

Circulating discourses on linguistic diversity – examining language policy in a multilingual school

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In this presentation, I will discuss preliminary findings from a discourse analysis of the Swedish Curriculum for Compulsory School, arguing that the way language is construed throughout the curriculum is reflective of conflicting ideological orientations to linguistic diversity.

The presentation draws on my ongoing dissertation work, an ethnography of language policy in a Swedish upper secondary school located in a linguistically diverse urban neighborhood. Language policy is viewed as a stratified phenomenon founded in social action, which means that policy is enacted by multiple social actors on multiple scales, ranging from steering documents to language practices on the ground (Hult 2015). The policy is mapped ethnographically, and nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon 2004) is employed as an analytical framework to enable tracing connections between norms and practices.

In this talk, I narrow my focus to the circulation of discourses about linguistic diversity across the scales of the school. The research question guiding the analysis is: what orientations to linguistic diversity emerge in the policy? Relating the findings to data reflecting other scales (e.g. interviews with participants, ethnographic field notes, photographs), the presentation illustrates how particular language ideologies discursively come into play in the policy process.

The analysis of the curriculum traces the way language as a phenomenon is construed throughout the two parts of the text, suggesting that a transformation is occurring of the way language is construed throughout the curriculum. This transformation is argued to reflect conflicting ideological orientations to linguistic diversity.

These preliminary findings indicate that the curriculum ideologically reflects an (institutional) norm where discursive space is provided for linguistic diversity on an abstract, generalized level, but where the more concrete and directive educational goals erase this discursive space.

References

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Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2004). *Nexus Analysis. Discourse and the emerging internet*. London: Routledge.