of scholars with an interest in drawing on and combining theoretical and methodological approaches from linguistics and ethnography. As an organisation, LEF can be traced back to a small seminar in Leicester in 2001, funded by the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) and Cambridge University Press, which brought together 30 academics and research students to identify key theoretical and methodological issues in linguistic ethnography. From that initial meeting, an email list was set up and a committee formed to explore the possibility of organising future events and facilitating this ongoing conversation.

The LEF group was rapidly constituted as BAAL's first Special Interest Group, and interest in it began to grow, with regular events and seminars focusing on a wide range of issues. These have included ethnography in multilingual contexts; individual and team research; reflexivity in fieldwork; linguistic ethnography and education; post-structuralist feminist ethnography; the contribution of theorists such as Hymes, Bernstein, Bakhtin; linguistic ethnography in the workplace; and more.

In addition to such events, there is now a regular summer course in Key Concepts and Methods in Ethnography, Language and Communication course, first introduced with funding from the Economic and Social Research Centre in 2007, led by scholars in linguistic ethnography from a range of institutions including Ben Rampton, Jeff Bezemer, Jan Blommaert, Adam Lefstein and Julia Snell. This is aimed at PhD students and post-doctoral researchers and has brought many new scholars into the field.

Graduates of one of the early ELC courses, Julia Snell, Fiona Copland and Sara Shaw, began the organisation of Explorations in Ethnography, Language and Communication conferences from 2008 onwards. This now biennial event has been held at Aston, in Copenhagen, in Manchester, and in Stockholm in 2016, at which latter meeting the papers in this volume were first presented. It is always a great pleasure to attend an EELC conference and to hear about the range and depth of work in linguistic ethnography coming from researchers around the world.

Linguistic ethnographic work has developed our understanding of many empirical areas, as this volume demonstrates with work on youth language, cultural identity, medical communication, translanguaging and classroom interactions. Linguistic ethnography combines ethnographic understanding of social settings with close analysis of linguistic data to generate unique insights into the workings of the social world, in a way which is sensitive to participants' meanings, values and experiences. Current challenges include how to carry out fieldwork in a world which blends digital and face to face channels of communication; how to successfully engage in the depth required of ethnographic work when funding is constrained and accountability requirements in universities are ever-increasing; and how to successfully communicate this work to policy and power.

LEF now brings together over 1000 people in over 40 countries who share the interest in combining linguistics and ethnography. The website, [www.lingethnog.org](http://www.lingethnog.org), includes instructions for joining and summarises events and activities. As an organisation we are able to offer funding to support the organization of events supporting the development of linguistic ethnography as a field, and particularly to support the participation of PhD students and others without access to institutional funding. We welcome additional members who share our concerns and our commitment to developing this theoretical and methodological orientation.

Karin Tusting, convenor, Linguistic Ethnography Forum  
Lancaster University

# Introduction

*Zoe Nikolaidou & Stina Hållsten*

The present edited volume introduces studies with a common methodological influence from the field of *linguistic ethnography*. This term was introduced in the beginning of the millennium, to describe a large number of studies that made use of ethnographic methods of data collection and analysis in order to be able to talk about context when studying language use, practices and ideologies.

In an introductory paper by researchers active in the first British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) Special Interest Group, we find a description of the epistemology underpinning the field:

Linguistic ethnography generally holds that to a considerable degree, language and the social world are mutually shaping, and that close analysis of situated language use can provide both fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity. (Rampton et al. 2004: 2).

Linguistic ethnography has since become an established methodological field within which researchers use a combination of ethnographic and linguistic analytical tools to better understand the dynamics of culture, society and communication. For linguists, the use of ethnographic data as an interpretive frame allows them to situate fine linguistic analysis in everyday activity thus locating the results in the socio-cultural context where communication takes place. For ethnographers, a focus on linguistic activity amongst groups of people allows for a narrow focus and results that are better tied to empirical data.

The large number of researchers that ascribe their studies to this field is attested by the active interest and high participation numbers in the biannual conference Explorations in Ethnography, Language and Communication (EELC), that provides a cross-disciplinary, international research forum. The present volume comprises a selection of papers resulting from the 6<sup>th</sup> EELC conference that took place at Södertörn University in Sweden. The studies reflect a rich variety in terms of research interests, methods of data collection and analysis, and results that can be placed under the umbrella term *linguistic ethnography*.

One related methodological term used to describe studies where ethnographic data plays an important role is communication ethnography, as understood in Saville-Troike (1982 and 1989). With a close reference to Hymes (1972), Saville-Troike explains communication ethnography, following an anthropological tradition, as patterning of communicative behavior as it constitutes one system (among others) which shapes a culture (p.1), or “the structuring of communicative behavior in social life” (p.2). The concern here lies in analysing different communicative cultures, often in terms of speech communities. The main methods for collecting ethnographic data are through, for example, participant observation and the taking of field notes. It is not always combined with close analysis of linguistic data; instead the focus often lies in analysing interview data, for example attitudes towards language use. While communication ethnography focuses on communication between people or groups of people, as part of an anthropological discipline and with no specific focus on linguistic data, linguistic ethnography invites researchers from a variety of scientific fields such as sociology, anthropology and sociolinguistics and calls for studies where ethnography and linguistic analysis go hand in hand. Research contexts explored with the use of linguistic ethnographic studies are, amongst others, classrooms, digital fora and workplace settings.

### Using linguistic ethnography to capture diversities

Today, with the development of technology, information and capital are transcending social and geographical barriers giving new forms to communication. In the social sciences, there is a strong appeal for research to include more diverse voices and the voices of the under-represented (e.g. Bucholtz 2017, Milani 2017). Linguistic ethnography has a meaningful role to play in this new challenge, with its focus on local nationalities, anti-ethnocentricity and cultural ecologies (Rampton, Maybin & Roberts 2015). Using linguistic ethnography allows for thick descriptions of contexts for communication and fine analysis of communicative practices, where the particular and the strange are uplifted and systematised. Capturing diversities calls, however, for methods that are flexible and under a process of continuous development. Research based on linguistic ethnography has a deeply self-reflexive character that allows for ongoing self-scrutiny. Linguistic ethnographers need to examine their methodological tools again and again to make sure that they are maximally honed for the difficulties entailed in capturing thick descriptions of diversity.

The EELC conference is one such attempt at self-scrutiny. The 2016 conference focused on diversities, and the expressed aim was to examine how linguistic ethnography can be used to capture cultural, gendered, linguistic and other kinds of diversity in today's global societies. A particular challenge is to develop research methods that will not only raise diverse voices, but also facilitate the communication of results and their application to the research participants' everyday activity. Diversity was discussed in a number of settings: in the workplace, in education, in the community and at home. The present volume features selected papers that are indicative of the themes that were taken up in the conference.

### The studies in the volume

The authors that have contributed to this volume have conducted research in Japan, USA, Finland and Sweden. Each one of the contributions tells a story with a focus on different aspects of people's identities: identities of belonging to different national groups, as youth, as students, as multilingual, as professionals, as parents, as writers, as non-racists. All of the articles raise new voices that reveal diversity in the way our societies are now structured, in the way people think of themselves and of others, and in the way they act. In the analyses, the research participants communicate this diversity in their everyday interactions, and they reflect upon it in direct relation to their participation in a research study. The authors of these contributions raise these voices high and urge us to reflect upon the role language plays, not only in creating diverse groups but also in breaking barriers and building bridges of communication. An additional important factor in the articles of this volume is that the authors reflect on the use of linguistic ethnography as a method for coming closer to the participants and highlighting their experiences, as well as for sensitizing concepts, asking the right kind of questions and focusing on that part of the results that is important not only to them but also to the participants. In what follows, we provide a short introduction to each study, with the aim of orientating the reader to the content of this edited volume.

Rickard Jonsson's study takes us to two upper-secondary schools in Stockholm, where the author looks for traces of colour-blind (anti-)racist discourse. Using ethnographic material consisting of qualitative interviews, participant observations and audio-recorded natural conversations, Jonsson conducts a narrative analysis with a focus on *small stories* in order to show how school students handle sensitive topics, in this case discussing prob-

lems with immigrant youths while at the same time aligning themselves with an anti-racist discourse. In the analysis, we find examples of students who deal with questions of past prejudices, geographical categorisations, skin colour and derogatory racial words. Jonsson argues for the necessity of linguistic ethnographic methods when studying anti-racist talk, not least when adopting an emic perspective in research. The study is an example of how fine-grained analysis of interactional data is best interpreted when set against the background of socio-historical structures, such as colour-blindness and racism.

Lilian Gorman's study on Mexican-Nuevomexicano families is a good example of how linguistic ethnography can be used to explore issues of language and identity. In this article, Gorman uses interviews and participant observations as a starting point to tell us a story about the place of language in the discussion of cultural identity. *Ethnolinguistic contact zones* is used as a key term in order to discuss mixed Mexican-Nuevomexicano families as dynamic spaces where languages and cultures are negotiated and shaped, and it is proposed as a timely analytical tool in a period of turbulence on the U.S.-Mexican border. The interviews are analysed with a focus on narratives that connect cultural identity to language use. The narratives reveal differing attitudes when it comes to questions of ethnic and cultural identification, with a rather clear connection to different generations in the families. Linguistic ethnography is discussed here as a useful method when conducting a study at the intersection of cultural studies and linguistics; it is used as a starting point in order to further "complicate the complex connections between language and identity" (p.55) and to "honor the ways" in which cultural groups "theorise about their own linguistic and cultural practices" (p.55).

Hirokazu Nukuto asks the question of how international students translanguage in order to construct knowledge and accomplish academic group interaction in an English learning context. She uses data from an ethnographic fieldwork at a university in Japan with recorded group interactions and a collection of public documents. In her study, we meet learners with different language backgrounds who translanguage using multiple linguistic resources, including their first language or additional languages, and thus accomplish group interaction. Nukuto argues that translanguaging should be seen as a pedagogical stance and as a strategy indicative of communicative competence in intercultural learning contexts.

Susana Hakulinen explores four different settings – Finnish students learning Swedish, Swedish students learning Finnish, and French students

learning Swedish and Finnish. She presents a transnational comparative study with material consisting of participant observations in classrooms, and questionnaires and interviews with 109 L2-speaking students and 12 teachers, in Sweden, Finland and France. In her analysis, Hakulinen uses thematic concept analysis and Goffman's concept of role to understand how students position themselves and how these positionings contribute to learning, using questions such as: Are you a quiet observer or an active listener? Hakulinen discusses how her study can help to answer questions on what communicative behaviours are expected in a classroom setting, and if that differs between cultures. Hakulinen makes a strong point about the importance of using different material types and different methods to collect data.

Ingela Tykesson, Linda Kahlin and Mihaela Romanitan have conducted a three-year long research project, with a focus on medical doctors' second language acquisition. In their contribution, they problematise methodological issues in the process of collecting data. Tykesson, Kahlin and Romanitan visit a medical Swedish language course and use role plays, interviews, focus group discussions and real occurring interaction to visualise difficulties in communication between doctors and patients. They describe their model for data collection as "a combination of participant observation and staged activities that provide opportunities for doctors to speak Swedish in a professional role and reflect on their language learning process." The researchers meet the doctors again when working in the Swedish context, and they then use more traditional ethnographic methods with the aim of describing and understanding their language use in specific medical practices.

Theres Bellander, Anna-Malin Karlsson and Zoe Nikolaidou write about parents who blog about the experience of living with a child with congenital heart defect. In this study, blogging is discussed as a characteristic of mass literacy in the knowledge economy and as a part in doing health literacy. The questions asked here are how parents construct their identities and how they build up knowledge by means of blogging. The authors discuss the bloggers' writer identities by looking for traces of identity construction in the different themes found in the blogs, as well as in the interviews they have conducted with the bloggers. Meta-reflexive accounts on their reasons for blogging and on the process of writing are analysed to show the construction of the bloggers' discursal self, self as author and autobiographical self. Finally, the authors show how participation in new discourses and new literacies leads to the construction of new knowledge in the context of health literacy.

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## Handling the Other in Anti-racist Talk

### Linguistic ethnography in a prestigious Stockholm upper secondary school

*Rickard Jonsson*

I will in this article take up the challenge voiced within critical whiteness studies (Hikido and Murray 2016) to map how people in privileged positions – in traditionally white spaces – talk about their views on increased diversity. Empirically, I approach this question by investigating how white students at a prestigious upper secondary school in one of Stockholm’s central districts find ways to speak about various problems associated with ‘immigrant youths’ without appearing prejudiced or derogatory. I examine how words such as “diversity”, “mix” and “new influences” can function as linguistic resources to establish anti-racist credibility. Furthermore, I ask how the anti-racist discursive regime prevalent at the school can co-exist with derogatory expressions. For example, how can the very politically incorrect word *babbe*, a word for non-whites, similar to the n-word, be used without evoking cries of racism? Or how can the hegemonic anti-racist discourse at the studied school possibly be compatible with the ongoing talk of a specific room where some non-white students spend their break times – a room that is associated with problems and bad behaviours and is given the nickname ‘the mafia room’? And finally, what does all this tell us about performative utterances in anti-racist talk?

#### Colour-blind (anti-) racism

One way to approach these questions theoretically would be to look at how critical race studies has discussed race and whiteness, and, not least, what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2002; 2010; 2011) calls “colour-blind racism”. Bonilla-Silva points out that colour-blind racism can be present in an approach that *celebrates* diversity. A typical manifestation is when people claim that they do not view or treat other people according to their skin colour, or when they argue that the opposite – talking about race – is doing racism’s bidding. Hence, economic and social status are not understood in a colour-blind world as the effects of structural inequality, based on race, but

as the logical consequence of an individual's merits. This idea, critical race studies holds, reproduces a hegemonic whiteness where being white is a privileged, normative and unmarked position (Frankenberg 1993). Drawing on Frantz Fanon (1952) Sara Ahmed (2007; 2011) states that colonial history has laid the foundation for a white world where white bodies have their given and privileged place in public space. Public spaces thus become equivalent with white spaces, in which non-white bodies are being interpellated (Althusser 1971) as the marked Others – as those having culture or ethnicity, and as those who constitute the backdrop against which a normative whiteness can be constructed and reproduced (Dyer 1997; Morrison 1992). Racism, when discussed within a colour-blind discourse, is often referred to individuals with particularly intolerant values, who clearly deviate from an anti-racist majority. Colour-blindness as a moral standpoint thus allows people to believe that the world has evolved beyond the race question. It becomes a way of presenting oneself as tolerant (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000; Bonilla-Silva 2002).

Colour-blindness has also been studied in critical classroom research. Several educational researchers (Beuhler 2012; Castagno 2008; Haviland 2008; Lewis 2001; Pollock 2004; Stoll 2014) have described how the colour-blind classroom emphasizes that everybody is equal whilst actively avoiding talking about race. Angelina Castagno (2008) believes, however, that the silence surrounding race and racism is not the result of forgetting or omission; on the contrary, it is a conscious pedagogical approach. Mary Bucholtz (2011), in her linguistic anthropological study of language use among white American students, shows how various democratic expressions stressing that everyone is equal have a colour-blindness that could be perceived as liberal and inclusive but at the same time represses the issue of racism. “Consequently, colour-blind discourse is enacted through its silences and omissions as much as its words. For discourse analysts, race talk invites close investigation to discover the rhetorical strategies that maintain the dominance of whiteness”, Bucholtz writes (*ibid.* 166).

The active silence surrounding race, that Bucholtz writes about, can create a pedagogical culture in which discrimination is actually denied. To persist in repeating that “everybody is equal” or “we make no distinctions” (Jonson and Milani 2009) can become a performative utterance that produces an image of a tolerant school institution without the need for institutional self-reflection. Such speech acts, writes Sara Ahmed (2006; see also 2011; 2012), can also be used as a tool to instil a belief that we have left discrimination behind us. An anti-racial statement does not in itself guarantee

an anti-racist world. Neither do people become anti-racists solely by paying lip service. On the contrary, to distance oneself from racism through anti-racist utterances can actually serve as an effective way of *maintaining* the hegemony of whiteness (Ahmed 2011). Anti-racist speech acts can even be employed to avoid having to change. Ahmed (2006) therefore calls them non-performative acts.

### The Swedish case

In the Swedish context, where the data for this article has been collected, critical race and whiteness scholars Tobias Hübinette and Catrin Lundström (2011) have argued that colour-blindness has become nearly hegemonic also within an anti-racist discourse. Here, the colour-blindness goes hand in hand with the idea of a Swedish exceptionalism – a national grand narrative of a particularly anti-racist and progressive country (Hübinette 2017). The Swedish anti-racist discourse also includes a taboo on talking about race. The country has, for instance, expunged the concept of *ras* (race) from all its official documents. We can understand this strategy as a way to learn from a racist past in order to never again use racial and potentially racist labels.

One might object to this picture of a Swedish hegemonic anti-racist discourse given right-wing populism has become more and more accepted in the Swedish political landscape, not least through the normalization of the Sweden Democrats, a xenophobic populist party. However, such normalization has been expressed in and through a colour-blind anti-racist discourse, claiming to stand up for diversity. Even the Sweden Democrats themselves often refer to their own “zero tolerance for racism”. There is thus a consensus in Swedish political debate that Sweden is a tolerant anti-racist country which has moved beyond race.

However, many critical race scholars raise the question of why race then still seems of relevance in everyday life (Farhani 2013; Hübinette and Lundström 2011; Sawyer 2008). How, for example, can words such as *utländskt utseende* (foreign appearance) and *etniska svenskar* (ethnic Swedes) be constantly used by the police, the media and politicians if we have really moved beyond racial categorizations? It is furthermore difficult to deny that race would not at all be an explanatory factor of discrimination in the Swedish labour market – where the unemployment rates for Asian- and African-born people are five times higher than the average unemployment rate for someone born in Sweden of Swedish parents (Hübinette et al.

2012). Yet the topic is silenced by the idea that we should not be talking about it. Swedish colour-blind discourse is therefore an anti-racist map that has erased some of the racist landscape.

### Hunt for racists?

This landscape, however, does not only consist of silenced classrooms, segregated neighbourhoods and labour markets but also includes different media platforms. Let me briefly mention a few of them. What comes to mind are, for example, the illustrations in a film, based on a children's book by Stina Wirsén, that were criticized for bearing clear resemblances to the pickaninny tradition (Figure 1); the advertisement for an ice lolly called Nogger Black, condemned for playing with connotations of the n-word, street and blackness (Figure 2); or debates about politically incorrect jokes about Asian stereotypes performed by anti-racist comedians (Figure 3) (for a detailed analysis of these and many other examples, see Hornscheidt and Landqvist 2014; Hübinette et al. 2012; Pripp and Öhlander 2008).



Figure 1: Stina Wirsén's illustration of 'Lilla Hjärtat', from the film "Liten skär och alla små brokiga", photo: Folkets bio.



Figure 2: Advertisement for the ice lolly Nogger Black, GB-Glace.



Figure 3: Photo of the Swedish artist Sanna Nielsen, dressed for a role at the Oscar theatre, published on her personal Instagram account.

These debates have provoked the Swedish colour-blind anti-racist self-image. Several prominent voices in the Swedish media have indignantly asked how these and other expressions could be called racist since everybody knows that the originators of such words or images had no racist intentions whatsoever. What seems most upsetting, according to the public reactions, is the discussion of race and racism when the latter (a) is not expected to be found, and (b) is expressed by people who are well-known anti-racists.

The critics of these examples, on the other hand, often express their disapproval in the shape of what Deborah Cameron (1995) calls *verbal hygiene*; they correct other people's politically incorrect words, texts or pictures. They point out the racism that, they argue, is present in these jokes, narratives and images. Needless to say, being associated with the negative category can be deeply face threatening (Goffman 1959). The persons ac-

cused of expressing themselves in a politically incorrect, or even racist, way must defend themselves (see also Augoustinos and Every 2010).

Anti-racist verbal hygiene acts may therefore have profound effects of what is becoming inappropriate to express in public. Stina Wirsén, for instance, actually stopped drawing her figure ‘Lilla hjärtat’ shortly after the heated debate. Thus, the shame connected to politically incorrectness also seems to do a silencing work. Wirsén says in an interview in the daily newspaper *Sydsvenskan* that at the height of the debate on the illustrations in her book she woke up at nights vomiting: “It felt like I was being forced, with a megaphone in my hand, towards a square full of people who demanded that I yell: ‘Yes, I’m a racist!’” (2013; author’s own translation).

Without looking any further at these examples, my point here is that Swedish colour-blind anti-racism is based on a dichotomy between the tolerant and the intolerant or the politically correct and incorrect. These are envisioned as two completely separate and mutually exclusive subject positions – where the racist can be employed as the opposite Other in the performance of an anti-racist persona. However, as Teun van Dijk (1992: 87) writes, “one of the crucial properties of contemporary racism is its denial”. Those who enjoy a race privilege can use expressions that clearly distance themselves from the “racist” category while more subtly expressing racist ideas (see also van Dijk 1993; 1997; Wetherell and Potter 1992). As Jan Blommaert and Jef Verschueren (1998: 117) have shown, tolerant and intolerant groups can very well share common notions of culture, ethnicity or “the idea that the ideal society should be as uniform or homogeneous as possible”. In a similar vein, Bonilla-Silva (2013; see also Hodges 2016) uses the metaphor “hunting for racists” to describe how a common understanding of racism is often based on the careful separation of, and search for, the good and the bad ones.

### Searching for the Other in anti-racist talk

By choosing examples from some students who claim to be anti-racists and whom I was lucky enough to get to know during my field studies, I will therefore examine what is often otherwise ignored within this colour-blind anti-racist discourse: the fact that anti-racist speakers sometimes do talk about the ethnic or racial Other.

My material comes from two linguistic ethnographic field studies – three and four months long respectively – in one of Stockholm’s prestigious upper secondary schools. Methodologically, the studies involved audio-

recordings of naturally occurring conversations, participant observation, ethnographic field notes and 13 semi-structured interviews with students (aged 16 to 17) in their first or second year of two programmes.<sup>1</sup> From this material, I have chosen the data from situations characterized by many disclaimers, pauses and hesitations. Even if not always outspoken, there seems to be something at stake in these communicative practices. I argue that the colour-blind anti-racist discourse described above may explain many of these hesitations – speakers must be aware of their choice of words when discussing diversity or racism with each other (or with a researcher). As Bethan Benwell (2012) writes in her discussion of why anti-racism at all needs rhetorical work to convince, given that it is often taken for granted, “the active ‘common-sense’ presentation of anti-racism (...) suggests that it operates in contexts where anxieties around issues of race and racism exist” (ibid. 364).

Linguistic ethnography is a well-suited approach for investigating participants’ anxieties, dilemmas and rhetorical work in colour-blind anti-racist talk. Karrebæk and Charalambous (2017) summarize three epistemological key assumptions within this approach: First, language and social reality are understood as mutually constitutive. Thus, “language is regarded as a contextualized system and understood and studied in context; conversely, language shapes, constrains and influences social meanings” (ibid. 4). Second, contexts of communication and meaning making in interaction should always be investigated rather than assumed (Rampton 2007; see also Copland and Creese 2015). One might object to the critical race theory, outlined in the introduction, in that the analysis of race and hegemonic whiteness, risks to be determined by the researcher’s own political commitments (Wetherell 2001). Whilst this text is deeply indebted to such critical perspective, linguistic ethnography offers further investigative insights into participants’ perspectives and emic categories, in specific communicative contexts.

Third, and related to this point, to understand how social and historical structures – such as colour-blindness or racism – are being reconstructed or challenged in mundane talk, we need to undertake fine-grained analysis of interactional data (Karrebæk and Charalambous 2017: 4). For doing such

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<sup>1</sup> To begin with, I followed a class of students on the social science programme (from where most of the data in this article comes from). Two years later, I followed up with new fieldwork, this time I hung around with the students on the natural science programme (from where my last example in this article is taken).

detailed analysis, I will employ a narrative analysis that searches for “small stories” (Bamberg 2006; Georgakopoulou 2007) combined with a discursive psychology approach with a focus on the local action in people’s mundane talk (Potter 1996). I consider storytelling an activity that takes place between people, with the narrative emerging at the very point of its telling (Georgakopoulou 2007). This perspective includes an interest in what conversational actions people accomplish in their storytelling (Stokoe and Edwards 2006: 57). I will pay specific attention to one such aspect of narrative action, namely the practice of handling sensitive topics.

More precisely, I will (a) investigate how some white students find discursive resources to speak about various problems associated with ‘immigrant youths’ without appearing prejudiced or derogatory or in any way politically incorrect. I will furthermore (b) explore the anti-racist discursive regime prevalent at the school and its co-existence with more derogatory expressions and categorizations, and finally, I want to (c) discuss what this might tell us about performative utterances in anti-racist talk.

This is a perspective that differs from the attempts to discover racist intentions or to “hunt racists” behind these words. But for the sake of clarity, let me underline that I do not doubt the students’ anti-racist positions; on the contrary, I have chosen the examples precisely *because* these students repeatedly expressed anti-racist views. By following them and investigating their ways of talking about diversity, I also touch a tender spot within me – as a white male academic, I often find myself participating in the same talk.

## The school

The school which is the scene for this study was selected on the basis that it was a prestigious, centrally located school which attracts students from a wide range of residential areas of Stockholm, thus making it possible to (a) capture a broad variation of experiences of schooling, and (b) collect a wide selection of narratives about the topics of diversity, ethnicity and race in education. The school might best be described as a former grammar school steeped in tradition. Classic art hangs in the corridor alongside portraits of past head teachers. Standing outside the school’s entrance, I read old lines of verse, carved in stone, encouraging patriotism. Some of the most evident and more contemporary signs inside the corridors are political manifestos from the liberal-conservative Moderate Party, queer feminist posters exhorting us to be proud of who we are as well as a sort of alumni hall of

fame for those who have gone on to have successful careers in politics, culture and industry. Amid the portraits of famous alumni also hangs a mirror with a sign stating a kind of future scenario that sets the tone for the school's ethos:

This is your future place in the school's hall of fame. You are one of the most successful students of all time. You have succeeded in everything you have wanted in work and your private life. You have also made a considerable contribution to the school through your willingness to work, your curiosity and your kindness to other students.

The call for respect, kindness and curiosity corresponds well with the school's official values, which hang on a large sign at the school's entrance, where also the word "diversity" is one of the keywords given pride of place. To further understand this school context, I should say something too about how the school's student composition has changed over the last decade. This was very much due to the model of free school choice, wherein students can themselves apply to the upper secondary school of their choice regardless of where they live. "We've been seeing more diversity in our school corridors in recent years", Niclas the teacher once told me. He said that it was principally students of non-ethnic Swedish parents who were mostly enrolled in the natural science programme. "They hang out in the west wing, and they are regarded as the immigrant class, and the social science programme is therefore seen as more Swedish". Interestingly enough, I soon learn that it is also precisely these natural science classes which are associated with disorder, unruly classrooms and indiscipline.

The association between ideas of non-Swedishness and the natural science programme is confirmed by my finding Internet discussion threads about the school. On a chat forum, students deciding whether to choose the school receive advice and descriptions from older alumni. These discussion threads enable *anonymous* conversations where people can ask and say things about the school. And here this very association between natural science and non-Swedishness comes up:

"If you go in the west entrance to the natural science corridor, it's like arriving in Iran ;)", describes one post. Someone else writes:

"I went to this school and didn't enjoy it much. But there aren't as many immigrants as everybody thinks. And the ones *there* have been put in specific classes, so you don't even notice them".

"Now, maybe I sound a bit prejudiced", replies another post, "...but are there really any Gangzta immigrants with good enough grades for the

school? The immigrants who go there must surely still be quite ambitious/integrated/intelligent/pleasant?”

An associative chain is created in comments like these, whereby the immigrants at this school are pleasant, ambitious and therefore *integrated*, which at the same time assumes that those immigrants who are no closer to acquiring Swedishness are associated with the opposite: unambitious, unintelligent and unpleasant. The tone expressed on the Internet differs dramatically from how the topic is discussed among staff and pupils in the school corridors. Nobody says anything derogatory about “Gangzta immigrants”, whom they would rather avoid. Instead, they talk about the “natural science class” and the “west wing”.

### Our past prejudices

When the west wing and the natural science students are mentioned in the conversations I taped, it is often added that the school’s *mix* is enriching. Ludvig talks on one occasion about this and then makes a comparison to former classmates from the Stockholm suburb of Fisksätra, whom he met during his upper years (Years 7, 8 and 9) of compulsory school. Fisksätra is known as a multilingual, densely populated immigrant suburb built in the 1970s. It is adjacent to a very affluent area called Saltsjöbaden, where Ludvig grew up. Now Ludvig explains his relation to the Fisksätra students by telling me about his memories of his former school:

1	Ludvig:	Eh: (1.0) Maybe they've destroyed some of these
2		<u>Prejudices</u>
3	Rickard:	Oh, what prejudices?
4	Ludvig:	Because, because they were still decent like. We had about,
5		must have been two, three who were from (.) <u>Fisksättra</u> if you know
6		where that is? Outside [yes, yes] next to Saltis, eh:: (2.0) who came
7		to our class. [yes] Eh e (.) and they were a bit rowdier than
8		everybody else, but they, they <u>broadened</u> everyone's horizons
9		like so-
10	Rickard:	Ok, in what way?
11	Ludvig:	No, I don't know (.) when we, we weren't used to, you know (.)
12		their way of behaving socially [no (.) no] (.) And it was like they
13		gave us like (.) new influences in the class, so I don't really know
14		how to put my finger on it.

In this small story about former classmates, Ludvig constructs the Fisksättra student as a specific category. According to Ludvig, the students from Fisksättra have added something positive. They succeeded in “broadening everyone’s horizons” (line 8) of the “we” he refers to. At the same time, there is something different about them. He says that his class was not used to the Fisksättra students’ social behaviour (lines 11–12). This is a sensitive topic though. Considering the prolonged “eh::” followed by the long pause, as well as the many “I don’t know”, followed by short pauses, the dialogue seems to have entered a minefield, and the risk of saying something that might sound prejudiced hangs threateningly over the conversation. To deal with this risk, Ludvig refers to our common understanding of the place Fisksättra. He does so by asking me whether I “know where that is?” (line 6).

The question inquires whether we share the same knowledge of the place. It is a way of constructing consensus in talk (Edwards 2003). Because I also answer “yes, yes” to the question (line 6), the conversation can unconcernedly continue where it left off. My short agreement “yes, yes” means something like “I understand what you mean” or “don’t worry, carry on!” Thus, through his statements and my “yes, yes”, we concur as to who the Fisksättra students are, and we construct consensus in talk.

In this story, Ludvig also says that “they were a bit rowdier than everybody else” (lines 7–8). However, he now performs a key reflexive manoeuvre: despite their unruly behaviour, he says it was a great asset to have the

Fisksätra students in the class because they “destroyed our prejudices” (line 1) and provided “new influences” as well (line 13).

Ahmed (2006) writes that statements in which the speaker expresses shame for the past can be used as a means of showing pride and moral recovery in the present. If we admit to previous prejudices, we can no longer willingly be prejudiced today. In the dialogue, Ludvig does not express shame, but he points to his own changed attitude, which does a similar job. Prejudices have had their time; they belong to a former self whom Ludvig has now left behind thanks to encountering the new influences.

As Bucholtz (2011) argues, colour-blind anti-racist discourse is enacted through its silences as much as its words. “I don’t really know how to put my finger on it” Ludvig corrects himself (lines 13–14) when his account risks starting to sound somewhat excluding. Ludvig and I choose our words with care: instead of talking about “immigrant students” or “multi-ethnic suburbs”, we say “destroy prejudices”. We say “Fisksätra, if you know where that is” and “yes yes” and “new influences”. In that way, the Fisksätra student can be singled out as foreign, yet their presence is full of positivity at the same time as the understanding of an anti-racist Swedish “we” is created in the dialogue.

### A coffee-break chat

One sunny day I go for a walk with the students Sonja, Julia, Sophie, Elizabeth and Kattis to a café near their school. We have agreed that I will record a conversation; however, they are now the ones doing the interviewing during our walk. Sophie asks where I live, and I find myself answering “between Enskede and Gubbängen”. This is true enough: my nearest metro station is Gubbängen, but my postal address is that of the more well-to-do residential district of Enskede. I cannot claim to live in Enskede, and I have never said that I live anywhere but Gubbängen. Instead, I have in the company of friends made a point of the hidden anxiety in not wanting to be associated with the wrong part of the segregated city. Now, during the walk, I am the one giving an ambiguous answer: I say that I live “between Gubbängen and Enskede”:

“That’s exactly what I said! I *knew* you were from Enskede!” exclaims Julia. “How could you know that?” I wonder. “No, just a guess, no particular reason, I just thought so”, replies Julia.

I got to know Julia and her friends as a group of students who kindly invited me to hang out with them and who often comment on their place in

the school – as a group of girls from a swanky centrally located area who sometimes have to deal with how their classmates view them as superficial or spoilt. Occasionally I hear other students call them a number of nicknames: “*Sex and the City*”, “the loud ones”, “the spoilt girls” or simply “Daddy pays” – they later reclaimed the last-mentioned nickname during the sports lessons by wearing T-shirts with “We thank our fathers” printed on their chests.

When we are sitting in the café, the topic of conversation keeps coming back to how the group feels excluded from the class and that other classmates seem to have prejudices about them, as though they were snobby. Together the participants co-construct a story of the shared experience of being excluded within their own school class (Bamberg 2006; Georgakopoulou 2007). Elizabeth remarks that her class is “full of immigrants”, to which Sophie quickly retorts: “That doesn’t sound like a nice thing to say!” “Did I say there was anything *wrong* with that?” Elizabeth replies. “I’m a third-generation immigrant myself! Of course there’s nothing wrong with it; I’m just saying that nearly all of our class *are*; it’s just, it’s just a *fact*”.

Sophie’s objection to Elizabeth’s description of the class being full of immigrants is understandable. “Full” implies a limit, a measurement that can be exceeded, that immigrants are something which there can be too much of in one class. Sophie’s comment is a criticism of Elizabeth’s remark about her class, and in response, Elizabeth refers to it being “just a fact”, a way to present the description as neutral and disconnected from Elizabeth’s own point of view. It is a means of referring to common sense, as a rhetorical tool to distance herself from sounding prejudiced (Benwell 2012; Potter 1996; Wetherell and Potter 1992).

She also says that she herself is a “third-generation immigrant”, thereby adopting the category in order to be entitled to comment on it. By pointing out her affiliation with the group as a third-generation immigrant, Elizabeth claims, without appearing prejudiced, the right to describe the class as “full of immigrants”. This raises some questions of representation and story ownership (Georgakopoulou 2007). Elizabeth’s claim to be a third generation immigrant is an example of what Gal and Woolard (2001: 7) call “authority of authenticity”, a discursive process whereby speakers load their statements with authority, not through claiming a powerful social position but rather through positioning themselves as the authentic, and thereby the legitimate, speakers for a social group.

The topic of the conversation returns to the classroom atmosphere; I ask if they have ever had any rowdy classmates and Kattis quickly emphasizes that

the independent school she attended before (Years 7–9) did not actually have any unruly students. And then she adds, “Because the school was really...only the same people ... there was *only* one type of person in the school. We had *one* immigrant in the whole year!” And then she continues, “It was really segregated...it was really ... one group of people”. Here Kattis uses extreme case formulations (Pomerantz 1986) in her account to single out the school as a striking exception; a school *without* unruly students due to “segregation” and “only one immigrant in the whole year”.

There are some pauses when this point is being conveyed. These pauses and the hesitations imply a subject we are aware of but cannot put into words without having to think about it first. Moreover, when Kattis talks about a city centre independent school without immigrants, she uses the word “segregated”. In public debate, the topic of segregation is often assigned to places *other* than the central districts of the city; it refers to the suburbs and to the multi-ethnic. It is a word that addresses a problem. In the girls’ conversation, however, the description of the school with “only one type of person” is ambivalent, referring *both* to segregation and to the advantage of having no unruly students. This is a way of displaying an awareness of a lack of diversity in the segregated school. But the school’s lack of immigrants is also in Kattis’s quick reply made synonymous with a school free from unruly students.

### How multicultural it has become!

One day I am standing in the school corridor with some boys from the social science class, waiting for the next lesson to start. The teacher is delayed, and the students have congregated around the classroom door. With his classmates as his audience, David remarks on a recent alumni reunion at the school. He had come across a group of older men who were former students of the school and were now visiting their old classrooms. There seems to have been something comical about this group of older gentlemen because suddenly David and Nils imitate their voices:

“Hello, Tjabo [an upper-class male nickname]”, says Nils. “Why, good day to you, von Färsen [an upper-class surname]!” answers David in a raspy old man’s voice. The joke continues with lines about how they are going hunting and that they are impatiently waiting for their next share dividend. They parody the temporary guests by using their voices. And in their joke, the upper-class, older generation is made into the hilarious Other. Victor, a

classmate, brings up this incident when I ask him what he thinks the school's reputation is:

1	Victor:	They say that it's a snobby school and things like that (.) But I think it's
2		a little more traditional because like, <u>the 1900s</u> , then maybe it was
3		[yeah] yeah, because the other day [---] students from the class of sixty-
4		two came
5	Rickard:	From sixty-two?
6	Victor:	Yeah, who were here [yes] (.) they were all like that, yeah, I'm no, I'm not
7		prejudiced, but everybody was:: (.) you know, <u>suits</u> and [yeah, OK OK] snobby.
8	Rickard:	What, so they were visiting their old school, were they?
9	Victor:	<u>Yes</u> (.) and they were <u>surprised</u> to see how it looked <u>now</u>
10		[Rickard laughs]
11	Rickard:	Hmm, interesting, what were they surprised at then?
12	Victor:	Oh well, I (.) never spoke to them (.) but you could tell by the
13		looks on their faces like, "oh, how multicultural it is <u>now</u> " kind of thing
14		(.) It's not necessarily a bad thing, but maybe they were thinking, "Well,
15		before it was only the central districts here" (.) now there's some more
16		people from all over kind of thing, eh: that's what I reckon they were
17		thinking.

The suit-wearing, upper-class, older gentlemen are acted out with stylized voices that say, "Why, good day to you, von Färsen". Likewise, through using reported speech Victor relates possibly xenophobic ideas to the upper-class, older Other. The temporality of Victor's small story also assigns them to a bygone era in "the 1900s". Victor had not spoken to the older visitors, but he interprets their facial expressions to mean that "they think the school has become far too multicultural". In other words, through his story he makes the point that the school's diversity is noticeable and can be perceived as a problem, but at the same time he is personally defending it. When we continue our conversation, Victor adds that he has never encountered any racism during his time at school. "But it depends on what you're like; it's maybe because my Swedish is better; I'm more Swedish than what the natural science class in the west wing is", he explains.

Victor's self-representation is confirmed by other students: "What about Victor", exclaims Gabriella, a classmate of Victor's, on another occasion in a conversation with her friend My: "...just because he is *dark-skinned* doesn't mean I consider him an immigrant!"

“Neither do I”, adds My, “he wears the same clothes as us, but it’s because he *acts* in a certain way”.

“But if Victor talked like ‘yo, yeah’, *then* he’d get that label”, clarifies Gabriella.

This is one of the few times in my data that skin colour is mentioned, which has been possible by pointing out that race has *no* significance, i.e. if you first emphasize that race is of no importance, then it nevertheless seems possible to carefully comment on it. By saying “just because he is *dark-skinned* doesn’t mean I consider him [Victor] an immigrant”, Gabriella is protecting herself from being accused of making distinctions while her statement maintains that the Swedish are normally white, dress nicely and behave well. Victor passes as Swedish because he can “behave” and does not say “yo, yeah”.

### The b-word

So far I have given a few snippets of stories in which ethnically and racially loaded topics were presented in such a way that allowed the speaker not to be accused of racism or xenophobia. But there were also a few occasions during my field studies when derogatory ethnic or racial words were used overtly. The word *babbe* (plural: *babbar*) is a case in point.

The word received media attention in autumn 2012 when the evening newspaper *Expressen* published a video clip in which prominent Sweden Democrat politicians threatened passers-by in Stockholm and used vulgar and derogatory language when speaking to them. One of these words was *babbe*. In the video, the word seems to be a derogatory name for someone who is not white and, in the logic of the Sweden Democrat politicians, therefore not Swedish. It is a word that I have never come across in multilingual suburban schools where I have conducted my earlier fieldworks, and I have not once heard anyone reclaim or use it as a self-titled, subversive label.

It so happens that I did hear the word used in the prestigious city centre school. This can be the case when someone cites the racist Other. Like when Sophie explains that people might have prejudices about her school because it has recently “become a babbe school” and that she has heard people ask if there are “loads of *babbar* who go there on the natural science programme?” She is quick to add that she thinks it sounds prejudiced to say so. But on a few occasions, the word is also used without referring to the absent racist Other. Like when Julia recounts an incident that occurred the week before when she was the victim of an offensive act in the school cafeteria:

1	Julia:	So a little thing that happened eh (.) last <u>week</u> got me: so
2		(1.0) <u>mad</u> even if maybe I shouldn't have, because you
3		shouldn't lump everyone together [no]. But eh (.) me and my girlfriends had
4		been sitting eating <u>lunch</u> (.) at a round table in the cafeteria [yeah] and then
5		uh many of them had gone out to <u>smoke</u> , so it was just me and Elizabeth
6		left (.) Then come three people, eh, yeah, <i>babbar</i> y'know, one of the
7		girls (.) or one of them, there were two boys and <u>one</u> girl and this
8		girl (xxx) in school like (.) is a bit <u>butch</u> (butchig), you know [yeah?]. Goes
9		round in sweatsuits, no make-up, y'know; just kind of doesn't give a shit
10		about anything or anyone, and so they come <u>over</u> and ask if it's free, and
11		we're like, "Yeah, sure, we were just leaving, take a seat!" And then
12		Elizabeth goes a bit <u>ahead</u> . I get up, take my <u>plate</u> and am about to like:: say
13		goodbye and wish them a nice <u>day</u> (.) and then that girl says to me, "Ey, wait
14		a minute", like "Yeah, sure" (.) Then she spits <u>out</u> her chewing gum on my
15		plate! (.) And it was the kind of thing that just made me (laughs) (1.0) so I
16		was totally <u>shocked</u> , so I actually wanted to tip my plate over her like, "You
17		can throw away your fucking chewing gum yourself!" but I don't think you
18		should do this [no], so that, I think it's an unwritten rule that you don't do
19		that if you don't know the person, eh (.) but I was so totally shocked.
20	Rickard:	What did you do?
21	Julia:	Well, I was just like "have a nice day", and I just walked away, you know,
22		but then I got totally <u>mad</u> and was like (.) What the hell is happening to this
23		school? You just can't help thinking these things, and then is this, is this the
24		way it's going to <u>be</u> ? (.) Do we have to have a small intake of
25		behavioural::cases so that people can like come here and behave themselves?
26		[ok] So it's things like this that make people (2.0) mad (.) just like of course
27		they get mad at <u>us</u> because <u>we</u> behave in a particular way.

This is a story about an insult, and Julia's reaction to the spat-out chewing gum is easy to understand. Yet, she did not use any coarse language during this encounter with the students in the cafeteria. According to her account, "Have a nice day" was her response to the spat-out gum. Her politeness demonstrates her tolerance and self-control. The derogatory words came later when she recounted the incident and called the student a "babbe" (line 6) who is "butch" (line 8) and "doesn't give a shit about anything or anyone" (lines 9–10).

The use of *babbe* and the other derogatory words must be examined in relation to the subject of the story. I suggest that the first-person narrator can claim their right to use taboo words if they first adopt a vulnerable position. Through displaying being in affect due to the encounter with the

Other, the derogatory terms seem possible to use. Affect and vulnerability legitimate the *babbe* word. As a matter of fact, loaded descriptions are needed to establish the seriousness and not underplay the story. Situations that are even worse than the insult the word *babbe* constitutes possibly justify the word being used. This could be understood as another example of Gal and Woolard's authority of authenticity (2001). Julia claims the victim category so as to be entitled to use coarse words.

Yet, considering all the disclaimers used in the story, it still seems difficult for Julia to claim the right to use these descriptions. Thus, she also uses a series of other rhetorical tools to avoid appearing to be derogatory. First, she has already in the interview celebrated diversity and repudiated racism. Her anti-racist position is established by the time we come to this part of the conversation. Seeing as Julia is anti-racist, it is safer to tell the story.

Second, Julia presents her moral points as if they were universal; as if everybody would have reacted as she did. She says, "You just can't help thinking these things" (line 23) and "So it's things like this that make people...mad" (line 26). As Augoustinos and Every state, "to appear not prejudiced, it is important to present one's views as reasonable, rational, and thoughtfully arrived at" (2007: 127). By referring to "you" and "people", Julia presents the criticism as general, as if it reflects an objective world rather than her own ideas.

Third, Julia begins her story with the comment that she "got mad". She says that "you shouldn't really" because "you shouldn't lump everyone together" (line 3). At the end of the story, she also says that "of course they get mad at *us* because *we* behave in a particular way" (line 27). Through these disclaimers, she forestalls any objections to her descriptions and again establishes her anti-racist position.

Fourth, Julia also quotes herself as being the polite one who respectfully says "have a nice day" (line 13). She refers to the basic ethical "unwritten rules" (line 18) that she follows. She is demonstrating that she can restrain her feelings while the girl called a "babbe" is described as "butchig" (butch), "she has no make-up" and "doesn't give a shit about anything or anyone" (lines 8–10). Moreover, in the description of the *babbe*, who says, "Ey, wait a minute" (lines 13–14) – said in a non-standard Swedish style – the non-Swedish, non-white speaker of urban youth styles is associated with those who break unwritten rules. In my earlier works on public debates on so called Rinkeby Swedish (Jonsson 2007; in press; Jonsson and Milani 2009; Milani and Jonsson 2011; 2012), this linguistic style has been accused of being sexist and understood as an index of a non-Swedish masculinity.

When Julia now describes the “babbe” – a girl who “has no make-up” and says things like “ey, wait a minute” – a female masculinity (Halberstam 1998) is invoked that feeds well into the macro-discourse about problematic masculinities in multilingual Swedish suburbs. The intersection of gender and class cannot be dissociated from the vocalization of a non-standard voice here. It is a complex nexus that allows Julia to position the other girl as the bad “Other” whilst implicitly presenting herself as the normative, polite, feminine, upper-middle-class Swedish self.

### The mafia room

Let me, as a final example, add data from the same school, collected two years later. I went back to the school for a new project. This time I had a special interest in the use of urban youth styles among high-performing multilingual students on the natural science programme. It soon became apparent that my recordings of everyday talk principally captured a natural science jargon between the students, which they used both in lessons and during breaks to perform identities as ambitious students, or to put it more bluntly, they talked in a nerdy way about mathematical problems to be solved or about the content of future chemistry tests.

I could not help asking myself: is *this* the class some call the school’s messy *babbe* class? After a while, the students I am following give me a piece of advice: if I am interested in multilingualism, I should instead visit the school’s “mafia room”. They explain that this is a room where some students hang out during break time. Kendal, a student, describes the room as “multicultural”. Aram says that it is noisy, and it is pointless to spend time there if you want to concentrate on your work. Aram then takes me to a glass door that leads from the school corridor into a room with some students sitting inside. I enter that room; it is 15 square metres and has a sofa, some chairs and student toilets. I spend some time there and get to hear the students reflect over how they are perceived at school. Bahir says that many seem afraid of them.

When sitting in what is called the mafia room, I notice that every time I am there, I am the only white person. I also observe that other students and teachers sometimes look into the room through the glass window in the door but then walk past quickly without coming in and saying hello. It is precisely these looks that provoke Bahir.

“Still, the worst thing was”, he says, “when the head teacher came in one time”. “She told us that we have to let all the students in the school come into the room!”

“What!? Everybody *is* welcome in here!” was Bahir’s reply to the head teacher.

One evening the school is the target of a racist act. The right-wing nationalist organization Nordisk Ungdom (Nordic Youth) put fliers in the students’ lockers, and its name was scrawled in large capital letters both on the wall in the corridor where the newly arrived refugee students on the language introduction programme hang around and in the mafia room. The right-wing organization obviously knows the layout of the school: their message was scrawled on the walls of the non-white rooms.

Up until this point, I have tried to carefully examine the anti-racist narratives told by some anti-racist students. However, the name “mafia room”, which many students seem to use, does not sound very politically correct. And in the racist scribbles on the walls of that room, I found hostility to diversity – an idea that stands in sharp contrast to the colour-blind anti-racist discourse. Let me, therefore, by way of a conclusion, discuss the performative work of anti-racist talk.

## Discussion

The problem of “hunting racists” in our analysis is that such an idea conceptualizes racism in strictly individualist terms so that racism “only exists in visible actions, such as hateful words, uttered by bigots” (Hodges 2016: 11). There are no racists to be hunted among the participants in my study. Rather, I have discussed a Swedish colour-blind anti-racist discourse that is politically correct at the same time as it may both include racial labels and repress the topic of race. The students in the study are competent users of this discourse.

Critical race scholars offer an analytical tool for pointing out the blind spots of such colour-blind anti-racist talk. In addition, the perspective urges us to talk about race, which for a long time has been silenced in Swedish public discourse. However, I suggest that the language which we think of as critical can also lend itself to not-so-radical speech acts. I have showed how politically correct vocabulary, with words like “diversity”, “new influences” and “mix”, can be employed to point out the Other. Or how references to certain places – like Fisksätra, Enskede or west wing – can replace more tabooed ways of labelling and categorizing people. And verbal hygiene acts

in public debates – based on a critical agenda – can also be employed to perform the anti-racist position, as the opposite of the racist Other.

Furthermore, I have showed in the case of Julia that racially charged words like *babbe* are used in complex ways and are not always possible to place along the racist – anti-racist binary axis. Through performing the normative femininity, which Julia did by telling a story about herself as the polite and tolerant person, her narrative simultaneously evoked the *babbe* category, which is associated with vulgarity, aggression and, by extension, whose presence risks ruining the school’s pleasant atmosphere.

Let me finally return to Ahmed in order to further discuss this point. In her analysis of universities’ diversity policy documents, Ahmed (2006) found specific institutional speech acts that declare organizations as being diverse and as committed to racial equality. However, such speech acts, Ahmed states, are *non-performatives*; since they do not bring about the effects that they name (ibid. 105). I suggest that such performatives are possible to analyse not just in policy texts but also in mundane anti-racist talk. “Non-performatives” might be a misleading word though. Of course such speech acts do things, but they instead do something else than what they say they do. In a text on disability and political correctness in Sweden and Denmark, Don Kulick (2014: 101) states that “language can become misrecognized as the site where speakers satisfy themselves that action takes place”. He continues, “Where language is perceived to be the site of progressive action, action is taken in language” (ibid. 101). Put differently, talk may become a substitute for other actions.

Transposed to my case, celebrating diversity in the school’s official values, or using correct words in mundane talk, does not seem to prevent the school from segregated rooms, suspicious gazes and processes where non-white bodies are being interpellated as out of place. I, therefore, advocate a detailed analysis of how colour-blind anti-racism operates in mundane talk. And more precisely, we need to take a close look at those linguistic resources that people may employ to take anti-racist action in language, including the words we use, to do other things than what we say we do, or even those anti-racist utterances employed to do nothing at all.

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## Transcription conventions

(.)	a short pause of less than one second
(2.0)	a longer pause, time in seconds
(butchig)	explanations of untranslatable expressions
[yes yes]	audience/interviewer’s voice, confirming the speaker’s point
:	extended sound
::	longer extension

shocked

“ ”

[---]

underlined, said with stress  
quotation marks indicate the speaker's  
reference to someone else's voice, i.e. "ey,  
wait a minute"  
missing speech

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(Dis)Connecting U.S.  
Latina/o Cultural Identities and Language

The Case of Mexican-Nuevomexicano  
Families in northern New Mexico

*Lillian Gorman*

In early 2009, the immigrants' rights group based out of Santa Fe, New Mexico *Somos un Pueblo Unido* launched a public information campaign entitled *Somos Primos*. The campaign sought to open dialogue between two distinct groups in New Mexico: Hispanic New Mexicans (*Nuevomexicanos*) and Mexican immigrants. In order to dispel what the organization founder called "the myths that are perpetuated to divide *las comunidades Nuevo Mexicanas y Mexicanas* in northern New Mexico" (García 2011), the 2009 campaign wished to highlight the long-term interactions, lack of knowledge, and obscured histories between *Nuevomexicano* communities and first and second-generation Mexican populations in New Mexico. The role of language took center stage in the public dialogues and the campaign encouraged an open conversation about tensions surrounding Spanish, English, and language loss. Although the campaign was short-lived, it emphasized that first and second generation Mexican communities and *Nuevomexicanos* have not really been studied in linguistic or cultural contexts together. This article serves to explore these linguistic and cultural contexts through examining more closely the ways in which these communities deploy narratives that connect cultural identities to language use.

In an extensive study of the history of Chicano families in the Southwest United States from 1848 to the present-day, Griswold del Castillo notes that "in the nineteenth century a third- generation Mexican-heritage population hardly existed, except among the Hispanos of New Mexico, a group which did not consider itself of Mexican nationality or culture" (1984: 122). This group of Hispanos in New Mexico was comprised of more than half (60,000) of the 100,000 inhabitants of the Mexican territory ceded to the U.S. in 1848. According to Gutiérrez, "Most communities of Mexican origin in the United States trace their roots to waves of immigration that have occurred throughout the twentieth century. Only a proportionally small number identify with the first group of Mexican-Americans" (2004:44). Yet,

a majority of the Hispanic population in New Mexico does, in fact, identify with this first group of Mexican-Americans. And, as Griswold del Castillo points out, this New Mexican population does not identify with a Mexican nationality. John Nieto-Phillips elaborates on the historical context of this disassociation from a Mexican national identity: “Mexican independence from Spain in 1821 did not significantly alter the ethnic consciousness of northern New Mexicans, nor did it instill a profound and pervasive Mexican consciousness rooted in national sentiment...” (2004: 37–8). The gap in researching this population of Hispanic New Mexicans (*Nuevomexicanos*) in relationship to more recently arrived Mexican immigrant communities is significant. This gap is particularly apparent given that the Mexican immigrant presence in New Mexico has steadily increased over the past thirty years. The American Community Survey illustrates that of the foreign-born population in New Mexico in 2008, 24.2 percent entered the country prior to 1980, 20.0 percent between 1980 and 1989, 26.1 percent between 1990 and 1999, and 29.6 percent in 2000 or later. Because the Mexican foreign born made up 72.8 percent of all immigrants in New Mexico in 2008 (“American Community Survey” 2008), this increase in an immigrant foreign-born presence points directly to Mexican immigration. Also, it is important to note that these numbers may be undercounting the Mexican foreign-born population in New Mexico due to inaccurate figures regarding undocumented individuals.

I propose that one lens through which to explore these understudied interactions is through what I term “ethnolinguistic contact zones.” I use the phrase “ethnolinguistic contact zone” recalling both Silverstein’s notion of ethnolinguistic identity and Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of “contact zones”. Silverstein (2003) highlights the central roles of language and language difference in the formation of cultural identities. Mary Louise Pratt designates “contact zones” as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (1992:7). Combining the two concepts allows for exploration of the dynamic meeting places in which *Nuevomexicanos* and first and second-generation Mexicans negotiate their respective conceptualizations of linguistic and cultural sameness and difference in northern New Mexico. Moreover, I propose that the mixed Mexican-*Nuevomexicano* family unit serves as a particularly intimate and useful ethnolinguistic contact zone from which these dynamic meeting places emerge from within the same mixed family. Schecter and Bayley emphasize that “there is no necessary opposition between a focus on the contact zone

and a focus on the home front because, in many cases, the home front, whether conceived as the immediate community or as the individual household, is also a contact zone” (2002:178–9). Specifically focusing on the adult children within these mixed-family contact zones (whom I will refer to as Mexican-Nuevomexicanos or MXNMX), I pose the question: In what ways does language inform the Mexican-Nuevomexicano conversations about cultural identities?

When discussing cultural identity in the Mexican-Nuevomexicano context, I think it is particularly relevant to highlight Stuart Hall’s theories. Hall’s work illustrates that movement and flow are always present in conceptualizations of cultural identities. Hall explains,

Cultural identity...is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being.’ It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power...identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (1990: 225)

Hall highlights movement in his theories through the simultaneous processes of “being” and “becoming” as well as the emphasis on the temporal interplay between distinct positionalities.

Appadurai’s framework of “scapes” adds an additional dimension to this process of positioning. When explaining his proposition of different global landscapes, he explains that the suffix of –scape “indicates that these are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors” (1996:33). The Mexican-Nuevomexicano identity narratives undergo continuous situating and (re) positioning according to the distinct perspectives represented by the Mexican, Nuevomexicano, and Mexican- Nuevomexicano “angles of vision.” Circulating within these notions of positionalities and perspectives is the idea of difference. Hall underscores the importance of “difference” when considering cultural identity as he explains the diaspora experience. He states, “The diaspora experience...is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not

despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (1990:235). The concepts of transformation, difference, and positionalities infuse cultural identity with notions of continuous movement. These ideas suggest that identities are also relational. Clary-Lemon explains, “The idea that one’s individual and collective identity may be seen as fluid, and always in relation to the Other, has offered a long-standing basis for understanding the constructs of ‘identity’, which rests specifically in determining what one is by virtue of what one is not...This model...allows that identities not be fixed in time or space, even by linguistic construction” (2010: 8). Therefore, we not only have a model that emphasizes the fluidity (or flows of identity), but also its relational and situated nature.

### Language and Latinidad: A Key Theoretical Framework

This project engages Latina/o cultural studies, and specifically theories of *Latinidad*, with sociolinguistics/sociology of language and linguistic ethnography. Linguistic ethnography takes as a point of departure a “dynamics of interdisciplinarity” (Rampton et al. 2015:21) and with its interpretative approach to studying “the local and immediate actions of actors from their point of view and...how these interactions are embedded in wider social contexts and structures” (Copland and Creese 2015:13), it provides an ideal methodology for considering the Mexican-Nuevomexicano ethnolinguistic contact zone. Appropriately, the notion of *contact* in *contact zone* already brings to mind certain linguistic and cultural associations. For linguists, perhaps, the term “contact” activates notions of languages in contact or dialect contact. For those hailing from a cultural studies framework, maybe the idea of contact evokes images of conquest, colonialism, or immigration. My point is that the *contact* in ethnolinguistic *contact zone* functions on several conceptual and disciplinary levels and it is exactly this multi-level, multi-modal, and interdisciplinary vision that this study embodies.

Theories of Latinidad further enrich my analysis of the heterogeneity among U.S. Latinas/os, particularly in the context of studying identities and language ideologies. Essentially, Latino/a cultural studies and Latinidad allow me to talk about identity in meaningful ways. Linguistic ethnography provides me with the tools to talk about language in a meaningful way. Uniting these approaches allows for language to take a more central role in Latinidad and for Latinidad to be utilized as a tool for analysis of language.

And the *contact* in ethnolinguistic *contact* zones allows me to work at this intersection of disciplines and methodologies. Through an interdisciplinary ethnographic approach, this project focuses on the macro and micro ethnolinguistic contact zones that emerge from the households of mixed Mexican-Nuevomexicano families in northern New Mexico. Acknowledging the internal differences within the Latina/o population in New Mexico already insists on a terminology and methodology that recognizes the lived dynamics and interactions between and among diverse Latina/o groups. In order to productively engage with the narratives the families provide, and connect their family stories with their identity formations and language practices, it is necessary to utilize frames of analysis that invoke the larger socio-historical contexts of these families. Theories of *Latinidad* permit this type of analysis and allow for a richer understanding of Mexican, Nuevomexicano, and Mexican-Nuevomexicano identities. *Latinidad* can be employed as an “approach that unveils the affinities between and among historical minorities” (2003: 93). This notion of *Latinidad* provides a space for agency and self-affirmation in which differences and similarities among Latinas/os, in this case Mexicans and Nuevomexicanos, are simultaneously activated and deactivated. Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez observes that this process can even result in “an increasing consciousness and affinity among U.S. Latinos/as” (1999:15). This notion is nicely complemented by Rúa and García (2007) as they conceptualize *Latinidad* as an “ethnoracial configuration and socio-cultural practice in placemaking, where a shared sense of being Latina/o transpires within diverse social settings and associations” (2007: 318). This “placemaking” process, however, does not ignore the existence of Aparicio’s concept of “competing authenticities” among Latinas/os. It does, however, draw attention to the dynamic nature and co-existence of these processes within Latina/o communities. By simultaneously contextualizing Mexican experiences in Nuevomexicano experiences and vice versa, we gain a more nuanced understanding of identity and language among Latinas/os in New Mexico while simultaneously inserting New Mexico into discussions regarding language and inter-Latina/o interactions throughout the larger Latina/o U.S.

This is an important point of departure due to the fact that previous studies of language and identity in New Mexico have not conceptualized Nuevomexicanos, Mexicans, or the mixed family units in terms of inter-Latina/o interactions. For this reason, the study of inter-group dynamics between Mexicans and Nuevomexicanos (and the romantic unions between the two groups) is productively informed by incorporating the increasing

amount of studies that focus on inter-Latina/o interactions (Pérez 2003; DeGenova and Ramos-Zayas 2003; Rúa and García 2007) and the increasing research regarding mixed Latina/o identities and these individuals' linguistic profiles, (Rúa 2001; Potowski and Matts 2008; Potowski 2010; Potowski 2014; Potowski 2016; Aparicio 2010; Aparicio 2017) rather than intergenerational studies of Mexican populations (Galindo 1995; Menchaca 1999; Vila 2000; Ochoa 2004; Mendoza-Denton 2008) or the limited previous ethnographic work conducted among Latinas/os in New Mexico (Pugach 1998; Roberts 2001). The Mexican-Nuevomexicano family unit problematizes any notion of a homogenous Latina/o population in northern New Mexico and challenges us to consider the everyday sites of contact, struggle, and interaction as "complex moments of convergence" (Rúa and García 2007: 336) under a framework of *Latinidad*. In the present analysis, I am interested in the complex linguistic moments of convergence within the mixed Mexican-Nuevomexicano families. Zentella (2007) emphasizes the utility of applying theories of *Latinidad* to linguistic situations in order to highlight linguistic identities, hierarchies, and ideologies. Theorizing a linguistic *Latinidad* allows me to continue Rúa and García's call to recognize that "identity formations must be understood as dynamic processes of interaction outlined by the structures of everyday life" (2007:336). For this reason, *Latinidad* plays a key role in addressing the central concern of the present discussion: the ways in which language informs conceptualizations around cultural identities in the Mexican-Nuevomexicano families and, specifically, among the Mexican-Nuevomexicano (MXNMX) adult children.

Related to my use of *Latinidad* as a central theoretical framework, I would like to clarify my use of the term "Latino" throughout this article. New Mexicans have clear inclinations towards certain terms of ethnic identity. As Gorman (2015) demonstrates, the term "Latino" has not been one of these terms. It is not my wish to impose the use of the term "Latino" on communities that clearly do not use it. However, I do think it is a useful term in the spirit of Aparicio, not to erase historical and cultural specificities between national-origin groups, but rather to "tease out the power differentials and the historical, social and cultural dilemmas that these terms evoke as we identify the interactions between and among peoples of various Latin American national identities" (2009: 625). For this reason when I highlight the power dynamics or knowledge that is produced between the groups, as well as the theoretical framework of *Latinidad* itself, I will use the term strategically throughout my study. Otherwise, I will use

the identifiers of “Nuevomexicanos,” “Mexicans,” and “Mexican-Nuevomexicanos” to reference members of the mixed family units.

### Participants and Methods: Mexicans and Nuevomexicanos as Ethnolinguistic Contact Zones

The Mexican-Nuevomexicano families represent a unique opportunity to explore the heterogeneous daily lived experiences of a family unit whose heritage is linked to “national” groups both inside and outside of the U.S. Frances Aparicio conceptualizes a framework of *Latinidad* based on this heterogeneity. She explains, “I suggest a reading of both *latino* and *latinidad* as terms that carry within them a diverse array of competing authenticities or paradigms of identity that, together, and in conflict with each other, constitute the heterogeneous experiences of various Latino national groups.” (1999:10). Keeping in mind Aparicio’s “heterogeneous experiences of various Latino national groups,” the Mexican-Nuevomexicano families consist of one Nuevomexicano parent, one Mexican first-generation<sup>1</sup> immigrant parent, and at least one Mexican-Nuevomexicano teenage or adult child. These families represent a distinct Latina/o profile. As I mentioned, those who identify as Nuevomexicanos in the family unit do not have a recent immigration history and do not identify as Mexican (Nieto-Phillips 2004). New Mexico is, in fact, the homeland of these individuals’ families. The first-generation Mexican parents do, in fact, identify with a Mexican national identity. The approach of linguistic ethnography presents the opportunity to capture the daily lived experiences of this profile. Rampton et al. underscores that linguistic ethnography “views language as communicative action functioning in social contexts in ongoing routines of peoples’ daily lives” (2015: 27). Additionally, the social context of northern New Mexico itself serves as a sort of macro-level ethnolinguistic contact zone in which we can explore these communicative actions. The region embodies the socio-historical linguistic legacies of both Nuevomexicanos and Mexicans. The use of the Spanish language in the region extends back to approximately 250 years of Spanish colonial rule and twenty-four years of Mexican rule.

Using qualitative research methods and taking as a point of departure the case study and ethnographic approach of Schecter and Bayley (2002)

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<sup>1</sup> In denoting first generation, I adhere to Silva-Corvalan’s established generational distinctions in which G1 denotes an individual born abroad that came to the U.S. after the age of 12.

and Yin (2009), the extensive work that Potowski has undertaken in gathering the Chicago MXPR interview corpus documented in Potowski (2016) as well as the interview methods utilized in the New Mexico Colorado Spanish Survey (Bills and Vigil 2008), the core method for data collection in my study of the Mexican-Nuevomexicano family unit consisted of semi-structured interviews and participant-observation. I conducted 40 interviews with nine Mexican-Nuevomexicano families from eight northern New Mexico towns<sup>2</sup> over a one-year period. I conducted interviews with every family member within the Mexican-Nuevomexicano families separately in the language preference of the participant and then engaged in a follow-up group family interview. Over the span of almost two years, these nine families welcomed me into their homes, kitchens, to their dining room tables, their backyards, birthday parties, places of work, and places of worship. We shared conversations over meals, church fiestas, into the late hours of the night, and even over beers. Rather than simply report on the descriptive terms used by family members to define themselves culturally within their narratives, the present analysis focuses on the tensions and contradictions within the meaning-making processes circulating around the link between cultural identity and language. It is not my intent to arrive at some over-arching or all-encompassing fixed identity term to which the Mexican- Nuevomexicano families ascribe, but rather to locate the role of language in these discursive constructions. For the present article, I draw my data from un-elicited instances from which the Mexican-Nuevomexicanos discussed cultural identities and cultural identity terms from within the narratives of their interviews, follow-up and clarification questions to these responses, and the Mexican-Nuevomexicanos' elicited responses the question, "What terms do you use to describe your cultural identity?"

### Having a Culture, Having a Language

Language ideologies linking Spanish proficiency with certain identity labels surface as a salient discourse within the family narratives. Bonnie Urciuoli (2008) refers to this connection as the "lamination of culture and language" or the assumption that culture and language always co-occur. Interestingly, unlike Potowski (2014), discourses about language and identity do not con-

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<sup>2</sup> The New Mexico towns included Algodones, Bernalillo, Santa Fe, Ribera, Leyba, Las Vegas, and Taos.

verge in the Mexican- Nuevomexicano narratives through any accounts of (or remarks of others noticing) the use of a particular Spanish dialect or Spanish lexical choice that indexes either Mexican or Nuevomexicano identity. Before exploring the ways in which this “lamination of culture and language” manifest themselves within the narratives, I would like to briefly address the identity terms that the MXNMX participants actually use. Of the 14 Mexican-Nuevomexicano subjects, two identify as Mexican/Mexicana (14%) and four (29%) identify as Mexican-American. One Mexican-Nuevomexicana (7%) identifies as Mexicana-Hispana and one participant (7%) identifies as Chicana. Half of the Mexican-Nuevomexicano subjects identify as Hispanic (43%). It is clear that the Mexican-Nuevomexicanos do not all conceptualize their cultural identities in the same way by the use of five different terms.

Returning to the link between identity and language, Alicia of Bernalillo defines the term “Hispanic” as based in locality *and* language. She explains, “For me, personally, it just means being from New Mexico and being a Spanish speaker.” Similarly, although Verónica of Algodones, NM does not identify with the term “Chicano,” when she does define it, she again invokes place and linguistic ability. She describes, “Uh, Chicana, to me, is someone who was born and raised here and learned Spanish here and kind of just absorbed the culture – Hispanic culture from here.” Mexicano-Nuevomexicana Edna (of Ribera, NM) also defines “Hispanic” as distinctly New Mexican with Spanish language ability. She states, “Hispanic to me means born in New Mexico speaking Spanish.” Olivia of Española, advances these associations into further specificity. She states that being Hispanic means that “I was raised northern New Mexican and I can speak Spanish and my parents are Hispanic.” It is fascinating that Olivia’s description emphasizes the “localness” or “New Mexicanness” of identifying as Hispanic and also equates this with an ability to speak Spanish. Olivia’s cultural identity indexes a linguistic identity as a competent Spanish speaker.

Another dimension to the “lamination of culture and language” described above occurs in Antonio of Bernalillo’s disassociation with the term “Mexican.” When I asked him if he would ever use the term “Mexican” to describe himself, he states, “Maybe once I’m older and I would then know how to actually speak the language. Because I mean I really don’t want to claim that I’m Mexican, when I don’t even know how to speak Spanish. So maybe once I’m older and I know how to speak it, then yeah.” Antonio seems to view himself in the process of “becoming Mexican.” He states that he prefers to identify as “Hispanic.” Yet, he clarifies, “but I have like strong Mexican blood in me since my dad is from Mexico.” The co-occurrence of

language and culture in Antonio's definition of "Mexican" precludes him from being able to presently claim a Mexican identity. He views an "authentically" Mexican identity as dependent on his own increased linguistic ability. Yet, when I asked Antonio if Spanish was necessary to identify as "Hispanic" he clearly responded that it was not necessary. Antonio's thoughts are very similar to Ana's opinions about the cultural identity of her Mexican-Nuevomexicano son, Rolando. Ana is a Nuevomexicana from Santa Fe. She explains,

and I think we always tell our kids, you know, don't be embarrassed of your culture or your heritage. And you know, you're Mexican, you better, darn better speak Spanish, you know, because that is who – I mean, that is part of who you are and you need to know the language...I think that they have a higher bar they have to achieve than, than I do. Because, I mean, ah, my family spoke Spanish. Um, and I – you know, I don't know. I guess I don't, I didn't really feel that way for us.

Ana echoes Antonio's conceptualization of "Mexican" as equivalent to a certain level of linguistic ability *and* linguistic responsibility. Like Antonio, Ana emphasizes that these requirements are not necessary when one identifies as "Hispanic" or, what Ana terms, "us." These particular manifestations of Urciuoli's "lamination of culture and language" highlight the (re)productions of these linkages and provide insight into the ongoing processes of inclusion and exclusion as the Mexican-Nuevomexicanos theorize about their cultural identities. For example, linguistic ability is included when defining certain identity terms which, in turn, includes and excludes certain individuals. Urciuoli explains further, "Language has a complicated place in processes of identity formation. It occupies a place in the list of things one 'has' when one 'has' a culture. But the link is not a necessary one, it is not always there, and when it is there, it may or may not signify belonging" (Urciuoli 2008: 264)<sup>3</sup>

Milagros Navarro of Ribera, NM grapples with this idea of "having a language" as equivalent to "having a culture" when she speaks about those who have Hispanic last names, but do not speak Spanish. She comments,

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<sup>3</sup> Valdés (2011) focuses on the link between language and identity formation among two G3 pre-adolescent young girls and is relevant to Urciuoli's ideas about "having" a culture.

...people who have a Hispanic last name but who don't speak Spanish? I just, I don't know. I don't know what to consider them. I guess I'd consider them Hispanic but like when I think about it a lot more, I just think well, they're kind of lost. They're just like they're not Hispanic. They're not white. They're not anything. They're just, it kind of seems like they're just this invisible people who doesn't have a name for themselves, and that's kind of how I view them. Like anyone around here who has that Spanish last name and who speaks Spanish, that's Hispanic. But anyone who just has that name has just, and doesn't have that language has completely lost who they are or what kind of made them into who they are. That's just kind of how I view it...It's a loss of identity. A whole big group of people who are part of a lost generation.

Navarro, at first, attributes the designation of "Hispanic" to those who do not "have" the language. Yet, as her thoughts continue to flow, the designation shifts. Those with a Spanish last name who do not speak Spanish are then removed from the identity category of "Hispanic" into a group that seems to be identity-less. Milagros's words seem to enforce a certain policing of identity boundaries around linguistic ability. Suzanne Romaine comments on these ethnolinguistic boundaries:

when the link between language and culture is intact, boundaries and identities may be taken for granted. However, because identities emerge in response to economic, cultural and political forces, perceptions realign themselves to changing situations. In some groups there may be debate about which particular aspect of their culture is of prime significance, or whether someone can be a 'real' member of the cultural group without speaking the associated language. (2011:11)

Clearly, Milagros's words express a boundary of exclusion that judges authentic group membership in terms of Spanish ability. Alexa of Taos expresses a similar opinion. She states, "Well, like people say that they're Hispanic. Like the people – like – I don't know. I think if they're Hispanic, they should know like some Spanish. Like I know a lot of Hispanics that don't know like nothing in Spanish." Alexa's use of the phrase "say that they're Hispanic" seems to call into question this identity because of the lack of linguistic ability in Spanish. This comment aligns with Aparicio's observation that "because of their 'lack' of competence in Spanish, most English-dominant Latinos/Latinas have been excluded from consideration as *truly* Mexican or Hispanic" (2000: 268). Interestingly, whereas Milagros removes the designation of "Hispanic" and labels them as "invisible," Alexa

continues to use the term as an identifier. The fact that Alexa affirms that she knows “a lot of Hispanics” that do not have this linguistic ability adds an element of simultaneous recognition and rejection regarding these particular individuals.

Although the preceding Mexican-Nuevomexicano accounts seem to affirm an inextricable connection between linguistic ability and cultural identity, Alexa’s words acknowledge that Hispanics without this ability do, in fact, exist. Verónica concurs. She states, “I mean to me if they are Martínez they are Hispanic. They have to have Hispanic somewhere; whether or not they speak Spanish or not.” Perhaps, this “having Hispanic somewhere” align with Carmen Fought’s words regarding linguistic ability and identity. Fought explains,

...it is also important to note that the linguistic expression of identity for Latinos and Latinas in the USA is not only or even primarily signaled by an ability to speak Spanish. A large number of the speakers born here, especially from the third generation and later, are completely monolingual in English. (2006:70)<sup>4</sup>

Nicolás Navarro, the Nuevomexicano father of Milagros and Rosalinda of Ribera, refers to this marking in the form of “cultural awareness.” Nicolás comments on Hispanics in the area that do not speak Spanish. He describes,

I feel that there’s less Spanish spoken, but by the same token I see um the younger kids are more aware of their culture and more proud to be a Hispanic...they’ll still say a few words. Maybe they’re not um able to have a complete conversation in Spanish...At the same time, their awareness of their culture is still alive.

Nicolás and Verónica reference a cultural marking that goes beyond linguistic marking. Even in terms of linguistic ability, there is a certain validation of the linguistic “pieces” that these Hispanics may still possess. Even if Spanish proficiency is absent, its absence is still invoked at some level in discussions about cultural identity.

With this extra-linguistic cultural marking in mind, I would like to explore Romaine’s comments a little more closely. She explains that “iden-

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<sup>4</sup> Although the Census does not quantify numbers of Latinos in the U.S. by generation level we have no way of knowing exact numbers of G3s in the country. However, simply utilizing the most recent numbers of Latinos born in the U.S., 64% or 12 million Latinos are U.S. born Latinos.

tities emerge in response to economic, cultural and political forces, perceptions realign themselves to changing situations” (2011:11). These words challenge the taken for granted link or “lamination” between culture and language. In the sociolinguistic context of New Mexico, in which such a large population of Hispanics have experienced language shift (Bills and Vigil 2008 and Gonzales-Berry 2000), it might be expected that this link would not be quite so strong. Yet, more than half of the Mexican-Nuevomexicanos do connect Spanish ability to cultural identity in their narratives. Why are linguistic abilities and cultural identities so strictly bounded by the Mexican-Nuevomexicano subjects? Again, I think that the conversation in the Navarro household can provide some insight.

Rosalinda Navarro challenges her father’s statement regarding an increased use of English due to the need to communicate with people who use more English than Spanish. Rosalinda responds, “But that was back then. But think about it now. Now it’s great to know Spanish.” The contrast between “then” and “now” may shed some light on the policing of linguistic borders in the realm of cultural identities. Nicolás’s linguistic experience, along with many other Nuevomexicanos’ linguistic experiences, does belong to another historical and cultural moment. He acknowledges this when he responds, “I guess maybe it’s my generation.” The historical memory of language oppression and dispossession (Aparicio 2000) still exists in the family histories of those of Nicolás’s generation. Rosalinda and Milagros feel that Spanish is *now* valued. Their Mexican-Nuevomexicano experience has never been without this “value” of Spanish and they have never been without Spanish linguistic ability. In Aparicio’s words, they have not been “of Spanish dispossessed.” Perhaps the lamination of culture and language is so strong among several Mexican-Nuevomexicanos because of this difference in experience, generation, and reference point. Rosalinda and Milagros have not been victims of an intergenerational linguistic terrorism (Anzaldúa 1987) or suffered from language oppression.

Interestingly, we do see a certain lamenting among all Navarro family members regarding the lack of Spanish ability in Bibiana, the eight year-old youngest Navarro daughter. It will be the topic of a future study to explore the ways in which new identities emerge and perceptions about “Hispanic” will realign in the Navarro family in response to Bibiana’s potential dispossession from Spanish in the future. Bibiana’s future, like the hybrid Spanglish reality of her father, may shed light on the role that English plays in the construction of Mexican-Nuevomexicano identity. I propose that English can also be theorized as a crucial element of U.S. Latino/a identity and par-

ticularly Mexican-Nuevomexicano identity. Jonathan Rosa explores English language practices as potential indexes of U.S. Latin@ identity and explains that “it is crucial to note that within a culturally valorized register that includes English and Spanish forms...it becomes possible to investigate the possibility of being/doing Latin@ in Spanish and English” (2010: 24). Therefore, rather than viewing English as an intrusion or inauthentic presence in Spanish, what if English also functions as an index of *Latinidad*?

### Concluding Thoughts: Mexican-Nuevomexicanos and Linguistic *Latinidad*

Rúa’s study of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago highlights the ways in which “ordinary people...theorize *latinidad* from their lived experiences” (Rúa 2001: 118). The voices of the Mexicans, Nuevomexicanos, and Mexican-Nuevomexicano subjects reveal the ways in which diverse Latina/os in northern New Mexico theorize linguistic *Latinidad* from lived experiences. Exploring the place of language in cultural identity constructions actually expands the dimensions of *Latinidad* as a theoretical framework and encourages us to consider the complex and contradictory ways language is always already present in the dynamic moments of interactions that inform identity processes. Consider Aparicio’s reflections regarding the place of Spanish in theorizations about *Latinidad*. She explains, “performing Spanish as cultural identity...excludes native-born Latinos whose dominant and primary language is English. Thus, Spanish functions and does not function, simultaneously, as icon of *latinidad*” (1999:11). If we limit ourselves to considerations of language within *Latinidad* solely as a measure of proficiency in Spanish, then considering language in *Latinidad* is undoubtedly an exclusionary and unproductive strategy. Yet, by considering how beliefs about language inform notions of cultural identity, we can expand the array of competing authenticities present in *Latinidad*. Notably, linguistic ethnography complements this expansion in framing *Latinidad*. Rampton et al. explains that “linguistic ethnographers contribute to post-modernity and its deconstruction of social categories. This work has been particularly relevant in terms of new and emergent constructions of language, culture, ethnicity, race and diversity” (2015: 27). By working at the intersection of U.S. Latina/o cultural studies, linguistic ethnography, and sociolinguistics, I am able to complicate the complex connections between language and identity that circulate within Mexican-Nuevomexicano fami-

lies and honor the ways in which these U.S. Latina/o communities theorize about their own linguistic and cultural practices.

Furthermore, the Mexican-Nuevomexicano ethnolinguistic contact zones I have explored provide a framework to more closely examine tensions between language and identity beyond New Mexico and open a space for innovative dialogues centered around dynamic processes of solidarity, conflict, convergences, and divergences within additional zones of contact. Given the recent political climate in the United States under the Trump administration, this framework is useful in considering the new ethnolinguistic contact zones being created between Mexican nationals within Mexican cities and first and second-generation immigrant populations to the United States who have recently been deported to Mexico. With the rescinding of the DACA program on September 5, 2017, an increase in these deportations is already occurring. Within the context of Mexico, then, we see a new phenomenon of U.S. Latinas/os born in Mexico who have both English and Spanish as heritage languages and who have known no other home than the United States being forcibly removed to a supposed “home” country. The linguistic and cultural interactions between these “returned” individuals and Mexican citizens is an ethnolinguistic contact zone worth significant attention. Additionally, due to the Trump administration’s overall negative stance towards legal and illegal immigration, new zones of contact continue to materialize with Central American immigrants opting to stay in Mexico rather than risk the increasingly immigrant unfriendly environment in the U.S. The methods and frames of analysis that I propose through the local study of the Mexican-Nuevomexicano family in northern New Mexico provide a point of departure for studying these dynamic and newly-emerging ethnolinguistic contact zones on a more globalized scale.

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# Translanguaging in Multiple Second Languages as Communicative Competence for Academic Group Interaction

An ethnographic study in a global education program at a Japanese university

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This case study describes and analyzes how international students use “translanguaging” (García and Wei, 2014) in order to accomplish academic group interaction in an English learning and global education context, that is, in a situation which is simultaneously translinguistic and transcultural. This is a topic that is particularly relevant to the evolving goals of language education in Japanese higher education.

As a part of overall changes in higher education resulting from globalization, recent years have seen many changes in foreign language and intercultural education as practiced in Japan. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), a department of the Japanese government, has implemented policies explicitly in response to increasing globalization (MEXT, 2011). Language education policy, taking globalization into account, now encourages educators to respond to social needs by adapting teaching and learning style to address current needs regarding communication and English proficiency (Butler & Iino, 2005).

At the heart of this global flow in language education, it has been suggested that English be used as the dominant language in classroom interaction rather than the students’ first language. MEXT (2011) defines foreign language proficiency as follows:

Foreign language proficiency required in global society can be defined as capability of smooth communication with people of different countries and cultures using foreign languages as a tool (p.3).

However, the desirable language, or languages for use in a foreign language classroom or intercultural education context remains a point of debate. As Nukuto (2015) reported in a case study, the policy focusing on global education requires students to learn not only foreign language but also to

acquire communicative and intercultural competence in given contexts. There, learners complement some lack of certain aspects of English proficiency with resources from their wider linguistic repertoire in order to achieve completion in academic group activities.

In order to look at the use and working of learners' linguistic repertoires, the present study describes and analyzes some intercultural and academic interactions within the framework of translanguaging (García and Wei, 2014; Mazak, 2017; Canagarajah, 2011). In the interactions, international students acquire communicative competence (Hymes, 1972; Canale and Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983) or intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997) to achieve academic group interaction in a global education class offered by a private university in Japan, which started in 2014. The data come from the author's ethnographic fieldwork in this classroom. I, as one of several group assistants in the class, was not only a researcher but also a participant in this global education program.

The analysis shows students trying to accomplish group goals through translanguaging rather than by strictly adhering to English use. In order to continue group interaction, students choose resources from among their shared foreign language repertoire, and in doing so enhance their foreign language skills.

### Translanguaging

Translanguaging has emerged as a popular yet controversial term, with many interpretations, in recent years (Mazak, 2017). Although the definition of translanguaging varies, the variations are united by a common framework. García (2009) emphasizes that bilingualism is not an additive linguistic process, but is a dynamic one, which goes beyond categorizing languages as distinct entities. Based on this perspective, García (*ibid*) defines translanguaging as “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (p.45).

The bilingual context of translanguaging is similar to that of “code-switching”, a framework that has been used for a much longer time. Researching how some languages or codes function in verbal and social interactions, Blom and Gumperz (1972) introduced the terms “situational switching” and “metaphorical switching”. Situational switching is defined as switching according to changes in contexts, while metaphorical refers to switching activity by one speaker within a single situation based on psycho-

logical and communicative factors. In various contexts, speakers who are recognized as multi-language users purposefully choose and switch codes.

However, in the translanguaging framework, we do not evaluate the appropriateness of speakers' language use (in particular, target language use). Garcia and Wei (2014) distinguish translanguaging from code-switching saying that it is attributable

not simply to a shift or shuttle between two languages, but to the speakers' construction and use of original and complex interrelated discursive practices that cannot be easily assigned to one or another traditional definition of a language, but that make up the speakers' complete language repertoire.

(p. 22)

As this suggests, translanguaging does not presuppose situations where language educators and researchers need to consider learners' target language proficiency so much as look at how learners perform discursive practices in sociocultural language learning.

In the more concrete situation of higher education, Mazak (2017: 5) summarizes some aspects inherent in the translanguaging framework. She sees translanguaging as a "pedagogical stance" and "set of practices" (*ibid.*, p.5). The former implies that participants, including teachers, can rely on their repertoires to "teach and learn both language and content material in classrooms" where they face linguistic and communicative difficulties. The latter suggests that translanguaging "seeks to include any practices that draw on an individual's linguistic and semiotic repertoires." (*ibid.*: 5).

In consideration of Mazak's definition above, the present study analyzes academic group interactions focusing on participants' linguistic repertoires and their discursive practice, in particular when they encounter linguistic difficulties. The study also explores how translanguaging works in a situation that is translinguistic<sup>1</sup> and trans-cultural.

## Methods

**Ethnography.** The present study is a part of the findings from my ethnographic linguistic research in a global education program offered by the

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<sup>1</sup> The situation is complex in that all participants already shared a common repertoire, Japanese language which they use outside of the classroom (as a first language or as a foreign language added to English).

Division of International Education at a Japanese university. The research was conducted within an ethnographic linguistic paradigm (Blommaert and Jie, 2010; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Copland, Creese, Rock and Shaw, 2015). From April to July of 2014, I participated in the course as a group assistant<sup>2</sup> and an observer. The data collection was carried out with video and audio recorders. The video recorder was put at the back corner of the room and used to record the whole classroom environment. In focus groups other than the one that the author was responsible for, the author asked the assistant for this group to wear a voice recorder on his chest in order to record the group interaction.

After the course finished, I carried out interviews with each of Andrew, Rachmad, and Ozora. I used English to talk with Andrew, and Japanese with Rachmad and Ozora. I did not have any difficulties in communicating with Rachmad in Japanese.

**Setting.** The site was one of the courses in the global education program offered to home-students and international students by the division. This course's aim was for students to acquire not only English language but also communicative competence as needed in intercultural contexts, where international students interact with each other. According to the curriculum document, the program was defined as "a new curriculum for international students and Japanese students who wish to develop their intercultural competence" (Kansai University Division of International Affairs, 2014)<sup>3</sup>. In more detail, the program's aim (for intercultural competence) was "to nurture a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for students to understand and respect people from different cultural backgrounds," (*ibid.*).

In the document, which outlines the course content, intercultural communication competence is embedded in foreign language skills, as "Good communication skills in a foreign language (e.g., English) is vital for such (intercultural) competency," (*ibid.*). These two key terms, "good communication skills" and "foreign language skills", set the goal for the course.

**Participants.** I focused on one advanced-level group. This group consisted of three students and one American group assistant (see Table 1). Andrew

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<sup>2</sup> This role was mainly to assist students with linguistic and interactive aspects of group activity.

<sup>3</sup> The author has cited the website from 2014. Some points may since have been recised.

was a group assistant of this group. He was an exchange student from the U.S., who studied Japanese language and culture. His original major was anthropology, so he had never been trained as an English teacher, or an assistant for an English class.

Ozora was a Japanese student, who studied translation between English and Japanese at the university. He would study abroad after the year of this course, so he had some motivation to participate in intercultural group interaction and learn English.

There were two exchange students in this group. Rachmad was from Indonesia. He was interested in Japanese language and culture, and in particular, pop-culture in Japan. He had some teaching experience of Japanese in his home country. Therefore, his Japanese proficiency was relatively high from my point of view as a Japanese native. For example, in the interview, which is a part of my ethnographic fieldwork, Rachmad and the author communicated in Japanese almost without any misunderstanding. His English level would be seen as the most advanced in this group. However, his communication competence, such as often taking a first turn in an interaction helped him get along in the group. Another exchange student, Charlee (a pseudonym)<sup>4</sup> was from Thailand. She studied Japanese language and culture. The author did not judge her English proficiency to be as advanced as other participants in the group, but she had a positive attitude toward the group activity as Extract 2 shall show later.

In addition to these participants, during the interactions shown in the extracts, the class lecturer also appears. She usually managed the overall classroom consisting of five different groups. Generally, at the beginning or between each task, she gave a short lecture and guidance or asked an assistant to talk at the front of the room. She held a PhD degree from a university in the U.S., and specialized in second language acquisition. Also she had long-term experience abroad from when she was young. Therefore, her English proficiency was quite near that of a native English speaker. As one extract shall show later, she tended to use English as a common language in the class.

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<sup>4</sup> All participants, except Charlee, agreed to my using their real names.

Table 1: Participants in the study

Name	Nationality	F/M	Resources (L1/L2)	Major
Andrew (Group Assistant)	American	M	English/Japanese	Anthropology
Ozora	Japanese	M	Japanese/ English	Translation (English and Japanese)
Rachmad	Indonesian	M	Indonesian/ English, Japanese	Japanese language and culture
Charlee (pseudonym)	Thai	F	Thai/ English, Japanese	Japanese language and culture
Lecturer	Japanese	F	Japanese/ English	Holds PhD in SLA from a university in the U.S.

**Rich Point.** Through the fieldwork and analysis, I found “rich points” (Agar, 1995)<sup>5</sup> in the activities of the group. As mentioned above, this group as a whole had the highest level in oral English and was the most active in group interaction. Every student could follow the group assistant’s support. Also, from the author’s view as an observer, even if they lacked some vocabulary and grammatical correctness, they could manage group work in the class language, English.

However, in this group I found that students sometimes used Japanese as well. This is despite the fact that English was the common language and that the lecturer, all assistants and students intended to use English as much as possible. Under this condition, I did not expect that, in the advanced group, Japanese language would be used to communicate<sup>6</sup>. On the contrary, in order to communicate and construct group ideas, participants also used Japanese language, which was the first language for one Japanese student, and a second foreign language for international students.

<sup>5</sup> “Rich Point” means findings that fieldworkers did not originally imagine and that what were not familiar before they carried out the fieldwork.

<sup>6</sup> Students usually used Japanese language before and after the class, or when they were out of the learning context.

In order to look at the data, in addition to the translanguaging perspective, I use discourse analytic perspectives (Seedhouse, 2004; Wong and Waring, 2010) to shed light on linguistic and interaction features, such as repair (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977), and turn-taking (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974).

In the analysis and discussion that follows, with two extracts from the class, we look at how participants, including the group assistant, communicate with each other going beyond the situation of single language use.

### Analysis and Discussion

In this part, we look at two extracts from the data, in which we can see participants' translanguaging to complete the group interaction. These two extracts are representative, in that the participants, including Andrew (the group assistant as an English native speaker), make use of the linguistic resources that each of them has acquired or has been learning. In each extract, Japanese language was used as a common linguistic resource, and it supported them in overcoming linguistic difficulties in intercultural and academic communication. Meanwhile, they, excluding Ozora (Japanese student), learned Japanese as a foreign language.

Extract 1 is from a group interaction in which students are discussing whether they agree with genetic modification in animals and pets or not. The first question for them is whether "they want a genetically modified animal as a pet". After the group was given the topic, Andrew steers the activity toward a group idea.

#### Extract 1

1. Andrew: So, the first question is what (...) do you want one as a pet? And why? The second question is genetic modification is OK? SO!
2. Charlee: No I don't want.
3. Andrew: No, I don't want the fish?
4. Charlee: Because I don't like fish.
5. Andrew: Don't like fish!
6. Charlee: I actually eat it but I don't want to...that fish.
7. Andrew: So, you wanna eat it?
8. All Sts: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
9. Rachmad: I become cruel xxxx?

10. Charlee: xxxxx  
 11. Andrew: What else? Yes? No?  
 12. Rachmad: I will.  
 13. Andrew: Why?  
 14. Rachmad: Because I like fish.  
 15. Andrew: xxxx O!K!  
 16. Rachmad: A:::nd...  
 17. Andrew: Like fish. A:::nd?  
 →18. Rachmad: *Mezurashi::: Mezurashi::tte nante iu?*  
                   [Rare::: What do you say “rare” in English]  
 →19. Andrew: Rare?  
 20. Rachmad: Rare:::  
 21. Andrew: mmm. OK!

Andrew is posing two questions to the students and encouraging them to start discussion through his use of the discourse marker, “SO!” (1) in English. Following this, Charlee responds in English showing she does not want it as a pet. Andrew checks this statement adding “the fish” to her response (3). Charlee explains her reason by adding “Because I don’t like fish” (4). The flow of the conversation is characteristic of academic group interaction. Through the interaction, students are encouraged, as much as possible, to explain their reasons after stating their ideas in English. Responding to Charlee’s statement, Andrew does not complete the sequence and keeps asking Charlee about her idea. He shows some surprise at her idea (5). Responding to Andrew’s surprise, Charlee again shows the reason why she does not agree with the genetic modification, adding a new part, “I actually eat it but I don’t want to...that fish” (6). In this turn, she has been able to expand the reason in English. Finally, Andrew intends to conclude this sequence by checking her idea (7). In Lines 8–10, without the assistant (Andrew), the students are still talking about the point. It can be assumed that Rachmad said that he could eat the modified fish though some turns (8–10) were incomprehensible.

Andrew starts a new sequence asking the students to give a yes or no for the same discussion topic (11). Following this, Rachmad takes a turn and suggests that he is not bothered by the genetic modification (12). As the sequence starts, the participants are still using English. Andrew then suggests that they should give a reason for the idea (L13). Rachmad states his reason as “Because I like fish”. In this case, the author supposes that Rachmad regards the fish as a decorative item. In response to this new idea

for the group, Andrew gives an OK and tries to complete the sequence (15). In addition, Rachmad tries to keep this turn using “And” (16) looking for additional comments. Andrew copies the “And” thus encouraging Rachmad to keep talking (17).

So far, it can be that the participants are performing English interaction and making up group ideas. However, in Line 18, Rachmad fails in expressing his idea in English. He cannot find the word “rare”, and he uses another linguistic resource, Japanese (“*Mezurashii*”), to tell his idea (18). Not only does he use Japanese language, he also asks the members how to say the word in English (18). Andrew guesses and asks Rachmad what he wanted to say in English (19). With this help, Rachmad completes his turns to show his idea (20).

In the latter part of Extract 1, we can see translanguaging by Rachmad. The whole sequence largely consists of two sub-sequences as described above. The first one is from Line 1 to Line 10, where participants used only English. This is what the class aimed at; using English and communicating for construction of ideas supported by specific reasons.

The course encourages the students to use English as a tool to accomplish intercultural communication, and in fact they generally try to use it throughout the interaction. However, in the latter part of the sub-sequence (18), Rachmad used another linguistic resource (Japanese language) to aid the interaction on the topic, putting English use aside. This linguistic and communicative action is possible because all participants in the group study Japanese as a foreign language or have acquired it as a first language. Considering the sequence as a whole, English and Japanese both function as communication resources for achieving the two goals of the class. Japanese also works as a second communicative resource to accomplish the goals of constructing a reasoned idea in the group.

As mentioned here, an implicit second language of the class, Japanese, thus functions to secure the group interaction. On top of this, non-Japanese participants improve their skill in Japanese as a foreign language while translanguaging to complete the academic group interaction. Extract 2 shows an interaction that follows from the discussion of genetically modified fish in Extract 1.

## Extract 2

22. Ozora: Maybe yes.
23. Andrew: Maybe yes? Maybe yes. Why maybe yes?
24. Ozora: Ah... it's interesting but ah...
25. Charlee: You want to eat it?
26. Andrew: xxx
- 27. Ozora: It's (...) not...not too (...) dohtoku...  
[Ethical...]
- 28. Andrew: *Dohtoku?*  
[Ethical ?]
- 29. Ozora: *Dohtoku (...) dohtoku tte nante iun desu ka?* (To  
the lecturer beside the group)  
[Ethical (...) What do you say in English?]
- 30. Rachmad: *Wakaran*  
[I don't know.]
- 31. Ozora: *Dohtoku tte.*  
[Ethical... what?]
- 32. Lecturer: Ethically::: you find that? Ethically::: xxxxxxx
- 33. Andrew: O:::K::: *Dohtoku (...)*
- 34. Ozora: *Dohtoku.*
35. Andrew: Ethical... Yes?

The situation is that Ozora, the Japanese student, takes a turn to describe his idea in the group. He responds that he agrees with the idea of genetic modification (22). Andrew then asks Ozora to support his assertion with some reason (23). Ozora expresses a favorable impression of the modification (it's interesting (24)). However, by using "but" he seems to want to qualify this statement (24). After turns taken by Charlee and Andrew (25–26), including an incomprehensible line, Ozora starts looking for a word to express his idea (27). It seems that he trying to say that it was not too ethical, as in Line 27. He uses the Japanese word, "*dohtoku*" which means "*ethics*" in English. In response, to this turn, Andrew cannot fulfil his usual role because he does not know the meaning of *dohtoku*. He asks the other members about what *dohtoku* means (28).

In this situation, Ozora decontextualizes himself from the group and asks the lecturer, who was walking around and viewing the group, about the meaning of the word, *dohtoku* (29). This part can be seen as separate from the goal of the class to use English. Rachmad responds to Ozora's question

in Japanese Kansai dialect, “*Wakaran*”; I don’t know (30). This sequence describes how Ozora is looking for the English word at the same time as he is trying to present his idea. The latter is the main goal at this moment, and he uses a polite Japanese form to ask about the word in lines 29–31. The lecturer uses English to respond to this question (32). With the lecturer’s help, Andrew understands the meaning of *dohtoku* and learns it as a part of his foreign language, “O:::K:::Dohtoku” (33). In that line, Ozora completes his idea repeating the key word, *dohtoku*. Moving away from Ozora’s use of Japanese, Andrew finishes up the sequence using English.

In this extract, the participants could build on the idea launched by Ozora, and overcame linguistic difficulties in the interaction. While trying to construct the group idea, all the participants were looking for a word which meant *dohtoku* in Japanese, in other words, “ethical” in English. It was rare in the interaction from the members of this group to look for a word which they did not know, and this kind of event interrupted what was otherwise a content-centered interaction. Here, it must be pointed out that translanguaging served not only the function of finding the word to continue the interaction, but also for learning the vocabulary from each other.

Another remarkable point which shows that translanguaging is an aspect of communicative competence in this multilingual and multicultural discourse is that the participants concentrate on the construction of the ideas rather than on learning a target language. By the end of the extract, Ozora must have learned the English word “ethical”, which would help him to continue his turn in order to complete the idea. However, as seen in lines 34–35, Ozora did not restate his idea using the English word he had just learned. In this case, all the participants were able to understand the idea formulated at the end of this interaction by sharing their common language resource, Japanese. This implies that it was not a matter of which language was used to do the work, since the main goal was simply to complete the group idea.

## Conclusion

The present study looked at how the participants (as language learners) translanguaged in the academic, multilingual and multicultural learning context. Summarizing the results, two main generalizations can be made: 1) the students used translanguaging as a communicative tool to accomplish their tasks rather than being obsessive about using English as a target language, 2) some participants used another language from their foreign lan-

guage repertoire (not English but Japanese) as a “common resource” in translanguaging.

The course documentation clearly describes that students are expected to learn both English as a communication tool and intercultural communication competence in academic group interaction. Following these goals, we see that the participants performed linguistically and academically in the group interaction. There, they needed to express their ideas with supporting reasons and construct collective ideas among the group.

In two extracts, we found that the participants had difficulties in maintaining the interaction. In Extract 1, Rachmad was unable to express his idea completely because he lacked the vocabulary for “rare”. Also, in Extract 2, Ozora could not find the word, “ethical”, and other participants in the group could not help with it. Both cases show how they opted for group interaction rather than using English.

In Extract 2, the participants used Japanese rather than English in order to solve the linguistic difficulty in the interaction. Their Japanese was not at a native level, which of course was also true of the English of many participants in this interaction. However, their performance in the interaction suggests that they were able to use Japanese as a common resource to continue and construct the interaction through translanguaging, even if Japanese was not a designated target language for language acquisition.

In the present study, we can thus see how multiple languages are used in the process of translanguaging. Some of these are foreign languages, and target languages for acquisition, for some or all participants. Others are first languages for some participants. As Mazak (2017: 5) summarizes, translanguaging is a “pedagogical stance” through which participants can draw on their linguistic and semiotic resources in order to address certain goals in classrooms. The present study would seem to support this character of translanguaging, by showing how the various languages function as a part of communicative competence in intercultural learning contexts.

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### Transcription key

As suggested in the framework for linguistic ethnography (Copland, Creese, Rock and Shaw, 2015), the details of transcription of the interaction data deepens on what the author is attempting to show the readers. Accordingly, in the present study, I have used the following transcription conventions.

(...)	short pause (less than 3 second)
[ ]	English translation
<i>Italic</i>	Japanese use
Capital	emphasis
xxx	unintelligible
:::	extended sound or syllable up to 3 second
→	particular point for analysis

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# Student Classroom Roles in France, Sweden and Finland Studying Swedish and Finnish as a Second Language

*Susanna Hakulinen*

In this article I will present some results of my ethnographic study focused on university-level learning and the teaching of oral proficiency in two Nordic languages in three European countries: Swedish as an L2 in France and Finland, and Finnish as an L2 in France and Sweden. More precisely, I will focus on how the students describe their role in the classrooms, since this may explain their communicative classroom behaviour. Given that speaking in language classes is especially important, it is interesting to explore how this is affected by the students' assumed roles. Based on data I collected from teachers and students in 22 classes during the academic 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 school years, I argue that there are culture-bound differences between the roles of students and their communicative behaviour in the language classrooms.

## Introduction

According to the action-oriented approach, which is promoted in didactic debates about the directions that today's foreign language teaching should take, European citizens ought to improve their competence in foreign languages and evaluate themselves based on their communicative and intercultural competences. First and foremost, learners are considered to be social actors, which differs from traditional views that define learners in terms of their deficiencies compared to the optimal level of a native speaker. This approach was adopted in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR 2001) and is also the basis for my ethnographic study.

At the same time, intercultural dynamics in transnational communication are clearly important and most often studied in relation to the *lingua franca*, English, in our ever-globalising societies (Hülmbauer et al. 2008:26). However, not just *lingua francas* should be of interest to us. The multilingualism of all citizens should be valued across the globe. Despite this ideal, some languages enjoy a higher status than others, which is also context-dependent. I decided to explore the learning and teaching of Finnish and Swedish as a second language because of the apparent differences in their official statuses in Finland and Sweden. Swedish is an official national

language in Finland, and its status is guaranteed in the Finnish constitution. Finnish in Sweden is historically a minority language and has a clearly inferior position to Swedish in Finland. In France, both languages are quite exotic to the general public.

There is no equivalent transnational comparative study that I am aware of which deals with the learning process of these languages in and outside the classroom. I would therefore like to contribute to the fields of foreign language didactics and linguistic ethnography by researching Swedish and Finnish as L2s in order to provide new contextualised, culture-specific knowledge about second language learning and teaching by analysing the data I collected in the field from 2013 to 2015. My data consist of 97 hours of semi-structured theme interviews with both teachers and their volunteer students, questionnaires and participant observations from 22 language classes where oral proficiency was a major theme.

One aim of this paper is to shed light on the way university students of Finnish and Swedish as L2 users perceive their roles in their language class and how this accounts for their communicative behaviour and participation in the oral expression classes. I interviewed the students' teachers of Finnish and Swedish, who all noted that making the students speak and participate in the class was one of their most important aims. My results indicate that students in Sweden perceived the classroom setting to be fairly relaxed. They felt that learning in the classroom was facilitated by creating an easy-going atmosphere in the lessons by sharing their thoughts and shortcomings with other students and the teacher. They adopted an active role in giving direct feedback to their teacher during the lessons.

In contrast, the Finnish students of Swedish identified active listening and staying focused on the lessons as being their roles in the classroom. The French students of Finnish follow the same pattern, given that the educational cultures in Finland and France emphasise the teacher's expertise in the subject, which is to be shared with students in a classroom setting. Consequently, the student's role is primarily to assimilate new knowledge in the language lessons by actively listening and participating as instructed by the teacher. Knowledge, referred to as new vocabulary and grammar rules by the students, could then be learned in greater depth at home. Oral proficiency classes were also evaluated in terms of the extent to which new vocabulary and linguistic structures were absorbed by the students interviewed.

However, the Swedish students of Finnish explained that the classroom is the place for ensuring that everyone understands the material. Therefore,

it is important that they say when they find something difficult and can ask the teacher for help. In contrast, the Finnish and French L2 students systematically avoided making language errors and showing their insecurity and lack of understanding in the classroom because they felt that their positive self-image was threatened. According to the students interviewed, it is this role, which is understood to give a specific, positive impression of the self, together with their usual, habitual classroom behaviour, that explains their participation in the classroom.

After explaining my methodology, I will present my research findings. First, I will illustrate the students' perceptions of their role in the classroom and then compare the discourses identified concerning target language use in the classroom in a more general way.

### Theoretical perspective

My research perspective stems from language ecology and applied linguistics. I would define my approach as ecological, as expressed by Wendel (2005:51):

The ecological approach to language considers the complex web of relationships that exist between the environment, languages, and their speakers.

The environment in our case includes physical, biological and social settings. This approach thus values diversity (Skuttnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 2011), which is most important to our research, taking into account both the environment and multilingualism of the participants. I also share Habermas's idea of the lifeworld (1989), and from a constructionist perspective I would argue that learning changes one's lifeworld and thus one's reality. Every person has his or her own reality, which is under continuous reconstruction. I consider the students in a holistic way as people who have their own histories, language learning experiences, affects, intentions and agency (see Lantolf & Pavlenko 2002:155).

My research is anchored, more precisely, in the social constructionist tradition. In this sense, language learning is socially constructed and happens in a certain period of time in a certain kind of environment with its

affordances<sup>1</sup> for language use (Van Lier 2004). I believe that our social worlds are based on shared perspectives and assumptions of reality as they are negotiated in interaction.

From my socioconstructionist and ecological perspective, it is also important to hear the voices of both students (Murphey 2008) and teachers. Teachers use different methods, something that students have to deal with, but there are also affordances in the environment. Students themselves are responsible for using them for their own learning processes. However, it is impossible to focus on the communicative behaviour of the students both in and outside the classroom within the scope of this article. Therefore, I will simply present some findings about the students' classroom roles and communication.

The concept I am especially interested in is role. What do I mean by role? Bruce J. Biddle (1986) emphasises that researchers indeed use role differently depending on how they define it. Some sociologists think of social functions or statuses whereas others focus on how roles are directed at other people or how roles, as behaviour, project a self-image. What I am interested in is the way students describe their roles. I look at roles from Erving Goffman's perspective.

For Goffman (1959), individuals *give* and *give off* information about themselves in their daily lives. Giving information is intentional and carefully manipulated by the *performer*, the actor, whereas some information is given off unintentionally. Therefore, the actor is entangled in the process of keeping up appearances in social encounters by managing information both given and given off as well as possible. When the role emitted is not in line with the act, repairs have to be made in order to maintain face. We also tend to maintain the face of our communication partners in daily encounters.

Goffman speaks of *information games* and *performances*. Individuals perform and communicate on the *front stage*, where they are in the company of other people. Performances can be prepared and practiced on the *back stage*, where the individual's behaviour does not need to be manipulated to influence other people's interpretations. The back stage is the place where we can be alone without other people observing us. I presume that all of us have been engaged in talking to ourselves, practicing different conversations and trying to decide how best to verbalise our thoughts in a

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<sup>1</sup> "Affordances" in our sense, as defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, are the qualities or properties of an object that define its possible uses or make clear how it can or should be used. They are possibilities for action.

way that ensures our intentions will be met. In actuality, we are not addressing ourselves but rather anticipating different conversational outcomes.

When we communicate with other people, or are observed by others, we tend to play roles that emit qualities we especially value, and we adopt appropriate conduct based on a perspective shared with other actors in a given situation. As we all know, we do not act in the same way in the presence of our superiors or meeting new colleagues as we do with family members or our closest friends. We perform different roles in different situations, and they are not limited to our social statuses.

We also adhere to multiple groups which we can call our *reference groups*, and they reflect different social worlds. The basic idea is that we want to give good impressions of ourselves to our *public* and that we seek to maintain *face*, an acceptable and accepted self-image, but also the face of others, in our daily face-to-face interaction. We therefore anticipate how other people would react to our specific courses of action and to our habitus or decor. We adopt the perspective of others, which is called *role-taking* in sociology and in symbolic interactionism (Mead 1934; Baldwin 1986; Blumer 1998), when we evaluate our actions and their outcomes even before they take place as well as on the spot and afterwards. Today, managing one's self-presentation in social media is a common practice and only one aspect of a person's performing roles, which entail controlling the assumptions that others will be able to make. I believe that the participants in my study all share this willingness to convey a good impression in the classroom context with respect to the face of other students and the teacher.

I would also argue that the students of Swedish and Finnish adjust their communicative behaviour relative to their managed roles and to the classroom setting and that it is not merely a question of their personality traits, such as being confident or shy. Maintaining face in a classroom context while practicing oral proficiency emerges as an important factor with regard to communicating in my interview data. This role, maintaining a certain kind of culture-bound student status and communicative behavior, is one aspect I will consider in this paper.

### The methods and data collection

My field study is aimed at identifying the communicative behaviour of students studying Finnish or Swedish as an L2 by employing the following methods: participant observation (from four to eight weeks) during oral

expression classes; quantitative questionnaires (with some open questions) aimed at filtering the most relevant information in order to customise interviews for each informant; semi-structured theme interviews (the *entretien compréhensif* method proposed by Jean-Claude Kauffman, 2007); and language tables in which students were asked to self-evaluate their linguistic competences and multilingualism. Participants were asked to reflect on their linguistic competences in written form and during the interviews in order for me to access their mental representations, attitudes and perceptions of the complex notion of language learning. The interviews were recorded and orthographically transcribed. I also took notes in the classrooms, writing down the number of students, the seating configuration, what the teacher said when giving instructions, who answered the teacher's questions and many other remarks. I also kept research diaries in which I wrote down summaries of the lessons, reflections, observations, analyses and mind maps about the phenomena that I simultaneously related to the research literature I was reading. I furthermore took notes during the interviews, writing down specific remarks. I have summarised some numerical information about my corpus in Table 1 on the next page.

Table 1. Information about the primary data

Country Language	Finland <i>Swedish</i>	Sweden <i>Finnish</i>	France <i>Finnish</i>	France <i>Swedish</i>	3 2		
Universities	4	1	2	2	9		
Classrooms	5	3	6	8 <sup>2</sup>	22		
Teachers interviewed <sup>3</sup>	5	2	2	2	11		
Students interviewed	22	8 <sup>4</sup>	19	29	78		
Students who filled out the questionnaire	26	14	20	33	93		
Number of student participants	28	15	21	45	109		
Level of the class	Bachelor + master students together, tailored for first-year bachelor students	High-school level of Swedish required (B1.2.-B2.)	Two groups of beginners + one advanced group	also master students in the third year in one class	First-, second-, third-year bachelor, also master students in the third year in one class	first, second, third year bachelor, also master students in the third year in one class	Beginner, intermediate and advanced students

<sup>2</sup> One group of second-year students had two lessons in which they were supposed to practice speaking, so it was the same student group participating but I attended both lessons. At another university, there were two groups of first-year students so I attended both classes. Overall, there were more students of Swedish than of Finnish at the French universities.

<sup>3</sup> The teachers also filled out a short questionnaire.

<sup>4</sup> My stay in Sweden was shorter than my stays in Finland and France. I conducted both the observation period and the interviews in 6 weeks. It was not possible to carry out some of the interviews planned because both parties had difficulty finding a suitable time in our calendars.

Altogether, 12<sup>5</sup> teachers and 109 students participated to my study: 93 of the students completed the questionnaire and 78 of them were interviewed. Some had forgotten to answer the questionnaire before the interview, which explains the variation in the numbers. An average of five students participated from each class. There were usually 5–10 participants present in the classroom in the Nordic countries, whereas in France the groups were bigger for the first-year students (around 20 and even more than 50 for one group) but smaller for the second- and third-year students.

In this paper, I will present some student responses from the questionnaires and some results from my comparative analysis of the interviews. Personalised interviews are a privileged method for accessing the individual, cultural and social dimensions of social actors: my informants. As I explained, social actors act out a role depending on the interactional context. This dramaturgical ability colours all human interaction, according to Goffman (Poggi & Sciortino 2011). In fact, all of us comprehend our roles in different ways. Therefore, I will not make claims about what roles, what kind of attributes, I assign to the participants from my student participant-observer perspective (emphasis on participant; see Bastien 2007 and Moeran 2009), but I have the students' own accounts as a starting point to provide insights into their communicative behaviour.

### The researcher's role

When it comes to the role of the researcher, I sought to relate to language learners from their own, *emic* perspective, as a member of a group of students sharing a fairly similar past, while comparing their accounts from an *etic*, more distanced and analytical outsider's point of view. I studied Swedish through my graduation from a Finnish upper secondary school and continued studying it and other Nordic languages as my major at a French university. As a result, the Finnish university students studying Swedish could easily grasp our shared interest, perspective (having a formal education from Finland and a fairly similar language biography) and positive attitude to the Swedish language. The French university students were studying either Finnish or Swedish, both of which are close to my profes-

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<sup>5</sup> One teacher I did not observe collaborated with one of the classroom teachers, and I interviewed her about the French students' learning diaries, which were intended to help the students reflect on how they learn Finnish. I wanted to check whether her report aligned with how the students talked about this. More specifically, the 11 classroom teachers are part of my core research, along with the students from their classes.

sional and personal interests. I used to attend seminars on the translation of Finnish and other language activities just for pleasure during my university studies in France. I also share similar interests (such as Nordic metal and folk music) and the same languages with the French students, which means there is mutual interest in each other's study paths.

The students of Finnish in Sweden also share similar interests with me. Some were of Finnish origin and are members of a linguistic minority in Sweden in the same way that I am, as a Finn in France. Others were of Swedish origin and wanted to learn Finnish for various reasons so it made us equals, with a special interest in each other's mother tongue. In order to relate to the students, I participated as a *new student* in their groups, which enabled me to get to know many of them on a one-on-one basis. The students could also focus less on my status as a researcher and more on my status as a person who is curious about what they feel and think about learning and teaching the target language.

I sought to establish a personal relationship with students so that as many as possible would be willing to answer my questionnaires and volunteer for an interview. Having gained a fairly high degree of confidence and trust from the students, I could get more comprehensive and sensitive accounts of their experiences. Had I been their teacher and had they provided me with their narratives for research purposes alone, there would have been more of a hierarchy in this relationship. The asymmetry of the student-teacher relationship or the more formal student-researcher relationship may no doubt influence the findings I obtained: students are likely to control what they say in order to match the researcher's expectations. As students, when we answer questionnaires or other questions for school purposes, we tend to ask ourselves what the teacher or the researcher may want to hear, what would be a good answer and how we can show them *Yes, I know this – yes I have thought about this*. It often becomes a question about performing appropriately.

My starting point was clearly different, and I made it clear to the participants that I was not looking for research findings or results that would be correct or better than others. I wanted to make the participants feel comfortable enough in my company during the field study so that they would not feel they needed to show me a pleasant image of themselves or demonstrate a good role as high-performing, talented or diligent students<sup>6</sup>. As a result, I got interviews not only with highly motivated or the most sociable students but also

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<sup>6</sup> See Goffman for his role theory.

from students who had interrupted their studies or were thinking about changing their programme of study. Moreover, students that I did not expect to volunteer took part – for instance, those who were quiet or did not have much contact with me during my stay. I acknowledge that the data are influenced by the kind of relationship I had with the participants.

Now, before examining the research findings, there are a few points I would like to make. As noted earlier, the students live in different countries with different affordances, possibilities of action, for language use. The context for the Finnish students is that they have studied Swedish since high school (some since they were 6–7 years old). Swedish is an official language in Finland and a compulsory language for all citizens. The news is televised on a national TV channel in Swedish (YLE5). The students come from five classes at three universities situated in different cities with different official language status: 1) southern coast: Finnish–Swedish, 2) southern Finland: *språkö* (‘Swedish language island’), 3) central Finland: Finnish as the official language of the municipality. Two male teachers and three female teachers participated in the project.

The context for the students in Sweden is somewhat different. They all have a personal or work attachment to the language: their mother is Finnish, both parents are originally from Finland, their boyfriend/girlfriend is Finnish, they have Finnish friends or relatives in Finland or they need to use Finnish in their work. Finnish is historically a minority language in Sweden, and there are many associations and other organisations that involve the Finnish-speaking community. There is also a radio station (Sisuradio) and a TV channel (a compilation of Finnish channels) that students can make use of. With Finnish being an official national minority language in Sweden, the teaching of Finnish and other language-related services should be guaranteed by law in specific administrative zones, which is true in theory but not always in practice. I will address these linguistic inequalities in more detail in my doctoral thesis. The Swedish participants studying Finnish come from one university and from three different classes. They were beginner (two classes) or advanced students. Their university is situated on the eastern coast, where there is also a prominent Finnish-speaking minority. Two female teachers participated.

The French students come from four universities, two of which are situated in northern France, one in north western France and one in eastern France. Four female teachers with 14 student groups participated (first-, second- and third-year bachelor students). As expected, the French students have fewer affordances for using Swedish or Finnish in their physical set-

tings. The students do not have the opportunity to be passively exposed to the target language in their daily life. The Finnish and Swedish Institutes organise cultural events and language courses that are less comprehensive than those followed by our participants. They need to actively seek virtual and real-life situations where they can practice their target language outside the classroom. Speaking the target language in the classroom is therefore of utmost importance to the students, according to their Nordic teachers.

### Research findings

For this paper, I have condensed the main findings concerning the students' reported roles in their language classes. I used thematic content analysis (Krippendorff 2012) to classify emerging discourses, identifying similarities and differences between them. Only discourses concerning classroom communication are dealt with here. As I noted above, there are differences in the language ecology of the countries in which the students' learning processes take place. However, there was no clear-cut correlation between the students' classroom behaviour and their language use outside the classroom context in any of the countries. Naturally, the ecolinguistic context has an impact on both the learning process and classroom interaction. Classroom interaction is affected not only by the students' personal traits or willingness to communicate but by their internalised habitual student roles, which can be understood to be embedded in their educational cultural context.

### In the classroom

Eva-Stina<sup>7</sup>, a teacher from Finland, explained her approach in oral expression lessons during her interview when she was asked to describe what competences she prioritises in her class:

Hmm. My priority, above all, is to make the students confident and that they dare to speak, express themselves without being afraid of losing face in some way and then, when I think I have achieved this or when I am about to achieve this, I have quite a lot of other requirements.

Eva-Stina is convinced that her students are afraid to speak and that they need to feel less anxious about participating. In the oral expression classes, having the students speak and practice the target language was essential for

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<sup>7</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

the teachers. Indeed, all 11 participant teachers emphasised that ensuring the students *speak as much as possible* in the classroom was one of their major didactic goals. They share the same vision as Canale & Swain (1980), that one best acquires communicative competence<sup>8</sup> through communicating. The students need to talk in order to become fluent, confident L2 speakers. However, most of the teachers in Finland and France felt that their students were too self-conscious about their flawed language, which made them reluctant to speak in front of others. The teachers explained that this was because of their lack of adequate vocabulary but also because the students did not want to make language errors in a classroom setting. Speaking in the classroom in front of everyone could be face-threatening for the students.

In contrast, the teachers of Finnish in Sweden were not concerned about this kind of lack of student participation. They emphasised, both in the questionnaires and interviews, that their students were very active by nature. They did not need to consider and create specific strategies to make the students participate and speak during the lessons. For instance, Kristina, one of the Swedish teachers in France, whose students were very active speaking in the classroom, had planned her lessons very carefully: no student could remain silent. She explained that she had to de-educate the French students from the usual communicative behaviour they had been socialised in and re-educate them so that they would learn collaboratively with other students through interaction and not directly and solely from the teacher.

Given that active participation and speaking in the oral expression classes are of utmost importance from the teachers' perspective, I analysed the students' accounts that deal with classroom interaction. Based on my comparative analysis of emergent discourses, the classroom roles seem to a large extent to explain student participation in the oral proficiency lessons in Swedish and Finnish. One could easily assume that the students' personality, their level of language proficiency, the teacher's methods in assigning certain roles and positioning the students, along with group dynamics, explain how the students participate.

However, it is worth noting that the students are members of the society they live in and have developed certain patterns of behaviour by interacting with other members of society. They are also used to different kinds of

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<sup>8</sup> They defined communicative competence as consisting of four distinct competences: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic.

teaching and learning styles, conceptions and activities that they take with them into the university language classes. I will call these habits, which include their roles, which are taken for granted, the students' *learner repertoire*. The teachers also have their *didactic repertoire*, which aligns with their teacher cognition. Since I believe in the usefulness of role theories in explaining human behaviour, I wanted to consult both the students and the teachers about their respective roles in the classroom. Given the limited scope of this article, I will focus on the students' roles. How do the students see their roles in the language class? Are there any differences between the countries in question? In the questionnaire, the students were asked to describe their roles in the language class. Later in the interviews, I asked the interviewees to explain their responses.

I will attempt to answer these questions by comparing student accounts from Finland and Sweden. In the next section, I will discuss the same issue in France. To illustrate student participation in Finland and Sweden, I have collected some typical descriptions in the questionnaires given by the students of their roles in the classroom. These are presented in Table 2 below. During the interviews, the students explained their accounts in more detail. The quotations<sup>9</sup> below come directly from the questionnaires. They answer the following open question: How would you describe your role in the classroom?

On the left-hand side are some typical answers given by Finnish students that I have classified under the category of the most prominent student role, which I call *concentration and active listening*. On the right-hand side are some answers from Swedish students, who describe their role as contributing to the group by *creating an easy-going atmosphere*.

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<sup>9</sup> The quotations were translated into English by the researcher from Finnish (Finnish students) and from Swedish (Swedish students). I chose to send the questionnaires to the students in their mother tongue so that they would not feel hampered by a foreign language. The students and teachers also chose the language they wanted to use in the interviews.

Table 2. How would you describe your role in the language class?

Finnish students:	Swedish students:
Concentration and active listening	Creating an easy-going atmosphere
<p>I am quite active but often I also observe the situation quietly. I become more active during group conversations than in the whole group. <i>I am afraid that I may say something stupid or wrong<sup>10</sup></i> in Swedish in front of everyone.</p>	<p>I try to be light-hearted and honest if I find that something is difficult. <i>Not to be embarrassed if I make mistakes</i>, which I hope makes my fellow students not afraid to try even though they are insecure. Try to have fun.</p>
<p>I open my mouth only when I have something to say and not even then. However, I try to <i>listen carefully and somehow show my presence to the teacher/lecturer</i>, so that they would not have the impression that I am just hanging out killing time there.</p>	<p><i>I listen actively.</i> I ask when I do not understand. I comment and ask when I have a different view. I try to laugh at my own expense and find humorous angles. I ask for simple language, suggest clearer formulations. <i>I try to encourage teachers by showing my appreciation when it is fun and interesting.</i></p>
<p>I am more of a quiet observer: I do not usually ask additional questions or comment out loud, but I try to take notes actively and stay focused during the whole lesson.</p>	<p>Ha ha ha... It is better if you describe it, you are the observer =) I am the student who talks a bit too much maybe and is quite blunt and I am not ashamed of myself or of what I am.</p>
<p>I take in the knowledge that is being taught, but otherwise I remain unnoticed.</p>	<p>I think it is quite nice to study and enjoy being in the classroom. I try to be active and show what I know and also ask when I do not understand. I also try to help others if they do not seem to understand, for example, by sometimes asking the teacher, who clarifies what we are doing. I also try to create a nice atmosphere by joking sometimes or <i>giving positive feedback to the others, because I think it is easier to learn when one is relaxed and when one can (do things<sup>11</sup>).</i></p>

The first quotation raises the issue of being afraid of speaking in Swedish and making a fool of oneself in front of the class, a feeling that is ubiquitous in the interview material. The Finnish students observe how their fellow

<sup>10</sup> The italics are used to emphasize the contrast between the two quotations in that row.

<sup>11</sup> In Swedish, the only verb in this sentence is “kan”, which is fairly similar in one sense to the English verb “can/be able to”. It could be translated as “be able to (do things)” but also “know (things)”.

students perform in the classroom and compare themselves to them. This is completely normal since we humans continuously make comparisons. What is relevant here is that the comparisons and the feelings of not being able to perform as well as others in the classrooms may prevent one's participation, as suggested by this participant.

The students in Sweden, however, as we can see in these excerpts, have been socialised to think otherwise in their educational culture: if they did not understand something, they would be more likely to show this openly to everyone in the classroom even though they were aware of being assessed by the other students. They hoped that showing their insecurity also encouraged others to do the same, which in turn could help everyone learn better. The students used different strategies when they felt uncertain about their understanding or their answers, such as asking someone else if they understood when they were addressed by the teacher.

Actually, fear of speaking in the case of the students in Finland was not just apparent in their questionnaire and interview responses. All five teachers there reported that one of their major goals was making students feel they did not have to be afraid of speaking. Since this was expressed by both the students and the teachers without being elicited by the researcher, I believe this is a relevant factor to consider with regard to using the target language for communicative purposes. The fact that the teachers had developed specific strategies to make students speak in the classroom implies that there was a need to address this issue. The students themselves explained that they were not used to speaking in language class because of the educational culture, which focuses on acquiring writing skills.

The second pair of quotations identifies active listening, which students also try to convey to their teachers. However, I interviewed the student in Finland in question and asked more specifically how he tries to show his presence in the classroom. His response differs from that of the student in Sweden. Whereas the Swedish student gives positive verbal feedback to teachers, the Finnish student shows he is listening with non-verbal cues, such as nodding and making eye contact with the teacher. The fact that the Finnish student reports that he does not open his mouth when he has nothing to say but even when he does should be understood in the cultural context of Finland. In their interviews, the students in Finland explained that they do not see the relevance of expressing their personal thoughts in the classroom. They self-regulate, weighing the relevance of their anticipated utterances to other students. If it is not something that is especially intelligent, enlightening or useful to everyone, it is best to keep it to themselves.

The third pair of quotations falls into same category, with the student in Finland describing herself as a quiet observer, remaining concentrated during the whole class. In sharp contrast, the Swedish student states that he is very direct, even blunt and supposes that I as a participant observer had noticed that he talks quite a lot in class, perhaps more than necessary. Certainly, this could be a matter of personality, but I would argue that there are still some cultural behaviours to be noted here. In Finland, expressing one's uncertainty, not knowing, having a lack of knowledge, is seen as rather negative and something to be avoided, whereas in Sweden, showing uncertainty is considered to be more positive and being able to do so could even be seen as a character strength rather than a weakness.

The question that arises is what communicative behaviour is expected for active participation. My interview data from the students reveal that students in Finland and France evaluated their own participation and that of their peers using the criterion of proving and displaying one's competence and an accurate understanding of the material and answering the teacher's questions, whereas the students in Sweden also referred to expressing genuine and spontaneous thoughts and matters of concern in the class. Participating in Sweden would also include telling people what one thinks about the exercises involved and saying when things are too difficult to comprehend. In brief, if students do not understand, they can ask the teacher and the other students in the classroom. Furthermore, bringing one's knowledge from informal contexts into the classroom was considered normal.

In Finland and France, classroom communication was described as formal communication that the teacher directs in a classroom setting. In Sweden, the informal atmosphere in the classroom and being able to present oneself as an individual were considered normal and acceptable behaviour both by the students and the teachers. When I asked some of the students in Sweden about the times they had specifically asked for help from their teacher, such as asking the teacher to translate Finnish vocabulary lists into Swedish, they did not recall having asked for these things. That seems to be standard behaviour for them. In a classroom setting, the Finnish and French students adopted a more generalised role for the others (*role-taking of the generalised other*) as members of a classroom community, having to suppress one's personality and individual needs. Anything that did not follow the teacher's lesson plan was seen as disruptive and thus not useful as such to the classroom community, which meant that it was not worth everyone's attention.

The fourth pair of quotations illustrates the behaviour of not feeling the need to be noticed in the case of the student in Finland. The most important thing about participating in class was successful knowledge mediation, which is suggested here. Above all, students attend class in order to gain knowledge. This is traditionally seen as knowledge transfer, but obviously knowledge is mediated in different ways. Every student has to interpret the new information in order to integrate it in their mental repertoire. The student in Sweden claims that it is easier to learn (mediate knowledge) when one is relaxed and feels that one can actually do things. Creating a positive classroom atmosphere is especially important for ensuring that the learning environment promotes learning. The same viewpoint was expressed by other students in Sweden during the interviews. One of them is Titta, a beginner learner of Swedish origin, who described her role in the questionnaire as sometimes enjoying being passive but asking questions when she does not understand. She explained why creating a nice atmosphere is important:

Well, then, if it gets, it really makes a difference how one's experiences of the teaching will be. If the atmosphere is positive, then, quite simply, one can focus all of one's attention on the teaching.

What was referred to as “vain noise” in the words of one Finnish student would be considered a necessary contribution to creating and maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere for Titta and the other students interviewed in Sweden. On the other hand, 4 out of 27 students in Finland described themselves as active and trying to answer most of the teacher's questions. I have therefore classified them as *active participants*. One student describes herself as being very talkative and correcting teachers quite easily when they make mistakes. In our discourse category, 21 of the questionnaire responses were classified as indicating *active listeners*, four of which are illustrated in Table 1 above as *concentration and active listening*. The other questionnaire responses emphasise being a quiet observer or a *traditional student*<sup>12</sup> who does everything s/he is told but does not like being the centre of attention and answers only when addressed by the teacher. We might ask ourselves whether the active listener and the quiet observer could fall into the same category, the role of traditional student. In a sense, all of these students are engaged in active listening in the oral expression classes.

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<sup>12</sup> Many students used the actual Finnish equivalent of “traditional student” to describe themselves.

The descriptions of their roles for students in Sweden were more diverse. Half of them (7) explicitly mentioned being active or explained in more detail different ways of contributing to the lesson, as the excerpts in the table above indicate. Three students emphasised active listening in their responses, while one expressed being relaxed and feeling no pressure. One student explained how she felt more sure of herself in the grammar classes and raised her hand there whereas she took the floor less often in the oral proficiency classes. Another student reported having the courage to speak and answer the teacher when no one else answered.

I would like to stress that it is quite a difficult task comparing self-reports about classroom participation and behaviour from different cultures. I do not adhere to research traditions that use standardised questionnaires to measure cultural differences and afterwards classify cultures into different categories. The reason is simple: students and teachers in different teaching and learning cultures do not share the same referents. What would be being “quite passive” to a student in Sweden may not seem passive to a teacher or student in Finland. From my educational perspective, saying that one does not understand something in the classroom and asking fellow students for help are not passive classroom participation. Then again, it is totally normal for students to compare their behaviour with that of other students, which makes it situated and subjective. We all evaluate ourselves in relation to other people and especially to our reference groups because their roles are most similar to ours.

What about the students in France? How do they describe themselves?

### Classroom roles in France

Since the students have fewer opportunities for meaningful language use in their actual physical and social environment in France, the teacher's role in fostering language learning is evident. This is why classroom interaction plays a crucial role for the students in France for them to develop communicative competence. The more oral communication there was in the class, the more satisfied the students were. Almost all the students in France asked for more hours to practice speaking the target language.

The teachers of both Nordic languages explicitly stated that they focus more on practicing oral expression during class because the students do not hear the language in their physical environment to the same extent as they would in Sweden or Finland. Some teachers also try to invite other target language speakers to their classrooms so that their students could hear dif-

ferent varieties of the same language. One of the teachers also collaborates with a Finnish–Swedish language school so that the students can have a pen pal in Finland.

However, the Nordic teachers noted the difficulty of making some groups of the students in France speak the target language in group discussions. In light of this, it is interesting to see how the French students described their roles in the classroom in their answers to the open question “How would you describe your role in the classroom?”. In the questionnaire, the students of Finnish reported the following roles:

Table 3. The roles of the French students of Finnish.

Category	Type of formulations	Number of students
1) active	I participate as much as possible.	seven students
2) normal	like everyone else – banal.	five students
3) active listening	I like listening but not participating.	three students
4) following instructions	I do what I am told	three students
5) rather passive	I find it difficult to speak so I stay inconspicuous	three students
6) mutual assistance	Because I already know Swedish, I can help those who sit next to me.	three students
7) cannot say	I do not have any role.	two students
8) trying to be active	It is not the class I participate the most in.	two students
9) saving the face of the teacher	The one who answers when nobody else does.	one student
10) one of the whole	A small component that participates to make the class work as a whole	one student

Table 4. The roles of the French students of Swedish.

Category	Type of formulations	Number of students
1) normal	<i>like everyone else</i>	six students
2) cannot say	<i>do not know</i>	four students
3) active	<i>I am active</i>	three students
4) following instructions	<i>I do what I am told</i>	one student
5) gaining knowledge	<i>I am there to learn</i>	one student
6) active listening	<i>attentive</i>	one student
7) too passive	<i>I should speak more</i>	one student
8) preventing others from progressing	<i>I have a poor mastery of the language because of a lousy memory</i>	one student
9) mutual assistance	<i>offering help to others</i>	two students

The French students of Swedish reported fairly similar roles, but there was more emphasis on actively participating in class, which is not surprising because of Kristina's classes. I have collected their responses in Table 4 below. All in all, there are similarities between the roles. The students did not necessarily report having a role in the classroom or they emphasised that they were like anyone else in the classroom.

Role number 9, *saving the teacher's face* by answering their question when nobody else would, was actually typical for many students from all three countries regardless of their role descriptions in the questionnaires. In the interviews, the students explained that they did this out of respect for the teacher. Overall, the interviews provided more in-depth accounts of keeping up appearances in the classroom than did the questionnaires.

During the interview, many French students noted that they had not understood what I meant by their *role*. This needed clarification, but I always asked the students first about their answer. To illustrate the strikingly common way of understanding the student-learner role in France that all of the students interviewed mentioned, I will quote one of the *active* students.

The following extract comes from an interview with Andreas, an active first-year student of English and Swedish in France. We had just been talking about other students, who Andreas says are quite accessible because they share a common interest, Nordic languages, which is not really shared

by everyone in France. I changed the topic to the classroom, as shown below:

S: You wrote<sup>13</sup> that *I participate actively in class. There aren't really any particular roles I think* (laughter)

A: Well

S: What does it mean "there aren't any roles"?

A: Actually that there aren't any particular roles between the students because I think that in a class there are two roles: so there is the role of the professor, who teaches us and there is the role of the students, who listen. There you are.<sup>14</sup>

A: And given that we were talking earlier, I mean that Kristina's methods, it was really to make us participate as much as possible. I think about fulfilling my role as a student, but not a role, not a role that could necessarily be distinguished from other students', in fact. There you are.

S: And what is fulfilling your role then?

A: Participating in class as much as possible, let's say that she asks a lot of questions, she asks us to participate. There you are.

The quotation from Andreas illustrates the way the French students thought about themselves and their communicative roles in the classroom. There are only two roles: the role of the teacher and the role of the student. We can see the teacher-student dichotomy and hierarchy here but not as a negative aspect. It is simply natural to the students. We can see similarities with the way the students in Finland imply that they have the role of active listener and participant. The expectations of sociocultural classroom roles that the students interviewed were used to seem to fall into the dichotomy of expert teacher-obedient student. Many examples of this student perception are found in the interview material, but I will not explore them further in this paper.

I chose to present Andreas's answer because he is one of the active students and he participated in Kristina's classroom, where every student

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<sup>13</sup> I am referring to Andreas's questionnaire response describing his role in the classroom. S stands for Susanna and A stands for Andreas.

<sup>14</sup> In French: "Voilà!".

was compelled to interact with fellow students because of the structured communicative activities she had designed specifically for French students. The students had to ask each other questions in Swedish from day one, and the lesson plan was made up in such a way that the students would think directly in Swedish and keep assimilating the language by explaining words and listening to others. From her point of view, there was no chance of obtaining this much speaking and participation from her French students using more traditional teaching methods.

Kristina had truly taken the culture-bound communicative behaviour of her students into account in planning her lessons. It is possible to resocialise students to adopt new learning strategies and classroom behaviour, but this needs to be carefully elicited and explicitly addressed to make students change their unquestioned patterns of behaviour. My field studies reveal that the students in France or Finland are not more passive than students in Sweden. The amount of speaking can be augmented by didactic activities, but the nature of typical communicative classroom behaviour is a matter of cultural habits. Having the students sit in a semi-circle made no difference in their participation. According to some students, they even felt oppressed having to stare at each other across the desks. The language of instruction did not have any particular impact on the students' roles or their participation, according to the students themselves.

The reported student roles seemed fairly stable and did not coincide with the actual learner roles that the students were asked to adopt in the classroom when they were engaged in different activities. For instance, one class of students in Finland had to organise activities for practicing oral communication in the classroom themselves, but their reports do not differ from those of the students in other kinds of classroom settings with more teacher-directed speaking activities. The students simply followed instructions and simulated role playing, so there was a lot of speaking in the classroom. Andreas, like all the other students in France and Finland, explained to me that he complies with the teacher's demands. The existing hierarchy between the students and the teacher was thus maintained by the student discourses in terms of their participation and student role of active listener or active participant.

The student-teacher role dichotomy emerged at the concrete micro-level of observed classroom interaction, where the students had shared experiences as participants in the class, and also at the discourse level, which was confirmed by interviews with both the teachers and student participants. Based on my data, I believe that there are culture-bound student and

teacher roles in all three countries. There are also universal principles when it comes to the classroom interaction and the student-teacher relationship: 1) students must show respect to the teacher by showing interest (verbally or non-verbally), 2) students must be engaged in following the lesson, and 3) students should demonstrate their competence in the oral proficiency classes because they are being evaluated.

### Communicating with the teacher

The students in Finland emphasised that they did not want to make an issue of their individual needs in public, which is underlined both in the questionnaire responses (and explicitly mentioned in some responses about their role in the classroom) and in the interviews. The conception of sufficient classroom participation is quite similar to that of the students in France. What is interesting is that the nature of classroom interaction and participation is largely perceived as teacher-initiated and directed communication, often question-response communication.

Students in all three countries considered their role in the classroom in terms of ideal student behaviour, of answering the teacher's questions or not, which is clear in the interview data. The students in Sweden, however, emphasised the importance of creating a positive classroom atmosphere. I asked all the students and teachers about what kind of roles they had noticed in the language classroom. The classroom roles that the students explicitly mentioned were simply those of some students speaking more and some less, which according to them was not due to the level of target language mastery but to the personality of their peers.

Paradoxically, when generalising about other students' verbal behaviour in this way, students in Finland and France explained that they actually observed how well other students pronounce the language, how quickly and fluently they speak and so forth. This can seem quite competitive behaviour and is typical of high achievers. Students who were majoring in another language than the target language also reported participating more actively in their major language classes in the two countries. Students in both Finland and France explained their lack of participation in terms of a lack of self-confidence about producing good enough language whereas they claimed they did not have the same problem in their major language. They did not have quite the same roles in the different language classes.

Håkan Ringbom (2007:194) notes that "The harmful attitude that one should not try to speak another language if one cannot do it really well is

still prevalent in our country". My results indicate that most of the participants in Finland – future teachers of Swedish or other language professionals – were still concerned about first being fluent and self-confident and then trying to communicate in Swedish in real life. Their accounts suggest that the language is understood as a system that needs to be mastered before one can use it to express oneself and speak it. This conception of languages stems from the Finnish and French school systems, which focus on correct written language use by favouring specific didactic activities. At the same time, the teachers emphasised that students nowadays are clearly more eager to speak in the classroom than in the past decades. They support the idea that the general focus on communicative aspects overruling linguistic competence in L2 classrooms is also evident at the university level.

Yet another difference between the students in Sweden versus the students in France and Finland is their attitude to language errors. The Swedish students explained that they use the trial-and-error method in learning Finnish. They preferred to test new grammatical structures and vocabulary as soon as possible for their own communication ends, for instance, by calling a close Finnish-speaking person right after the lesson. The perfectionist belief of having to master the language before using it to communicate may hamper classroom participation in Finland and France.

The students accounted for three types of communication going on in classrooms in the interviews: 1) verbal teacher-student communication, 2) non-verbal student-teacher-student communication and 3) virtual communication. The teachers in every country actively addressed the students directly in the classroom. Consequently, some students felt that they were expected to speak and answer the teacher's questions although they were unsure about their ability to perform adequately. It is obvious that the students were unsure about being able to save face and maintain the image of a competent student in these situations.

When the level of mastery of the target language is not especially high, it is more difficult to control the image of oneself emitted with linguistic means. It may also be more difficult to hide one's insecurity when one feels uncomfortable. This uncertainty does not help the students communicate freely even though the students are trying their best to perform. Some students explained that the pressure of the formal classroom setting makes it difficult to speak and that they manage better in informal settings. It goes without saying that there is a communication contract in the classroom that defines who can speak and when. This is negotiated during the interaction.

It would be ideal to present videos of these classroom situations, but I chose not to film anything in order not to stress the participants.

As already noted, students try to convey to the teacher that they are actively listening by making eye contact, nodding and producing other non-verbal cues. Non-verbal communication is typical in all three countries. Another form of communication mentioned by some of the students is using smartphones in the classroom. However, the students interviewed did not approve of this kind of communication, which would imply a lack of interest in the teacher. In Finland, interruptions by students were not greatly appreciated, and were thought to shift the focus from the teacher's intended content. The teacher's authority and autonomy in deciding the didactic activities were thus highly respected. Huhtala's study (2008) of how students who aimed to be teachers of Swedish in Finland saw themselves and their studies at a Finnish university reported results similar to those in my study. The students in her study perceived the teacher as having self-evident authority and at the same time assuming the role of fostering educator.

However, my Swedish subjects have quite a different way of perceiving the teacher as a facilitator of the learning process. The discourses that I identified in the students' answers to questionnaires and in interviews present the teacher as being at the service of the learners. The most important characteristic for the teacher was to ensure that the new knowledge was successfully mediated. Debating and giving direct feedback to the teacher were thus important from the students' point of view. The notion of collaborative language learning emerges from the interviews. Because of this collaborative view of learning, classroom verbal and nonverbal interaction was not only directed from teacher to student but from student to student and from student to teacher in order to ensure, through interaction, that everyone had understood and could keep up with the pace of study.

There was an emphasis on the students' own responsibility in making the classroom atmosphere relaxed and pleasant for everyone. In this sense, there was possibly less hierarchy in classrooms in Sweden than in Finland and France, where it is the teachers, not the students, who felt responsible for creating a friendly, informal atmosphere for learning. However, it is impossible to say anything about the actual learning outcomes of the students or claim that more informal classroom communication would guarantee better results. It was also evident that the students' participation did not depend on their actual level of target language proficiency. Very performant speakers could also remain silent. Teachers cannot control every-

thing in the classroom setting so it is important to encourage students to seek affordances for communicative target language use in their free time.

## Conclusion

Since being able to speak is important to language learners and since active verbal participation in oral language classes is of utmost importance to teachers, it is useful to study how students and teachers feel about this. In this paper, I have used the students' self-reported roles as one perspective for considering classroom interaction. I hope that I have conveyed some relevant results regarding the classroom roles of students in Sweden, Finland and France within the limited scope of this paper. As I demonstrated, the French students outlined their role in relation to the teacher's expectations and often described their role as not being different from the role of the other students. Some used the words "classic student" or having "no role", while others emphasised their role as helping other students. The classic teacher-student dichotomy emerged from my data.

The students in Finland described their roles in terms of actively listening to the teacher and following instructions to match the teacher's expectations. The students in Sweden described their roles in more varied ways, but they explained in the interviews that creating and maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere was very important to them in facilitating learning. The Swedish students perceived classroom participation in a less hierarchical way and could easily initiate conversations. Furthermore, errors were presented not only as something negative and to be avoided but as a normal part of language learning. All the students also managed their self-presentation to the best of their ability in the classroom, which explains why participating in certain ways was preferred to other possible lines of conduct while respecting cultural norms.

It is notable that the way students discussed their roles in the classroom both in their questionnaire responses and in interviews did not reflect the various learning activities that they were asked to perform in the classroom. The role of a student seems to be more stable than the different roles that the students were asked to assume in order to perform the language activities planned. To conclude, it is clear that the students in Sweden, Finland and France all share a mutual goal: being able to communicate in the target language for actual or future purposes. In that sense, it is worth studying how they try to achieve communicative (intercultural) competence, how their strategies work and how this is being taught (teaching methods).

I would argue that it is of utmost importance to examine the roles that students assume and are intentionally assigned by the teacher through organised activities when it comes to practicing oral language in class. Considering the educational cultures of students may be useful in order to have a more nuanced perspective on classroom interaction. I believe that this perspective can be useful in achieving a better understanding of the communicative behaviour of language students, and not just in migrant contexts. Teachers often feel personally responsible for not being able to make their foreign language learners speak or assume that learners do not appreciate their methods. My study indicates that this is not necessarily the reason for the “lack” of participation. The culture-specific context and the students’ learner repertoire, which includes the learner’s classroom role, can indeed explain their participatory actions in oral language classrooms.

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# Methods for Studying Migrant Doctors’ Transition to a New Language

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The demand for specialist physicians in Sweden far exceeds the supply. In the coming years, the supply of specialist physicians will depend on the continued migration of doctors trained in other countries, according to the Swedish National Board of Health (Socialstyrelsen 2015). In an increasingly globalised world, people are more closely connected to one another as well as more mobile. Greater mobility, especially in the labour market, has made language skills a resource that is also attractive in commercial terms (Blommaert 2010), which among other things can be reflected in advertising for profession-specific language training.

In an ongoing research project<sup>1</sup>, we have followed a group of doctors in the process of establishing themselves in Sweden. They were employed through a company commissioned by the county council to recruit doctors from different EU countries and which is responsible for their Swedish language training. An intensive Swedish course is conducted at a campus in Poland for about three months. No prior knowledge of Swedish is required for doctors from EU countries in order to get a Swedish medical licence. However, most county councils require these doctors to pass language tests to be hired. The company guarantees that the doctors will have reached Level B1 after their intensive training in Poland and Level B2 after an estimated three-month stay in Sweden.<sup>2</sup>

The overarching aim of our project is to investigate the doctors’ development of interactional competence needed to function as a doctor in a Swedish healthcare setting. We are interested in how professional linguistic skills are recontextualised in a new country and want to explore the meaning of change of workplace and how different resources are used in the process. In order to examine this process, data from different settings before and after the doctors’ migration to Sweden is necessary. In this paper, we discuss some methodo-

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<sup>2</sup> The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) describes foreign language proficiency at six levels: A1–C2.

logical issues about different types of data, and the possibilities they provide to examine the doctors' transition to a new professional language. We have a range of data (interviews, focus group discussions, roleplays and real occurring interactions), and with examples of results from completed or ongoing sub-studies we want to identify and analyse some of the strengths and limitations related to these different types of data.

### Theoretical background

Several factors interact when professional skills are to be transferred from one country to another, in this case Sweden. Below we describe some factors that we consider to be central in this process. Our theoretical approach is based on the view that language resources concern different kinds of competence at many different levels and create a complex linguistic repertoire in an individual. These resources may consist of concrete accents, styles, genres and different modes of conversational arrangements. The linguistic repertoire of multilingual individuals consists of resources acquired from different language contexts (cf. Blommaert 2010). For the doctors in our study, we assume that their experiences of using their first language in some discourse practices are resources that are partly transferrable to a new healthcare context. The doctors' professional knowledge, which is partly conveyed through language (to what degree varies between different specializations), comprises medical knowledge and familiarity with what the role of doctor entails in matters such as case history, disease diagnosis and treatment. This is described by Sarangi & Roberts as *professional discourse*, that is, 'the shared ways of knowing and seeing which characterise the community of medical practitioners' (1999:480).

The research field of second language acquisition is traditionally dominated by grammatically oriented studies (Håkansson & Norrby 2010), but during the last decades there has been an increased focus on pragmatic aspects (e.g. Markee & Kasper 2004; Kasper 2000) as well as communicative competence (e.g. Larsen-Freeman & Long 2014). The concept applied in our study, *interactional competence*, is more complex and can be described as an umbrella term for pragmatic and conversational knowledge (about turn-taking, topic initiation etc.). More specifically it can be defined as an individual's ability, in interactional situations, to express and interpret communicative acts linked to the socio-cultural and psychological rules of a group (Barraja-Rohan 2011). The concept contains a number of resources and abilities that are required for successful participation in social inter-

action, and some researchers use the plural form of the term, interactional competencies (Kasper 2006:86) to emphasize the multiplicity. Much of this needs to be learnt in context, but this does not preclude people who are multilingual from using a previously acquired linguistic repertoire to some extent. For adult second language learners 'interactional competencies are both resources and objects of learning' (Kasper 2006:87).

As claimed by Young (2011:430), interactional competence 'is not what a person *knows*, it is what a person *does* together with others'. The concept of interactional competence builds on previous theories of competence, but unlike the concept of communicative competence, which is recognized as a characteristic of a single individual, interactional competence is co-constructed by the participants in interactional practices (Young 2011). In line with this reasoning, the study of an individual's development of interactional competence over time assumes that the individual being studied interacts with the same person in the same type of discursive practice.

Participating in interaction obviously assumes some basic knowledge of the syntax, lexicon and phonology of the current language. An established approach is to consider language proficiency as a separate component (cf. Bachman & Palmer 1996). Another approach, proposed by Young (2011), is to consider language proficiency as resources included in the concept of interactional competence. It is possible to separate language knowledge from interactional competence (e.g. in teaching and test contexts), but linguistic resources must be included in interactional competence.

Communicative practices in the health care sector are, according to Roberts and Sarangi (2003), characterised by complexity where communicative models, strategies and styles may shift constantly, and the health worker has to take on different roles due to a constant change of conditions (Sarangi 2000). A part of the new knowledge that the migrant doctors have to acquire is awareness of socio-cultural factors such as national and local conditions concerning healthcare organisation, rules, and regulations, as well as behaviour towards patients. Knowledge about these factors is needed to understand and participate in what Sarangi & Roberts (1999) call *institutional discourse*. In addition, the doctors have to acquire knowledge on ways to handle *personal discourse* (Sarangi & Roberts 1999), which includes being able to talk about experiences from personal life-worlds, such as small talk, in accordance with socio-cultural norms and frames of reference. The demands of the doctors in our study are therefore to be able to use linguistic resources for different purposes in complex medical practices.

The ethnologists Wolanik Boström & Öhlander (2012) describe the mobility of doctors in a global labour market in terms of the Bourdieu-inspired expression *transnational medical field*. In a study of the experiences of doctors who were born in Poland and migrated to Sweden, one of the findings was that the doctors' professional competence, despite the transnationality of the profession, requires adaptation to new socio-cultural conditions at the national and local level. One organisational difference is that the division of responsibilities in the Swedish healthcare is described as being more horizontal than in Poland. Some of the doctors describe it as a move without problems from one local context to another within the medical field. Others note language problems in their daily interaction. They express frustration over the fact that their own inability to communicate in what they call 'fine' Swedish can undermine their capacity to act as a professional authority when they see patients (2012:10).

### Linguistic studies of interaction between doctors and patients

Interaction between doctors and patients is a well-researched field both internationally (e.g. Heritage & Maynard 2006) and in Sweden (e.g. Melander Marttala 1995; Melander Marttala & Mattson 2017). According to Linell (2011), primary care consultations between doctors and patients are likely to be the most studied activity type, not least with techniques from conversation analysis (CA). The studies within CA have identified distinctive tasks, goals and activities in different phases of the interactions as well as communicative dilemmas in the interaction between doctors and patients (ten Have 1991; Heritage & Maynard 2006). In English-speaking countries, language proficiency as well as different cultural expectations have been identified as issues for doctors who use English as a second language in their profession. Regarding second-language speaking doctors in the Swedish-speaking area, Berbyuk Lindström (2008) presents a study using a range of methodologies to examine the communication of doctors who are second-language speakers with Swedish patients and colleagues. Specialists, such as most of the doctors in our study, face other medical activity types in various stages of the care process than the medical interview and physical examination (Linell 2011). Doctors' inter- and intra-professional interactions are not as well researched, though there are some exceptions, like Lundgren (2009), Svensson et al. (2008) and, to certain parts, Berbyuk Lindström (2008).

In medical education, roleplay is widely used as an educational method for communication training (Nestel & Tierney 2007). A study concerning the learning contexts for doctors is Thomassen (2005; 2008), who analyzes simulated consultations between medical students and real patients during medical education in Norway. According to Thomassen there are ambiguities at different levels for the participants to handle, caused partly by an uncertainty as to whether the roleplay should be perceived as authentic or as a training situation. In countries like Australia and New Zealand roleplays have been studied as ways of testing as well as training doctors with English as a second language, e.g. by Wette (2011) and Pryor & Woodward-Kron (2014).

### The Swedish course in Poland

According to the recruitment company's website, the language training offered is focused on professional, medical language and typical situations encountered in this new work environment. Nonetheless, we note that the teaching at the training school in Poland consists mainly of traditional foreign language teaching, with emphasis on vocabulary and syntax. In most cases, oral exercises are based on written texts. Only about fifteen per cent of the time is spent on what is known as Medical Swedish.

### Methodological approach

In order to capture the complex interaction between factors of relevance in the process when professional knowledge and experiences will be transferred to a new language, we need to use different types of data. The data collection was designed in relation to two fields: a) the education context (the Swedish course at the campus in Poland) and b) the Swedish medical field. The education context is fairly easy to grasp (certain time, certain number of participants, clearly defined purpose), whereas the health care context is a large and heterogeneous field.

Based on these conditions, we developed a model for data collection, which gradually was adapted to actual conditions in the fields. a) After having observed the learning activities at the campus during a first visit, we found them unsatisfactory for the purposes of our study and decided therefore to take a more active part. Our model is based on a combination of participant observation and staged activities that provide opportunities for doctors to speak Swedish in a professional role and reflect on their lan-

guage-learning process. b) When we studied the doctors in Sweden we used more traditional ethnographic methods, aiming to describe and understand the language use in the specific medical practices.

The result of the necessary adaption to the two fields is a mixture of different methods. In accordance with Angouri (2010), we believe that mixed methods designs can contribute to more in-depth analyses of research questions. This is an experience also drawn from a previous project about Swedish-speaking staff at another company located outside Sweden (Kahlin & Tykesson 2012). Different collection methods can also make it easier to gain trust and get access to different settings. As Angouri points out, ‘some of the challenges of the workplace as a site of research [is] that [it] is notoriously difficult in terms of gaining access and collecting data’ (2010:39) and some areas of research are more relevant for the practitioners than others. In Poland, our participation had to be authorized by key people on campus, and therefore we developed a design that in certain parts could be considered useful for the course and the course participants. Due to the necessary compliance in fieldwork, the research plan was gradually adjusted. It is well known that a detailed research plan cannot be followed in terms of conditions with an unpredictable and sometimes chaotic everyday reality (Blommaert & Jie 2010). In our case, the data collection had to be adapted to the course’s schedule, which sometimes changed from day to day.

The choice of analytical methods is eclectic, in accordance with the tradition of ethnography of communication (Rampton et al. 2002), but mainly the methods have been taken from the field of interactional sociolinguistics. In the analysis of the roleplays and the real occurring data, we use tools of CA that are suitable for a close analysis of different aspects of interactional competence. In line with Linell & Thunqvist (2003) and researchers in the area of applied conversation analysis, e.g. Stokoe (2011), we think that CA can be used as a method to analyze simulated interaction, such as roleplays, with awareness of the type of activity being studied – despite the fact that applying the method to data other than naturally occurring social action and interaction is not in accordance with CA’s basic principles (Sacks 1992).

### Data collection

The first phase of data collection was carried out in Poland. We visited the campus on three occasions, ten days in total, and collected data from participants of two language courses. The visit to the first group served as a pilot study that helped us develop a data collection model during the two

visits that followed with a different group. During the first visit, we conducted interviews and observed lessons. This was also done with the second group, but during the second and third visits we took a more active part, e.g. by conducting roleplays – that is simulated medical interviews – and initiating focus group discussions.

The second phase of data collection took place in Sweden, with interviews with some of the doctors after a few months of working and living in Sweden. We also conducted a pair of case studies that consisted of observations and recordings with two of the doctors at their workplaces during a working day. The amount of data from workplaces is relatively small but can be reliably related to the large amount of previous studies of medical practices.

The major part of the data is collected through various activities we initiated (see table 1). The real-occurring data is collected during lessons in Poland and during various health care activities with patients and colleagues (see table 2). All data was audio recorded, although audio-visual technology would be preferable for our analyses. The use of audio recordings was chosen for two reasons. During the course, we wanted to have access to sensitive situations in the early stages of language learning and we did not want to disturb more than necessary. At the Swedish hospitals video recordings were excluded for legal reasons.

Table 1. Audio recorded data from research-driven activities.

Type of data	Location	Time	No. of participants	Length of recordings
Interviews, doc's	Poland	6 <sup>th</sup> course week	9 (1 <sup>st</sup> course)	5 h 6 min
Interviews, doc's	Poland	6 <sup>th</sup> course week	7 (2 <sup>nd</sup> course)	3 h 42 min
Interviews, doc's	Sweden	After 3–7 months of work	5	5 h 35 min
Interviews, teachers, organizers	Poland	6 <sup>th</sup> course week	2	2 h 26 min
Focus groups	Poland	12 <sup>th</sup> course week	14 (3 groups)	2 h 1 min
Argumentation exercises	Poland	12 <sup>th</sup> course week	14	1 h 36 min
Roleplays	Poland	6 <sup>th</sup> course week	14 (2 groups)	2 h 45 min
Roleplays	Poland	12 <sup>th</sup> course week	14 (2 groups)	2 h 19 min

Table 2. Real-occurring data, documented by audio recordings and field notes.

Type of data	Location	Time	No. of participants	Documentation
Talk-in-interaction	Workplaces in Sweden	After 5 and 6 months of work	2	1 h 16 min and 2 h 1 min
Talk-in-interaction	Lessons in Poland	6 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> course week	23 (1 <sup>st</sup> course) 14 (2 <sup>nd</sup> course)	Ca 8 h (observations)

### The study's interdisciplinary approach

All data collection was carried out by Kahlin and Tykesson, both applied linguists. As a way to diminish the interpretive gap between the actor and the observer-researcher, discussed by Sarangi (2007), we have made this into an interdisciplinary project, conducted in cooperation with Romanitan. She has a double role, since she is both a co-researcher and a clinical doctor (a triple role, actually, since she herself has migrated to Sweden as a doctor). Romanitan's contribution, besides being a medically informed dialogue partner during the research process, is that she created realistic cases suitable for the roleplays.

### Interviews as a method

The interviews in Poland were semi-structured, lasting between 45 and 60 minutes and were conducted in Swedish. Although the Swedish course had only lasted for five weeks at that time, out of sixteen persons only one chose to speak English. The doctors were also encouraged by their teachers to participate in our interviews, as this gave them an opportunity to speak Swedish with native speakers. Both researchers participated in most of the interview occasions and the respondents were also given the chance to ask us, as residents of Sweden, things about their future homeland. Thereby, they got to know us, which made it easier for us to get their contact information for follow-up interviews. The respondents were asked questions about their background, the Swedish course, their language learning strategies, their reasons for migrating and what ideas they had about how it might be to start working in a new country. Through these initial interviews, we got 'the big picture' and were able to get a grip on their experiences of difficulties and achievements, concerning language acquisition outside of the target language environment. We noted a tendency to downplay the importance of having to change professional language. An example is the following quote, which we think captures rather well the respondent's

and her course mates' mainly positive attitude to their migration project as professionals: 'I hope I'll be the doctor that I was in Croatia, after some time I hope it'll be the same'<sup>3</sup> The notion of 'the same' indicates that the respondent considers her profession as essentially transnational (cf. Wolanik Boström & Öhlander 2012).

The second part of the interviews was conducted with a smaller group of doctors (five persons) at their workplaces in Sweden, or, in one case, by telephone.<sup>4</sup> The interviews were performed in a conversation-like manner and lasted between one and two hours. The overarching questions were: 'How has everything worked so far?', 'How is the interaction with patients and colleagues working?' and 'Do you have any specific strategies to overcome language obstacles?'

To summarize some of the findings about the doctors' experiences of difficulties and achievements at their new workplaces, the people interviewed give the impression that they all agree on the degree to which different medical practices are challenging due to shifting conditions and situations. Talking to patients appears to be fairly uncomplicated: 'It goes fine with patients, I think. Sometimes they don't understand me, so the nurse helps me.' Work-related interaction in face-to-face situations with colleagues is also reported as generally easy to handle, whereas phone conversation with colleagues and other staff is more difficult (cf. Pryor & Woodward-Kron 2014). By far the greatest communicative challenge is, according to the doctors, to take part in small talk, that is, talking about things in domains not related to medicine: 'It's easier with the patients than during coffee breaks [*fika*]. Everybody talks and I don't understand.' Berbyuk Lindström (2008) also mentions small talk as a problematic issue for second language speaking doctors at work. The plausible explanation is 'the lack of both language competence and cultural competence' (2008:115).

A particular kind of challenge is hybridity in communicative activities (cf. Sarangi & Roberts 1999). This is shown by the quotation below, about specialist meetings that include features of joking:

Mammography conference with radiologists, surgeons, pathologists, oncologists – it feels good. We sit and show different cases. Do they need surgery or not, we talk about what to do. It goes well. I understand most

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<sup>3</sup> All utterances of participants are given here in English translations of the Swedish originals.

<sup>4</sup> The telephone interview is not recorded.

part. Sometimes they make jokes that I don't understand, but I understand what happens with patients.

When fluent in a certain language, small talk may be a moment of relaxation at work, whereas for the doctors who have just arrived in Sweden, this is the most challenging form of communication, especially when the small talk is embedded in another communicative activity.

Through the interviews, we captured some of the language learning strategies used by the doctors. One notable finding is that many of the respondents emphasized the value of having second language speaking colleagues to whom they can turn with their language issues, as well as questions about the organization culture.<sup>5</sup>

A great advantage of using interviews as a research method is that it provides insight into the great variety of communicative practises that doctors face at work that would otherwise be difficult for researchers to get hold of, like private situations and sensitive professional situations. In our experience, it was valuable to be able to reflect on the learning process along with the doctors, especially in the early stages of their intensive language studies. The reflections are of interest as they allow us to learn from people rather than studying people (cf. Spradley 1980). It was all facilitated by the fact that the informants have long study experience and generally a well-developed verbal capacity. However, reported data has its weaknesses. As noted by many researchers before us, it captures only what the interviewees are aware of, can express and want to tell the researcher about.

### Focus group discussions as a method

The three focus group discussions, with 4–5 people, lasted for about 40 minutes each. They were held in connection with lessons (argumentation exercises) that we had been asked by the company to lead.<sup>6</sup> We were both present and shared the role of moderator. The participants were grouped by their specialization. This division was not our decision, but the fact that the smaller groups turned out to be fairly homogeneous, possibly increased the participants' involvement in the discussions.

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<sup>5</sup> For a more elaborate presentation of interview results, see Tykesson et al. (2017).

<sup>6</sup> As university lecturers in linguistics, we are both experienced teachers. It should be noted that the moment we switched to the focus group discussions, we carefully announced that we now acted as researchers and no longer as teachers.

Through the discussions, we got insight into the participants' way of talking about their professional knowledge, such as their views on language use in their professional roles. It also provided information on the different kinds of interactional knowledge the doctors have previously gained. As medical students, some of them had taken courses in how to talk to patients, but most of them had learned through practice, by observing how others do, as one of the psychiatrists reported: 'My mentor told me that I first had to sit next to her to see how to talk to patients. After three months we changed places. And she gave me feedback after each patient encounter'. This approach was also perceived to be the best way to learn. In connection with this, they discussed the degree to which it is possible to learn medical Swedish through studies on a campus, or if one learns best through internship, which some of them claimed. These people also expressed their frustration that, as experienced doctors, they now had to sit on the school bench all day long and study language. However, most of the participants expressed satisfaction with the intensive Swedish studies. The latter point of view was in line with what was conveyed in the interviews.

Based on their experiences as doctors, the participants jointly were able to reflect on important aspects of conversations with patients as well as ideas on what communicative challenges the work in Sweden would entail. To be capable of really listening to what the patient says, essential if you are to help the patient, was highlighted as the biggest challenge: 'I think at first it will be difficult'. In some medical areas though, listening to the patient is less crucial, since the activity is less conversational dependent than in others. A consideration expressed by a cardiologist was that the examination of patients should not be problematic. To her, informing the patient should be more difficult than the physical examination. Some challenges mentioned were related to cultural expectations. The following quotation is from a psychiatrist, who expressed concern about working in a country without the same strong narrative tradition as in his home country, Spain:

You have to learn what is 'normal' in Sweden. What is considered normal in one country need not be considered normal in another. For instance, I like to tell stories to the patients. I think it will be difficult in another country.

The focus group discussions took place after the second roleplay sessions, and some of the topics that had been raised during the moments of reflection after the roleplays were reopened for further discussion. Not least, this was the case with subjective perceptions, such as cultural differences in

the positioning of doctors: ‘In my country [Romania], old doctors have God complex, the doctor is God’, followed by a statement from a participant with other experiences: ‘In Greece, the attitudes toward doctors are more democratic, as they appear to be in Sweden’. The perception of a more egalitarian Swedish health care was widespread among the participants (cf. Wolanik Boström & Öhlander 2012; Berbyuk Lindström 2008). They also expressed confidence that the Swedish nurses, who can be expected to be well-educated, would probably also help them with the language.

An advantage of using focus group discussions as a research method is that it generates questions other than those addressed in interviews. Thus, aspects that would be less accessible without the interaction of the group can emerge (cf. Davies 2008). What is being discussed also tends to be more universal than in individual interviews. Another advantage, which has been pointed out by researchers like Kitzinger (1995), is the possibility to get access to group norms and what is considered common knowledge in the group. Given that the participants come from different parts of Europe, it is worth considering that they orient towards a common professional discourse, which can be seen as a sign of the transnationality of the medical field (Wolanik Boström & Öhlander 2012).

### Roleplaying as a method

The main reason why we organized roleplays was to get access to material in which we could investigate the doctors’ development of interactional competence, an ability that has to be displayed in dialogue. We also wanted to offer an activity where the doctors could make use of their professional linguistic skills. These simulated medical interviews were performed on two occasions with the same doctors. The first time was at the 6<sup>th</sup> week of the course. At the 12<sup>th</sup> week of the course, the same cases were used for a second roleplay. In this way, we were able to make comparisons over time and examine the doctors’ development during the course. As trigger material, we let them watch some films on doctor–patient interactions used for training of medical students in Sweden, which we had access to.<sup>7</sup> Each roleplay was about six minutes long and the rest of the group was present as spectators. Most cases were adjusted to the doctors’ speciality and each person was given the same case the second time. Either Kahlin or Tykesson

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<sup>7</sup> The teachers of the course were present while the films were shown and in discussions afterwards. None of them were present during the roleplay activity.

was acting as the patient and the other one was available to scaffold the doctors, if they asked for help. During scaffolding episodes (e.g. introducing words in Swedish), the roleplay was put on hold for a short while. Each roleplay was followed up by a short moment for reflections and questions.

Interactional competence entails, among other things, the ability to display understanding, to show engagement and empathy, and to respond to the other participants' turns in a coherent way that fits the sequence (Barraja-Rohan 2011). These aspects are central for 'active listening', an ability emphasized in communication training for doctors – 'the first step to effective communication' in patient-oriented medicine, according to Van de Poel (2013:26). Two ways to display active listening is by the use of backchanneling uttered during the current speaker's ongoing turn or by minimal responses, i.e. feedback right after the preceding turn. We can assume that the doctors have a good ability to perform active listening in their native languages and some of them, especially psychiatrists, are trained to display empathy and understanding. The question is to what extent this ability is developed in their new language.

The results show that the doctors generally use backchanneling and minimal responses already during the first roleplay and that they do not use these particular semiotic resources to a considerably larger degree during the second roleplay. This indicates that the ability to perform active listening to some extent is transferable from experiences of a similar discourse practice, medical interviews, in the mother tongue. Some of the participants seem to be able to recognize relevant positions for backchanneling even when they have problems understanding 'the patient'. Apparently, some of the participants were good at keeping a poker face during the activity. Two of the doctors (both psychiatrists) who use backchanneling frequently, afterwards reported that they did not understand much of what 'the patient' said. This is displayed in the following excerpt (Example 1), where the doctor (D) does not reveal if she understands 'the patient' (P) or not, but the backchanneling is done at relevant spots.

#### Example 1: (second roleplay, 12<sup>th</sup> week of the course)

- P: I fall asleep [(.)eh so but so it takes a couple  
 D: [mhm  
 P: of hours then I wake up and then I lay there and  
 can't go back to sleep it is not possible[(.)if I  
 get up and  
 D: [ahm

- P:        drink a glass of water go to bed my husband  
             snores[ (. )  
D:                        [aha

A recurring pattern for minimal responses is when a doctor is using minimal responses frequently in a third turn position right after ‘the patient’s’ response to a question. The minimal responses are followed by a new question. These responses display very little about the doctor’s understanding but can still be a significant signal of empathy. This way of displaying empathy does not require sequential timing as much as using backchanneling as a positive reinforcement for continued talk, and in a further analysis it will be interesting to compare different patterns of active listening to be able to investigate the patterns more closely.<sup>8</sup>

#### Example 2: (second roleplay, 12<sup>th</sup> week of the course)

- P:        it’s something weird with my arm  
D:        **mhm** (.) what do you mean?  
P:        yea yea I cannot explain it but eh it- it like it-  
             has become numb eh  
D:        **mhm** when e:h did it start?

A crucial reason for the setup of the roleplays was to offer a situation that enables us to study how professional experience interacts with language learning. Similar to the following excerpt (Example 3), the doctors often know what they want to say from a professional point of view, but sometimes they lack the linguistic ability to express it. One instance where some of the doctors have difficulties expressing a well-known communicative act in the medical interview is when they ask ‘the patients’ if they have any additional health problems to consider. The question *are you healthy?* (Example 3) seems a bit odd in the situational context, where ‘the patient’ has just described various symptoms of illness. The doctor is searching for words and has problems formulating the question appropriately. After the response from ‘the patient’, the doctor is able to reformulate the question in a more adequate way (*do you have any other diseases?*).

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<sup>8</sup> The analysis of the roleplays is part of an ongoing study by Tykesson et al. (manuscript under review).



sources, as Young & Miller (2004) have shown in an empirical study, but it is remarkable that all the doctors managed to implement these simulated medical interviews, already at the first occasion, when they had studied Swedish only for five weeks. We believe this can be explained by the doctors' previous experiences of medical interviews. The doctors can express enough questions to keep the conversation running, using some keywords that actualize a semantic field that is familiar to them. Besides this, they can take advantage of the right to have a higher degree of control over the topics, in their role as the institutional representative. One limitation, though, is that the doctors have to rely on verbal activities, without support from artefacts or physical examinations of 'the patients'.

A methodological advantage is that the roleplay activity allows comparisons over time, as several variables were held constant (each individual interacts with the same partner on the same topic in the same type of discursive practice). More problematic is to make comparisons between the interaction in roleplays and the interaction with patients in authentic situations, where the interaction is a part of a chain of different healthcare activities. Our role as patients with fictitious diseases, of course also reduces the similarities to real doctor–patient interaction. Linell & Thunqvist argue that simulated activities like roleplaying 'involve complexities and hybridities on several planes' (2003:409) and, like Thomassen (2005), that participants' perception of what is going on may vary. This means that when analyzing the roleplays, we must be aware of that the participants have to relate to dual roles, as doctors/learners respectively patients/teachers. Overall, the doctors take rather few initiatives for language repair during the roleplays, which is worth considering, given the early stage of their language training. The relatively few repair initiatives may be explained by the simulated situation (nobody is in real danger) or by the fact that the course participants might be afraid of being judged as poor Swedish speakers if they reveal their lack of understanding.

### Two case studies: interactions at workplaces

The authentic talk-in-interaction data is recorded in two different medical settings in Sweden, a department of cardiology and a department of radiology. The two doctors we studied during different work-related tasks are both experienced specialists. At the time for the observations and recordings, the cardiologist had worked in Sweden for 5 months and the radiologist for 6 months. We divided the data collection between us so that only

one researcher was present at each workplace. Although we regard it as most valuable, the recorded authentic talk-in-interaction data occupies a relatively small part in our study. The main reason is that it was difficult to get access. Some of the doctors who were asked to participate declined to let us record them while working. In our experience, the doctors need to have strong self-confidence to let themselves be studied after a short time in a new country and at a new workplace.

There are many benefits of the study of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction.

With the recordings from different working activities we can examine how the doctors manage social actions through talk, which relies on interactional competence in relation to the actions of colleagues and patients. One finding concerns the doctors' strategies used when their linguistic resources are not sufficient. The recordings from the workplaces give evidence of the importance of repair work when the doctor does not understand a colleague or patient, in comparison to the roleplays, where, as stated, relatively few repair initiatives were taken by the doctors. Example 4 illustrates an interaction between the cardiologist and a nurse. They are in an office and prepare themselves by going through medical and social information about every patient, before they encounter the patients during the ward round. The example illustrates the professional discourse with specialized knowledge about heart rate etc. The interaction is performed in relation to graphic curves on a screen.

#### Example 4: Nurse (N) – doctor (D) interaction during a ward round, in the office. The patient is not present.

- N: she's still going quickly between hundred fifteen and  
hundred thirty hundred forty
- D: mhm
- N: is quite confused (.) dementia warning one can say  
On [her
- D [what?
- N: a little dementia (.) ☺possibly☺

In the third turn the nurse issues a priming remark on the patient's mental condition in a rather casual manner (*dementia warning one can say on her*).<sup>9</sup> This leads to a repair initiative from the doctor, where the most relevant

<sup>9</sup> In Swedish: *demensvarning kan man väl säga på henne*.

information is repeated in a downplaying way (*a little dementia* followed by *possibly*, which is said with laughing voice). The patient is not treated for dementia at this department and the information is given in an inexplicit way and marked as an eventuality. After the repair, the interaction about the patient's heart rate continues.

In another sequence (Example 5), at a patient's bedside during the ward round, the doctor asks the same nurse for help when she does not understand a word used by a patient. In this sequence the doctor makes use of some resources simultaneously to understand the expression of an unfamiliar word, *melange*<sup>10</sup>. She asks the nurse at the same time as she looks at the patient's thigh.

Example 5. The doctor (D) and the nurse (N) are standing  
next to the bed of the patient (P)

- P: speaking of the legs I'm melange on the thigh like  
I've never seen before (.)
- D: mhm
- P: is it something with oxygenation or is it- and it was  
before I came here so star-
- D: that you have problems (.) melange? ((to the nurse))  
we'll take a look
- N: motley ((the patient pulls down her pants and the  
doctor looks at the thigh))

In both of these excerpts we can see how the nurse and doctor co-construct their talk to fulfil the relevant medical tasks. We can examine the use of practice-specific linguistic expressions in interaction with nonverbal actions and artefacts. This interaction is possible to study only in the natural setting with all the relevant resources and actual consequences in case the doctors do not fully understand the other part.

Through the ethnographic fieldwork we got insights into what two different specialized environments actually can require in terms of linguistic resources. The fieldwork highlights the differences between various medical settings. The discursive practice of a radiologist in front of a screen is fundamentally different from the interaction beside a patient's bed during ward round.

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<sup>10</sup> In Swedish: *melerad*.

Ethnographic observations of workplaces give us the opportunity to study what the doctors actually do at work. Blommaert (2010) emphasizes that people are generally unaware of their routines and habits, and, as Angouri (2014:6) claims, ethnographically informed case study research increases 'our understanding of the challenges employees face routinely at work'. This is true, not least for second language speakers at work and we find it fruitful to be able to study some of the doctors in their authentic setting after a relatively short time in Sweden.<sup>11</sup>

### Concluding remarks

Our experience of combining different types of data is that it is a prerequisite for capturing complex research issues. We agree with Davies (2008) when she points out that different methods of data gathering will produce varied results and may contribute to a more complete and valid analysis. For us, this means that we can achieve a deeper understanding of how different types of resources are used in the transition to a new professional language of migrant doctors. Below we will reflect on how the different types of data in our model have contributed to the analysis.

Since we are interested in the interaction between professional experience and situated interaction, we cannot rely on established test methods with high generalizability, although some of the data allows us to make comparisons between two similar situations. A series of tests, e.g. of word comprehension, would have given us some knowledge of the linguistic progression but very limited opportunities to investigate the doctors' ability to apply the knowledge in situated interaction. Whereas the available authentic talk-in-interaction data allows us to get hold on strategic use of resources at different levels but limited possibilities to make generalizations to other settings. What characterizes analyses of such data, according to Rampton et al. (2002), is the particularity of the interpretations you can make as a researcher. The meaning of the doctors' actions at the hospitals can only be interpreted in their natural context.

We regard our real occurring talk-in-interaction data as most valuable, although it is time-consuming for the researcher, and, in this case, hard to get access to. One of the benefits of real situations compared to constructed, is that we can study how the language use is intertwined with other resources and ways to communicate when the doctors accomplish tasks in

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<sup>11</sup> The analysis of these two case studies is part of an ongoing study.

medical practice. The recordings from the workplaces are useful to reveal the mechanisms through which the doctors constitute the specific medical encounters in their specialized settings. It gives some insights into what different specialized work situations actually can require by doctors as newly arrived second language speakers. In interaction with real patients and colleagues, doctors are also more motivated to mobilize all their resources.

The elicited data in the form of roleplaying offer some opportunities to investigate the doctors' development of interactional competence in a new professional language. The opportunity to plan the activity makes it possible to make comparisons over time. The longitudinal design enables analysis of the learning process and sheds light on some of the resources the doctors bring with them from previous experiences. One example is the doctor's ability to perform active listening. It supports the assumption that the participants' experience of using their first language as doctors is a resource that, to a certain extent, actually can be transferred to a new language. Overall, it is striking that the doctors were able to participate so fluently in the roleplays – and that everyone managed to do it – although their basic language skills in Swedish were not so well developed, especially not at the first occasion. A reflexion is that the simulated situation limits the possibility to draw conclusions about the professional language use (included so-called Medical Swedish). One limitation is that the participants' previous experiences of doctor–patient interaction cannot be fully used, because multimodal aspects of various kind are lost.

The individual interviews along with the focus group discussions provide some insights into the participants' personal history and professional norms and values related to their social interaction as doctors. These insights, along with the knowledge gained through the involvement of our co-researcher Romanitan, increased our understanding and provided us with greater certainty in the interpretation of the talk-in-interaction data. A full understanding of interactional competence requires, according to Young (2011:434), 'an investigation of social, institutional, political, and historical circumstances that extend beyond the horizon of particular interactions'.

As researchers doing field studies, we have experienced that you must be flexible in the process of data collection, in relation both to gradually gained knowledge and to the conditions of the studied activities. The notion that you are not always in a position to choose freely when doing field studies (cf. Angouri 2010), is particularly true in the case of commercial enterprises. The way in which the roleplays were performed would have been different if we could make decisions without any restrictions. An optimal design, above

all, would require more time with the participants. Outside this, we would have preferred to use audio-visual technology, and after each roleplay given the participating doctor the opportunity to comment on what happened during the encounter. In this way, we would gain more detailed knowledge, not only about the participant's listening comprehension, but also about what the participant really wanted to express. Moreover, repeating the procedure at the next roleplay event would give access to the participants' own reflections on their and each other's linguistic development. According to our original research plan, we would rather have made the roleplaying with a selected few. It was not in our interest that everyone was given the opportunity to act, we believed (and some of them were quite reluctant to participate the first time). But the realized design, where everyone was included, also had advantages. A comparison of many beginners in action allows a higher degree of generalizability. In retrospect, we benefit from the discovery that there was a wide spectrum between the doctors' language proficiency.

Language skills are a valuable resource and offer possibilities to move across social and spatial domains (Blommaert 2010). Swedish hospitals are primarily monolingual environments, despite the large proportion of multilingual people in the Swedish society. While some other sectors in Sweden have switched to English as working language (cf. Söderlundh 2010), for employees of the Swedish healthcare sector the working language is Swedish, almost without exception. Therefore, mastery of the Swedish language is a ticket to the Swedish labor market and what seems to be more rewarding working conditions for doctors and other healthcare professionals. Among others who immigrate to Sweden, the recruited doctors of our study constitute a privileged group because of their highly requested medical expertise and, in relation to doctors who are not EU citizens, because of the free movement of workers within EU. Along with the discussion of methodological issues in this paper, we have identified certain parts of a doctor's linguistic repertoire, such as backchanneling, repair techniques and ability to participate in small talk, which facilitates participation in medical practices in Swedish healthcare settings.

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## Transcription key

D	doctor
N	nurse
P	patient
(.)	short but clear pause, 'micro pause'
<u>what</u>	emphasis
do:	vowel lengthening
do::	extended vowel lengthening
befo-	interruption, for instance, interrupted word
D: thank [you	overlapping speech
N: [thanks	
((to the nurse))	non-verbal aspect or comment on activity
☺well☺	said with laughing voice
(oh yeah)	possible interpretation of speech that is difficult to hear
oh?	question intonation

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# Blogging as a Health Literacy Practice

## Identity construction and knowledge-building in the writing of parents of children with heart defect

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In our studies of health literacy practices among parents of children with heart defects, we noticed early that blogs were a recurring source for acquiring information (Bellander & Nikolaidou 2017). We also noticed that the parents in our study did not only *read* blogs, but some of them also *wrote* blogs. To regularly publish entries on a personal blog has been found to be a widespread activity within the area of health communication (cf. Miller & Pole 2010). We understand health blogging as a part of mass literacy in the knowledge economy (Brandt 2009) where building health knowledge is not only a matter of consuming information, that is by reading, but increasingly by producing knowledge, that is by writing. This is in line with what Brandt calls a significant shift in literacy activity where writing is ascending in importance, in relation to reading, and where the value of text activities lies in the doing of them rather than in the reading of them (Brandt 2009:157).

However, few studies have focused on the learning potentials in the act of health blogging. In this study, we aim to focus on how parents use blogs to produce and process knowledge by constructing identities. Receiving a heart defect diagnosis for one's child is a life changing experience and one that is bound to leave an imprint on a person's identity as a parent. Blogging is here understood as a means of expressing oneself and therefore as a means of processing change. We take a socio-constructivist view on identity formation and approach it as situated in the actors' socio-cultural context (Barton & Hamilton 1998). Identity is not understood as singular and stable but as plural and continuously changing and is therefore best studied in relation to the context in which it is being enacted. Writing is seen as a means of identity expression which is, to a varying degree, conscious and shaped by the writer's social context. There are many aspects that influence how people choose to portray themselves and thereby construct

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their identity in writing. In relation to health literacy, the construction of writer identities can tell us something about the different norms for knowledge mediation that co-exist in the modern information society. Identity construction in personal journal blogs has been studied mainly amongst young people and has focused on the way they express their adolescent, sexual and gender identity (e.g. Huffaker & Calvert, 2005, Chittenden, 2010). These studies show that personal blogs can be an important medium for learning – in the case of adolescents, for example, learning about themselves and about relationships to others.

In the present study, we investigate health blogging as a social practice, with a special focus on how identities are constructed, through sharing experiences and knowledge on the blogs. Our analysis of blogs and interviews, where the blogging parents reflect upon reasons for writing and ambitions with their blogs, seeks to answer the following questions:

- a) Which identities are constructed through blogging about children's heart defect?
- b) What kinds of discursive knowledge-building are enabled and made visible on the basis of these identities?

### Previous research

Studies on health literacy that are anchored in a situated perspective show how engaging in health literacy practices involves complex cognitive, social, cultural and affective challenges for patients at multiple levels, including: disease domains, documentation, patient support, and the construction of patient identity (Papen 2009, Hunter & Franken 2012). Besides the ability to access, analyse and evaluate health information, health literacy also involves the ability to communicate messages in a variety of forms (Aufderheide 1993). The ability to transfer previous experience to written media in a specific context is fundamental to the act of writing a blog (Herring et al. 2004).

Health blogs have gained popularity by supporting long narratives and accounts of personal experiences along with information and commentary on health policy and health research (Stavrositu & Kim 2015). Blogs written from a patient perspective are rapidly increasing among various patient groups (Miller & Pole 2010). Motivations for writing health blogs that have received attention in previous research are for example *problem-solving*, *emotion management* (Kim & Chung 2007, Chung & Kim 2008), *community building* (Sundar et al. 2007), *information-sharing* (Chung & Kim

2008), *learning* (Pettigrew et al. 2016) and *campaigning* by disseminating information, collecting money and organizing events (McKenna & Pole 2008).

Health blogs written by patients or their family and friends are used for sharing both personal stories and medical information, although personal stories seem to occur more frequently (McKenna & Pole 2008). Blogging offers an opportunity to ‘write in depth’ and to sort and process health related problems. The act of writing a health blog has been compared to the established therapeutic method *the expressive writing paradigm* used in psychological treatment of people in crisis (Rains & Keating 2015). Psychologists (Nagel & Anthony 2009 and Tan 2008) argue that feelings of empowerment and relief by means of articulating one’s thoughts in a blog after experiencing a traumatic event are of therapeutic value. Blogging about cancer has been described as a way of creating networked narratives and engage in collective social action (Stage 2017).

Blogs are open to the public, which means that the writing can be followed by others. Writing a health blog means receiving support and advice from readers as well as reaching out to others in need (Sundar et al. 2007). Health blogging can also be viewed as being part of an epistemic community online where the writer’s medical professional knowledge is recontextualised and new knowledge based on one’s own experiences is created<sup>2</sup>. Sources of medical information are often referred and linked to and sometimes also criticised. By sharing medical information and experiences bloggers perform an expert role. Besides disseminating information health bloggers act as campaign workers by using their blogs for activities such as mobilizing donations and organizing events (McKenna & Pole 2016).

The blogs on children’s heart defects examined in this article are written by parents and bear, in that sense, some similarities to the established blog category *Mommy blogs* (Friedman 2013, Lopez 2009). These are often described as informal, narrative and humorous. The fragmentary format of the blog and the daily repetition of the parental role emphasises an identity as a parent (Lopez 2009:744).

Blogging can be understood as a way of sharing parts of one’s life: events, views and thoughts. John (2013) refers to digital *sharing* mainly in relation to the technical sharing function in the modern web and points to the fact that it is fast and easy to share digital content that already exists online. The

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<sup>2</sup> Discussed in detail in an article by Theres Bellander and Mats Landqvist, currently submitted for publication.

social practice of blogging means reaching out to other people, communicating with them, sharing one's opinions, feelings and current events. The difference between writing a personal journal and writing a personal journal type blog is that the latter includes the writer's intention to share the content with a wider public.

### Theoretical framework and analytical tools

The present study adopts a social constructivist perspective of knowledge-building, and focuses on the construction of social positions in relation to producing and mediating knowledge (e.g. Berger & Luckmann 1967). As a general theoretical framework, we use the sociocultural paradigm of New Literacy Studies, which understands literacy as a social practice rather than an individual, cognitive skill. In this paradigm, identity is constructed in the linguistic aspects of discourse and multimodal semiotic resources, but also in other social practices in which writers engage in direct relation to writing a text, e.g. establishing contact with the reader, positioning oneself, expressing knowledge, emotions, etc. Using this principle as a starting point, we look for traces of identity construction both in the discourse in parents' blogs and in the way that the blogs and the practice of blogging are discussed in the study's interviews.

The social construction of identity as formed in writing and in other social practices has been extensively researched by the linguist Roz Ivanič. In her studies, Ivanič has shown that different forms of literacy foreground different aspects of identity and that these can be traced in specific discursive choices (1998:71). Identity is understood as a continuous process, shaped by events and moments in a person's life rather than as a quality. She uses the term *identification* in order to capture the transitions inherent in the process, turning identity from a noun to a verb (2006). We understand *constructions of identity* as temporary discursive positionings in this ongoing process, both in relation to what is said and in relation to the writer's self.

In her study of identity construction in academic writing (1998), Ivanič proposes four aspects of writer identity and argues that these aspects can also be tracked in other contexts of writing than academic. The first aspect is the writer's *autobiographical self*, that is the sense of who the writer is as a person, experiences of life, interests and practices, including literacy practices. The second, the *discursive self*, has to do with self-representation in the text, the impression we convey of ourselves when writing. Ivanič des-

cribes discursive identity as related to “values, beliefs and power relations in the social context in which they [the texts] were written” (p. 25). Elsewhere, Ivanič (2006) argues that the discursive construction of identity is achieved (amongst other strategies) by affiliation, that is the way we talk (or in this case write) like others who engage in the same practices. The third aspect is the *self as author*, which has to do with the degree of authoritativeness that writers put in their writing by establishing an authorial presence in their texts. Ivanič explains that the self as author is also part of the discursive self but she chooses to include it as a separate category as it is concerned with the interpersonal aspect of identity and can be implicated not only in discourses but also in social relationships of power (Ivanič 1998, Burgess & Ivanič 2010). The final aspect of a writer’s identity does not refer to individual writers but is located in social space. Ivanič calls it prototypical *possibilities for selfhood* and by this she refers to social positionings shaped by the writer’s socio-cultural context and which shape all three previously mentioned aspects of individual writers’ identities.

In our analysis of health blogs, we use these four processes of identification in the act of writing as a starting point in order to say something about the way parents shape identity when blogging about children’s health and thus when practicing health literacy. Due to the nature of our data, we mainly concentrate on the two aspects that are most directly traceable in the discourse of the blogs: *discursive identity* and *self as author*. We also reflect on *autobiographical self*, as far as our interview data allows. How these aspects are analysed is further described in the method section. The aspect of prototypical *possibilities for selfhood* is more briefly touched upon.

A discussion of identity construction in the process of blogging leads to a different discussion about the blogging parents’ learning practices. Identification with other people’s practices or with a community of practice implies participation in new discourses and participation, in its turn, leads to learning (Wenger 1998). In our study, we are interested in bloggers’ newly acquired knowledge in relation to heart defect, their role as parents to a child with a heart defect and the way they negotiate and give meaning to this role as part of their health literacy practices.

### Data collection and methods for qualitative discourse analysis

The data consist of 13 Swedish blogs on children’s heart defects and interviews with six of the blogging parents. The blogs were all in active use and regularly updated at the time when they were collected: between February

2015 and March 2016. To find the most read blogs we used a standard search engine and the keywords *hjärtebarn* or *hjärtbarn* ('heart child') and *barn med hjärtfel* ('child with heart defect'). All the blogs collected were written by parents of a child with a heart defect and are focused primarily on the child and not on the life of the blogger in general. All bloggers regularly published blog posts at the time when the blogs were collected. Some writers started blogging during their pregnancy and some after their child's birth. The age of the children ranges from newborns to primary school age. The children suffer from different kinds of heart defects and have gone through different stages of treatment. The parents chosen for interviewing were the ones who were at a close reach to the researchers and who responded to our call for an interview.

Between May 2015 and March 2016, we conducted in-depth narrative interviews (Mishler 1984) with six of the blogging parents. We used open questions that enabled them to reflect on their blogging as a social practice, their identities as bloggers and their view of the functions of their blog. The questions aimed at promoting narratives, and were of the type "tell us about starting the blog, what was happening in your life?", "what were your intentions with the blog?", "what do you write about?" and "tell about the people reading your blog". The interviews were in average one hour long and they have all been transcribed. We will refer to the interviewed bloggers with the following names: Anna, Aydah, Chris, Elin, Sara and Vera. They are in ages between approximately 30 and 50 years old. Five are female and one is male. All six live together with the other parent. All six also have other children. Two of them, Anna and Aydah, have children that are younger than their "heart child". The interviewed bloggers live in different parts of Sweden and they have different economic, educational and sociocultural backgrounds. One of them, Aydah, is multilingual and uses both Swedish and Arabic in her family. Her blog, like all the blogs examined, is in Swedish. Two of the interviewed parents, Sara and Chris, have written blogs before. All parents are active in social media such as Facebook and Instagram. None of the interviewed parents say that they write other types of texts, besides their blogs and entries in social media, to any extent either for work or leisure.

Both interviews and blog texts are considered to be discursive accounts, produced in situated interaction. Reflective accounts on communicative norms, discursive roles and ideologies are made in both interviews and blogs. Thus, we do not understand the interviews simply as 'what the blogging parents say' about blogging and the blog posts as 'what they actually do' when they are writing. However, in the interviews, a more explicit meta-

discursive frame is often set due to the interviewer's explicit questions (cf. Hanell 2017:4–5).

The software ATLAS.ti was used for a thematic analysis of the interviews and all texts in the 13 blogs.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this initial analysis was to get an overall view of the content of the blogs, and a base for choosing text for further analysis. We identified four main types of content: texts about *the parents' everyday life with the child*, texts about *medical facts*, texts about *engagement* and texts about *feelings*. These main types are presented within an overall framing story where the “heart child” is the main protagonist (Bellander 2016). Other participants i.e. parents, siblings, doctors, nurses, preschool teachers etc. are assigned roles in relation to the child.

The four content types match the different functions of blogging, pointed out in previous research. *Information-sharing* (Chung & Kim 2008) can be seen in texts about medical facts, *problem-solving* (Kim & Chung 2007, Chung & Kim 2008) occurs in texts about the parents' everyday life with the child and *campaigning* (McKenna & Pole 2008) corresponds to texts about engagement. Texts about feelings can be interpreted as both information sharing and problem solving; by writing about feelings the blogger informs others on how it feels to be a parent of a child with a heart defect, as well as attempts to engage others in solving these problems. All bloggers write about their everyday experiences. Some are more inclined to write entries that contain medical descriptions, whereas others use their blogs mainly as a platform for emotional expression. A blog entry might start with a description of an everyday experience, which can be followed by a thorough medical description or by an outburst of feelings. Thus, the categories do not always match separate text units, but should be understood as abstract typifications. In the analysis that follows, we focus on blog extracts that represent all four content types discussed here.

In the analysis of *discoursal identities* constructed by the bloggers, these are understood as results both of how the writer depicts her- or himself as a character in the text, and of the social relations which are being enacted through discourse. More specifically, we are interested in the values, beliefs and power relations which are made relevant in relation to parenting, and how these influence blogging as a health literacy practice. The blogging parents' construction of discoursal identity is thus discussed not as a sum of original acts of writing, but as a means of affiliating oneself with other blog-

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<sup>3</sup> For a description of how ATLAS.ti can support discourse analysis see i.e. Paulus and Lester 2015

gers, parent bloggers and parents who do not blog. It is also important to note that our aim is not to arrive at typified categories of discursive identities in health blogs, as we, in accordance with Ivanič & Clark (1997), do not see self-representation as necessarily coherent. Instead, we argue that bloggers, similar to most kinds of writers, present changing and sometimes contradictory representations of themselves throughout the blogs. Neither do we view discursive choices in the blogs as indicators of health literacy skills, in the sense that certain discourses are linked to better health literacy. Instead, our aim is to show which discourses are in play when practicing health literacy and how they are used by the parents to enact identity in writing. In the blogs, we focus our analysis on discursive portrayals of social actors and social actions, whereas in the interviews we look for sequences where the blogging parents reflect upon their aims with blogging, give accounts of their writing processes and describe themselves as bloggers and as parents.

In the analysis of *self as author*, we look at whether bloggers put themselves in the centre of their writing and the degree to which they establish their presence in it, for example by attributing medical facts to other sources or by presenting them as acquired and therefore as owned knowledge. According to Ivanič, one way of understanding the difference between discursive and authorial self is to think about voice as a content in the first case and voice as form in the second (1998:331).

We also investigate the aspect *autobiographical self*, although it is made relevant to a lesser degree in our study, partly due to its design. The interviews with the blogging parents focus more on narratives around the diagnosis, the child's health condition and the blog, rather than on larger life narratives. We do, however, take account of who the parents are by making reference to their gender, ethnicity and earlier experiences on blogging when we present them as participants of the study. We also discuss autobiographical elements in the analysis, when the parents make it relevant for their blogging and when we can show how the autobiographical self plays a role in the discursive representation of self.

It is important to note here that the blogs were originally written in Swedish language and the extracts presented in this study are our translations. We believe that the questions we have asked and the discursive analytical methods that we have used, as described here, are not dependent on linguistic details on the level of the specific language. Therefore, translated extracts can in most cases be used without losing valuable meaning. In those cases where features of the original language are needed

for the analysis to be meaningful, we write the Swedish word in brackets ( ). All personal names and dates have been changed in the extracts. Names of places have been replaced with explanations in square brackets [ ]. Square brackets are also used when parts of the interview sequence or blog extract is left out.

### Identity and knowledge in parents' blogs

The starting point for this analysis is that the four content categories (texts about everyday life with the child, medical facts, engagement and feelings) differ to an extent that they constitute platforms for constructing different identities. Apart from focusing on the texts, we also search the interviews for extracts where the bloggers explain how they thought or what their aim was when blogging or when writing a particular entry in their blog. By doing this we aim to make a connection between identity construction and knowledge building when blogging about children's health defects. In the analysis that follows, we look separately at each one of the four content categories and discuss the different identities that bloggers can construct in relation to them.

**Identity constructions while sharing everyday experiences.** The most dominant type of blog content is parents' everyday life with the child. This includes recounts of visits to the hospital and accounts of everyday moments, thoughts and decisions. Entries about everyday experiences are typically narratives about events that have occurred in close time to the time of writing. In the interview extracts (1) and (2), the bloggers Anna and Vera say that they want to write their blogs from a parent perspective in contrast to a healthcare perspective.

(1)

Interv.: Um, okay, and how do you think that you want to contribute, I am thinking about your blog

Anna: I think I want to contribute with the parent perspective because all the other things I hope the health care can take care of, and I think that it is pretty important

Interv.: the everyday life with the child

Anna: yes and it is important to show that things can get out of hand but things can also turn out alright and it is worth taking the chance

(2)

Interv.: What did you search for on Google?

Vera: I googled the name of his heart defect Ebstien's Anomaly there was almost no information. Most of it was foreign information so, as for me, I almost got angry, everyone googles why isn't there something to find, someone has to write something but no [...] there will always be new people with heart defects and I know they will do exactly the same thing as we did and find nothing apart from the medical texts that you actually don't really understand and then I simply started a blog where I write how we experienced everything about everyday life and when we were there [at the hospital]

Anna points out her “parent perspective” as different from what “the health care can take care of” and she accepts the suggestion from the interviewer that her experiences from everyday life as a parent to a heart child can be of value to readers of her blog. Vera makes a comparison between information about everyday life with a heart child and information about medical facts. She places herself in a former position of having been someone in need of information on everyday life with a heart child and in a present position as someone providing this information to others. An aspect of Anna's and Vera's *autobiographical selves* can be seen to play an important role here. The experiences they have gained in their role as mothers lead them to juxtapose their knowledge with the institutional knowledge offered by the medical care. They orient therefore towards an identity as parents who know about everyday life with a “heart child” and who have the important task to show both positive and negative aspects of such a life.

Many blog entries represent everyday situations that are affected by the child's heart defect. In these blog entries, the parents perform *discoursal identities* of informed caregivers who adapt their way of acting in relation to different contexts. In example (3) from Lisa's blog, Lisa writes about her daughter's cold hands and feet as an implication of the heart defect:

(3)

Emma gets cold very easily. I know that all children get freezing cold hands and feet. Only few see that as a problem, it's worth getting to feel the ice, digging in the snow, splashing with water... of course Emma also wants to play without her gloves on. But because of the heart she has a bad blood circulation and she gets cold, so cold. Although she is wearing wool underwear, extra layers, fleece overalls, woollen socks and thick overalls she freezes sometimes so much that she cries. When we come indoors we need to flush hands and feet in hot water for a long time. Or give her a bath.

The child Emma is the protagonist in this narrative. The decreased blood circulation, an effect of the heart defect, makes Emma cold. This fact is embedded in a retelling of how Emma likes to play outdoors and how the parents have to flush Emma's hands and feet or give Emma a bath after coming inside. In the described situation, the blogging mother Lisa constructs a *discoursal identity* as an active caretaker; someone who knows that children with heart defects easily get cold when they play outside and therefore dresses her child in warm clothes. In the recount of the everyday experience she also gives herself the role of the one who solves the problem with the cold hands and feet. Lisa constructs a *discoursal identity* of someone who is aware, well prepared and in a position to intervene and act on her child's needs. In her blog entry, she shows that she possesses valuable knowledge that gives her tools to be in control over the everyday situation of playing outside with her child.

In a narrative recount of a medical examination at the local hospital (example 4), the blogger Ulrika writes about acting on a sudden medical decision made by a cardiologist.

(4)

Today we had a routine control with the cardiologist in [name of town]. It was rather quickly seen that there's too much liquid in the pericardium and that something needed to be done. A call was made in the [name of hospital] in order to find out what should be done. The decision to put Marcus in hospital ward 323 was taken, so it was fast home and pack, find a sitter for the dog and the cat and then drive at full throttle down to [name of town where the hospital is].

In this extract, as well as in example (3) above, the child with the heart defect is portrayed as the main character and as a child in need for help. However, in example (4) the one person in position to help is not the blogging parent but

“the cardiologist”. Unlike Lisa who can act on her child’s needs, Ulrika is not able to do anything about her son’s condition “too much liquid in the pericardium”. Instead “we” meet doctors, wait for and receive the doctors’ decisions and finally act on these decisions by engaging in practical matters, like “packing, finding a sitter for the dog and the cat and then drive at full throttle”. Similar to Lisa, Ulrika constructs a *discoursal identity* as an active caretaker. But unlike Lisa, Ulrika’s acting is not built on her knowledge of heart children’s special needs. A comparison of examples (3) and (4) shows an adaptation of acting to different contexts that is characteristic for the parents in the study. In situations like the one with the frozen hands and feet, the parents seem to be fully competent to care for their children’s needs, while at the hospital they leave the power to make decisions in the hands of the medical staff and they act upon the doctor’s instructions. They build identities in relation to the context and their capacity to act on their children’s needs. In some situations, these are *discoursally constructed identities* as caring parents who are aware, well prepared and in a position to intervene. In other situations, these are *discoursal identities* as caring but unprepared parents who are dependent on medical staff.

**Identity constructions while sharing medical facts.** Entries where the bloggers give medical descriptions of the heart defect, symptoms or treatment, i.e. medical facts, are shared to a fairly large extent on the blogs, although they are usually embedded in narrative accounts of experiences. The parents often include visual aids in the form of drawings of the heart and pictures of their child, in order to explain medical conditions. In the interviews, some of the bloggers categorise the sharing of medical facts as an act different from that of sharing moments from everyday experiences. Chris in example (5), talks about how he prepares the writing of blog entries that involves medical facts:

(5)

Chris: writing is also a way of collecting one’s thoughts and make it into a form that is understandable, so I guess, I sit down and I think through what has happened and what that means and then I’m like: “well this happened”, and then I might have to find out facts about that, so I do that and I put it in [in the blog]. I read the facts and then I reformulate it into my own words.

In this extract, Chris reflects upon his writing and describes it as a process consisting of several steps. It starts with Chris sitting down and thinking through “what has happened and what that means” where after he “might have to find out facts”. He does not say how he finds the facts, e.g. by searching the Internet or checking a book, but he describes how he reads and then “reformulates” the facts into his “own words”. In this extract, Chris specifically reflects on his writing process and he discursively constructs an *author identity* of someone who writes in order to find knowledge and make it “understandable”. He portrays himself as someone who takes responsibility for his own learning and achieves this by means of writing. His blog is open for anyone to read and later in the interview he shows that he is aware of his readers as when he, in example (6), reflects on different levels of background knowledge.

(6)

Chris: I sought information from many different sources and finally I had an overall picture. I am quite used [to searching for facts] and I’m pretty critical when I gather the facts. I have an academic education and I use critical thinking but when you think about it not everyone has that.

By talking about gathering information “from many different sources” and by being “critical” while gathering, Chris describes himself as an author who takes responsibility for what he writes on his blog. He explains this side of his blogging by bringing into play an aspect of his *autobiographical identity*, namely his academic background and his ability for critical thinking.

Constructing a strong and conscious author identity contributes to the discursive representation of someone who is informed and knowledgeable. In addition, Chris takes responsibility not only for his own learning, but also for the knowledge-building of others. In the blog extract in example (7), he explains the medical terms VSD and ASD:

(7)

VSD/ASD

VSD and ASD is usually called “a hole in the heart”. It is the most common congenital heart defect and can be found in 25% of all heart children. V stands for Ventricular and it means that the hole is in the wall between the heart’s chambers. There is another type of septum

defect where the whole is between the atriums and then it's called ASD, Atrial Septum Defect.

Chris' child is not present in the text. Instead, the main character is the child's heart along with different specific parts of the heart. In his explanation, Chris provides the exact medical terms: "ventricular" and "Atrial Septum Defect", by defining and explaining: "V stands for...", "...it means that...", "it's called", and by using everyday terms, like "a hole in the heart". He makes no reference to the source of the information. Instead he presents the facts as acquired, processed and integrated knowledge. In his writing, he constructs a *discoursal identity* as a layman expert, a knowledgeable person who can provide understandable information about heart defects. By writing the facts without directly connecting them to his own child and by using statistics to show prevalence, "25% of all heart children", Chris places his son's heart defect in a general context and makes the information applicable to unknown potential readers.

Like Chris, the blogger Elin seems to use her blogging as a way of making medical facts understandable. On her blog, as shown in example (8), she shares her own self-made picture of her child's unique heart. While introducing and explaining the picture by comparing it to a picture of a normal heart, Elin also gives an account of the process she went through in order to understand her daughter's heart defect:

(8)

It has taken us a long time to put together how the Princess's heart actually looks like and it became more difficult since there was no drawn picture with all the problems together and instead we got different sketches depending on which heart defect we were talking about. In the Princess medical journal from 15-02-17 you can read the following: "Truncus arteriosus type1 with rupture in the aortic arch. Open ductus. Complicated situation with a very dysplastic truncus arteriosus with a minor leakage and minor obstruction." In order to show what this means in practice I have put myself into doing a little sketch, I borrowed Growingpeople's picture of a heart with truncus arteriosus and then I drew the other defects. You can find more information on Growingpeople's heart page, all I give here is a short summary.

Elin describes her understanding of the heart defect as a process involving having to "put together" pieces of information during a long period of time. In consultations with cardiologists, the parents are often shown sketches

(Karlsson, Melander Marttala & Mattsson 2014). Elin writes that these sketches have been different, depending on which of her daughter's two heart defects the doctors have talked about. In order to fully understand the combination of the two defects, Elin writes that she used information from her daughter's medical diary. She also writes that she found a sketch of one of the defects online and that she drew "the other defects" on this sketch. Elin's *self as author* becomes visible here, as she adopts an academic discourse by providing sources to the information she cites. At the same time, she is not only copying facts, she is also creating her own knowledge by making the new sketch and claims therefore authority for her blog entry. In this way, Elin *discoursally* constructs herself as someone who is knowledgeable and takes responsibility for her own understanding to such an extent that she provides support for her own learning process. In her blog post, she does not only pass the information about the defect on to others – she also passes on a model for how to gather and synthesise information. Her *autobiographical identity* is also relevant here. Besides writing the "heart child blog" about her daughter, Elin is also the moderator of another blog where parents of children with heart defects are invited to write short narratives of their child's health adventure. Her experience as this blog's moderator and her contact with many parents to heart children appears to allow Elin to access, discuss and process medical knowledge possibly in an easier manner than other parents would do.

**Identity constructions while sharing engagement.** Some blog entries are written with a focus on engagement, where the blogger engages in a larger cause related to the child's condition. This can, for example, include requests for money or organ donations. Some of the interviewed bloggers seem concerned that few people have heard about child heart defect, as it is a fairly common but hidden disability, and argue that they want to make it widely known. This engagement does not originate in the bloggers' personal needs or wishes for their specific child. Instead their engagement can be seen as a collective action, a way of standing up for heart children in general. When reflecting on her blog writing in the interview, in example (9), Elin expresses feelings of unfairness when it comes to which children gain more attention.

(9)

Elin: but it is just that these statistics are not talked about, because only children with cancer count, really, of course that is horrible too but they are not as many if you compare and heart children are not talked about, really

Elin discursively portrays herself as a person with a mission. By mentioning “these statistics”, and by talking about “heart children” in general – not only her own child – she shows that being a parent to a child with a heart defect means, for her, being part of a community of people who are engaged in a larger cause. Thus, when the parents write about engagement in their blogs they construct a *discursial identity* of a person with a mission that goes beyond their own parenting. Parents of children with heart defects are dependent on help from medical professionals. At times when their children are hospitalised they are placed in the position of bystanders. When engaging in donation activities, the bloggers take an active position as someone who is able to do something for all heart children. This might be a way for them to compensate for the forced helplessness in relation to their own child. Example (10) shows how Gunilla, on her blog, writes about making stuffed animal cats for hospitalised children.

(10)

Now I am finally done making the Heart cats. My goal was to make five of them. The fifth one is almost ready too but I really don't think it turned out good. I used another type of yarn and it didn't turn out as good, so I don't want to send it. I might change my mind later but I am going to send these four cats first. But here we have Vida, Liv, Lycke and Gert. They are four small, cute cuddly cats that I hope will come to the delight of their future owners.

Gunilla uses a narrative to tell about the handcrafted cats she has made and donated. Along with a picture of the cats, she writes about the goal she had “to make five of them” and a yarn problem that occurred in her making process. In the two last sentences in example (10), Gunilla orients towards a marketing discourse that seems to be nowadays used even in charity activities. By shifting to an almost professional role in relation to making and donating the cats, she constructs herself as a person engaged in a cause larger than her own parenting.

**Identity constructions while sharing feelings.** In the blog types where the main topic is feelings and thoughts, the main character is not the child but the blog writer, and the focus lies on the blog writer's feelings. At the same time as the parents in our data often construct *discoursal identities* as strong and active, many extracts from both interviews and blog entries show positionings towards identities as emotionally fragile. Reflecting on their reasons for blogging in the interviews, five of the six parents express a "need" to write, more precisely expressed as a "need to get things out of their system". Some of them used the word "therapy" when talking about writing. In example (11), Ayda says that she often wrote in her blog as an alternative to calling a friend.

(11)

Ayda: I definitely get therapy from writing. I mean I felt relieved ('lätad') when I had written a blog post. I felt it was, maybe it has to do with my personality that I like writing so much, other people might call a friend instead but I didn't do that because I didn't feel like talking to anyone.

While Ayda uses the word "relieved" ('lätad'), Chris who also describes his writing as therapy, talks about "breathing space" ('andningshål') in example (12).

(12)

Chris: in my case it was pure therapy in a way [...] You get your thoughts on something else, or not on something else, but when you are in this situation you are so tense all the time you have to find some kind of breathing space ('andningshål').

The use of writing to be relieved or to find "breathing space" seems to be directly relevant to the bloggers' *autobiographical self* and is put into practice when they are in a sad, frustrated or angry mood. These feelings result in constructing a discoursal self of an emotionally loaded parent. Ayda says that she needed to write because she felt depressed. Christer talks about "feeling tense". The blogger Vera says that she writes when she is feeling bitter and angry and that she uses her blog in order to "ventilate" or to "get all the feelings out". Even if this would imply that writing is primarily for the parent's own sake, one of our earlier studies on parents' information seeking practices (Bellander & Nikolaidou, forthcoming) reveals that

parents want to read about other parents' emotional experiences, in order to prepare themselves for what might come in the future. Thus, there is no sharp border between self-therapeutic and communicative functions in the parents' blog writing.

In some of the blog entries, the blogging parents seem to be governed by their emotions and reactions. Feelings usually appear in narrative sequences, where they write about stressful or negative experiences or situations where they have felt strong emotions. In example (13), Sara writes about how she felt when her youngest daughter had to spend nights at the hospital, without her.

(13)

Now I am at home, in bed. Thea is sleeping between me and Marc ♥ wonderful! But every night I feel that a piece is missing. My other child is not sleeping with us. She is a long way from us in a hospital room together with a person she doesn't know. She is sleeping with a respirator and she needs constant attendance! I just want to go there and be with her! It is tremendously hard, tough, strenuous, pure hell downright! I want my beloved children with me twenty-four hours a day! We have come this far on this nightmare trip and we'll keep on fighting! I'll try to sleep a bit so that I soon can go to her, I miss her enormously!

I love my children above everything, they mean all to me! ♥♥♥♥♥

Sara places herself and her feelings in the centre of the text. Thea, Marc and the daughter with the heart defect, "my other child", are described in relation to Sara's physical position. Thea and Marc are close to Sara, in her bed, and "my other child" is far away in a hospital room. Together with "my other child" is "a person she doesn't know". This person probably belongs to the hospital staff but is not described from her/his professional position but from her/his relation to the child. Sara *discoursally* constructs herself as sad and vulnerable. She uses adjectives to describe the missing piece as "enormous" and the situation: "tremendously hard, tough, strenuous, pure hell downright". At the same time, she uses a collective "we" in the sentences "we have come this far...we'll keep on fighting". Sara seems to construct herself as vulnerable when being alone, but as a strong fighter when she is together with her family. Her *discoursal identity* as a mother with strong feelings is accentuated by the use of emoticons of small hearts and exclamation marks.

In some of the blogs, descriptions of emotional states and expressions for feelings occur outside of a narrative context. In example (14), Vera writes about her feelings, without connecting them to any specific event. Her text has a structure that evokes associations to a poem:

(14)

In the evening

That's when they come, the feelings!! Today it got worse than in a long time. It starts with a small thing that feels tough and ends with all the feelings bubbling up. Shit!



In the blog entry, Vera does not portray herself in relation to her child, who is in fact not present at all in her text. As opposed to writing about the specific emotional struggle of being a heart child parent (compared to Sara in example 13), Vera aligns with general discourses about the tiresome demands of always being strong. Vera places her feelings in a general and recurrent time context: “in the evening That’s when they come, the feelings” and “today it got worse”. However, exactly what Vera is feeling, and why, remains untold. Attached to the short text is a picture of a sad person sitting down with her/his knees up. The person is saying (or thinking) “And what the hell should one do when one isn’t capable of being so bloody strong all the time”. Vera’s choice of circulating a prefabricated picture, probably found online, makes it possible to interpret her expression of feelings as less individual, which opens for identification. In this extract, Vera constructs a *discourse identity* of a fragile and thereby a loving mother. The extract can be seen as a summary or as a culmination of feelings and events described in earlier blog posts.

## Discussion

The aim of the study has been to explore how parents construct identities when blogging about their child's heart defect, and to examine what these identities tell us about the knowledge they build up. Like health blogs in general the heart child blogs support long narratives and accounts for personal experiences along with factual style information (Stavrositu & Kim 2015). They are written in a personal journal type style (Herring et al. 2004). Because of the strong focus of the children, the writer's identities as parents are emphasised. In this way, the blogs bear comparison to so called mommy blogs (Friedman 2013, Lopez 2009). In our analysis, it has been confirmed that different content becomes platforms for constructing different identities and thus portraying different knowledge. Before discussing this further, the results of the identity analysis will be briefly summarised.

The identity of an informed caregiver who can adapt the way of acting in relation to different contexts is best expressed in blog posts where the focus lies on moments from everyday experiences. When describing events that take place at home, the bloggers construct themselves discursively as fully competent to care for the child's needs. On the contrary, during events that take place at the hospital, they discursively construct themselves as subjected to the doctors' expertise and as parents who do not have enough knowledge to take own initiatives but act upon doctors' instructions. Often, this is accompanied by narratives of feeling helpless, probably since handing over control over one's child is not in line with the general norm of competent parenthood.

Writing about medical facts seems to involve conscious learning, where the blogging parents process medical knowledge to make it relevant to them as parents of children with a heart defect. The analyses of both interviews and blogs show that in these blog entries, the parents have the opportunity to construct *discursive identities* of well informed, knowledgeable parents who are responsible for their own learning. They possess the ability to gather information from different sources, critically value the facts they find and explain it in a way that makes the facts understandable to themselves and their potential readers. The identity aspect of *self as an author* is made relevant here, as the blogging parents often cite information that they have been given by medical staff or that they have found in other sources, such as the Internet. Here we find blog posts with a high degree of authoritative-ness, where the blogger presents knowledge as internalised and obvious and does not therefore make reference to the sources. On the other hand, we

also find blog posts where the bloggers adopt a more academic discourse and acknowledge their sources. When understood within the frame of helping others to learn more, making references to sources should not be seen as an indication of uncertainty or incompetence, but as a way of making their descriptions more credible and as a way of facilitating for other parents to orientate themselves in their search for information and knowledge.

When the blogging parents write about engagement in their blogs they construct the *discoursal identity* of a person with a mission that goes beyond their own parenting, and places them in a larger community. Their engagement can be seen as a collective action, a way of standing up for heart children in general. Parents of children with heart defects are dependent on help from medical professionals. At times when their children are hospitalised they are placed in passive positions as bystanders. As a contrast, some of them take active positions when engaging in donation activities. In these blog posts, parents also construct themselves as knowledgeable in terms of what kind of help is needed in this context and of how this can be achieved.

When writing about inner thoughts and feelings, the parents have the opportunity to *discoursally* construct themselves as fragile and weak or as strong fighters. The same blogger can alternate between both conflicting identities in different or even in the same blog posts. The knowledge that becomes relevant here is that of a parent that knows not only what to do in order to take care of a heart child, but most importantly how it feels to be this kind of parent. This is a knowledge that is unique to each parent but that seems at the same time to be useful to other parents who read these posts.

The new identities that parents construct by means of blogging tell us a lot about the new knowledge they have acquired and which they consider important to share with their readers, including other parents. On the basis of daily events and the identity as a competent parent who knows their child's best, the bloggers can process general knowledge and adapt it to their own, specific situation. When medical procedures are represented as part of feeding or clothing routines, they are placed within a real-life context, and also tested and found relevant. While health care providers can give information about what is common and what *might* occur, the blogger can tell about a real case, with a thick context and with events in temporal sequence. However, the lived experience provides little knowledge about the future. Thus, the *discoursal identity* as a critical gatherer of information and 'layman analyst', comparing facts and sketches, enables knowledge-building beyond the personal experience. In order to take on an *author identity* as

someone who provides broad and trustworthy information, the blogger needs to look beyond their personal situation. Interestingly, this widened scope makes them more prepared for processing new and unknown knowledge about their own child. The *discoursal identity* as a strong and executive activist, working for the best of all heart children, enables knowledge-building about the social and financial context of specialised health care and research. Finally, while reflecting on and analyzing their own feelings and reactions, and thus constructing a *discoursal identity* as vulnerable and yet struggling human beings, the bloggers can shift focus away from the medical context and, to some extent, away from their roles as parents, and focus on their own well-being and on the general challenges of coping as a person in a difficult situation. At the same time as being the most personal identity position, it is the one pointing to the widest interpretational context. This is underlined by the recycling of memes and quotes, not referring to heart child parenting at all.

The common theme in all four types of blog posts is that parents construct themselves as knowledgeable. Their child's health adventure has put them in a position to acquire knowledge that parents to healthy children do not normally have. In addition to presenting knowledge about heart defects, and different aspects of living with this condition, parents project in their writing new knowledge about who they are as parents as well as persons. For Ivanič, participating means reconfiguration of subjectivity and she argues that "learning to feel different about yourself, even to have a different sense of who you are is in itself a type of learning" (2006:26). In the case of the blogging parents, participation is achieved by means of blogging. Writing seems to be for them a means of processing events and information, but also a means of entering a community and both these activities lead to new knowledge, or else to learning.

The results of this study also tell us something about the conditions for being a knowledgeable parent to a child with a chronic disease in the contemporary society, since its case is placed in the intersection of family norms and communication ideologies. According to Westberg (2016), who has investigated the discourses of parenting in a Swedish context from an historical perspective, the 2010's Swedish public discourse about parenting is heavily influenced by a child-regulated parent position. This means that the child's need is put first, and that a good parent knows (or feels) what their child needs. This position is also commonly supported by experts and authorities, which means that there is no necessary conflict between following expert advice and listening to one's child. Both point to an indi-

vidually oriented way of being a parent, based on relevant knowledge and personal confidence. However, parents of children with chronic illnesses, such as a heart defect, develop different, more specialised, and more complicated relations to experts' medical knowledge. They need to relate to general knowledge, which is not based in their own experiences and individual preferences, and still they need to learn how the heart defect affects their particular child. In this way, parents of children with severe illnesses often find themselves in a position in relation to authorities that resembles the "normal" parent position of the 1940's in Sweden, when new scientific knowledge on parenting was produced, urging parents to break with old traditions and become modern, informed and educated parents (Westberg 2016:109 ff). This is not only a conflict between personal identities, but also a conflict between dominant co-existing ideologies in today's society: that of being a self-confident and child-regulated parent and that of being an informed and responsible patient.

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## Södertörn Discourse Studies

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The term *linguistic ethnography* was introduced at the beginning of the millennium to describe a large number of studies that made use of ethnographic methods of data collection and analysis to talk about context when studying language use, practices and ideologies.

The six chapters in this edited collection were among the forty papers presented in the Sixth Conference on Explorations in Ethnography, Language and Communication, at Södertörn University in 2016 and they all have a focus on methodology. A preface is included written by Karin Tusting, convenor of the Linguistic Ethnography Forum at Lancaster University.

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