Discourses on encountering multilingual learners in Finnish schools

Abstract

The study examines the narratives of Finnish lower secondary school teachers working in linguistically diverse schools by analysing their narratives' discourses on encountering multilingual learners. The study reflects the current period when the Finnish education system is experiencing growth in linguistic diversity and a change in educational policies that require language awareness from all teachers. In the study, 16 teachers participated in semi-structured group interviews. The teachers' narratives were analysed by applying a framework for linguistically responsive teaching (Lucas & Villegas, 2013) in combination with discourse analytical methods. The analysis resulted in six discourses concerning agency, acceptance, and change in the school culture. The findings provide insights into the complex and multivoiced ways in which teaching multilingual learners is discussed. By revealing contradictory and overlapping voices, the study deepens the understanding of the process of developing teachers' preparedness for linguistically diverse classrooms.

Key words
Multilingual learners, linguistically responsive teaching, discourse analysis

1. Introduction

In the twenty-first century, classrooms throughout the world are increasingly receiving pupils who speak several languages. These languages are often different from the language spoken by the teacher, in which case the language of the school is both the target and instrument of learning for the newcomers. The increase in linguistically and culturally diverse pupils (i.e. *multilingual learners* (MLLs)) requires societies to set language awareness and multilingualism as prioritised targets in developing their educational policy (European Commission, 2019). Schooling is essentially a linguistic process, as language is the medium through which pupils access learning and display knowledge (Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Schleppegrell, 2004; Cummins, 2000). Therefore, ignoring the needs of newcomers would lead to inequities in pupil participation, access to the curriculum and opportunities to learn the language of the school (Menken & Kleyn, 2010; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Verplaetse, 2000; Cohen, 1997).

Teachers have a significant role in creating, interpreting and adopting new educational policies (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). Policies are often operationalised in regulations and guidelines at the national level, and these guidelines are then interpreted at the institutional, interpersonal and practical levels. In their daily teaching practice, teachers have the opportunity to make small changes regarding the topics they choose for discussion, how they structure the classroom and the interest they show in pupils' challenges. Teachers can transform classrooms, thereby promoting political and institutional change that can ultimately lead to broader

social change (McCarty, 2011; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). However, regarding diversity, previous studies indicate that teachers' lack of preparedness for multilingual learners is related to, for instance, pessimistic views many teachers hold of linguistically diverse pupils (e.g. Iversen, 2020; Lucas et al., 2015; De Abreu & Hale, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2007; Escamilla, 2006) and the limited resources they have in terms of time and materials (Cho & Christenbury, 2009; Batt, 2008; Cho & Reich, 2008). The lack of preparedness is also connected to the difficulties of identifying the language demands of classroom tasks (cf. de Jong et al., 2013; Pettit, 2011; Faltis et al., 2010) and maintaining monolingual practices despite the positive values presented by linguistic diversity (Alisaari et al., 2019; Lundberg, 2019; Karathanos, 2009; Garcia-Nevarez et al., 2005; Griego-Jones, 2002). Additionally, unpreparedness is linked to the inclination to place the responsibility for teaching MLLs on other colleagues with more linguistic expertise (Hutchinson, 2013; Yoon, 2008; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). However, the research (e.g. Kirsch et al., 2020; Kirsch & Aleksić, 2018; Kuukka et al., 2015; Reeves, 2006; Walker et al., 2004) suggests many teachers desire to participate in professional development (PD) to cultivate the necessary knowledge and practices for multilingual teaching.

In the Finnish context, quantitative studies have recently measured teachers' responses in terms of their beliefs, attitudes and resources to the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse pupils (Alisaari et al., 2019; Acquah, 2015). These studies reveal that not all teachers have sufficient knowledge of how to teach MLLs. Additionally, a meta-ethnographic study by Tarnanen and Palviainen (2018) indicates the shift in teachers' discourses regarding multilingualism occurs slowly, thus causing a delay in comparison with the pronouncement of documented educational policies. Nonetheless, a deeper understanding of teachers' discourses is essential to determine the focus areas for PD. In this study, discourses are seen as ideas and ways of talking and, in terms of their linguistic aspect, as "conventionalised sets of choices for talk" (Johnstone, 2018, p. 3). The study draws on an intertwined relationship of discourses and beliefs, as "the ways of talking produce and reproduce ways of thinking, and ways of thinking can be manipulated by choices about grammar, style, wording and every other aspect of discourse" (cf. Johnstone, 2018, p. 53). The study is motivated by understanding teachers in today's schools. If more knowledge was available about contradictory discourses regarding linguistic diversity, the shift in teachers' beliefs and actions could be more strongly promoted towards linguistically responsive teaching.

The current study considers teachers' narratives concerning their encounters with linguistically and culturally diverse pupils in Finnish schools. More precisely, it examines how the narratives of lower secondary school teachers (teaching pupils aged 13–16 and grades 7–9) reflect the framework of linguistically responsive teaching (by Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Linguistically responsive teaching is the method that inspired this study, the goal of which is to critically analyse narratives in discourses on teaching MLLs. Exploring the narratives provides insights into teachers' contradictory realities, motives and reasoning regarding their preparedness for newcomers in the school system. The analysis also elucidates the complex, multivoiced ways that teaching MLLs is discussed today.

1.1 Context of the study: Societal change driving the Finnish school system to revise curricula

Finland and its education system are experiencing changes due to globalisation and an increase in linguistically and culturally diverse learners. The increase can be seen at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, as the growth in population is based completely on immigration (Statistics Finland, 2019). In 2015, 6% of pupils in basic education had a home language other than Finnish, Swedish or Sami, the three official languages of Finland. Simultaneous with this increase in linguistically and culturally diverse learners entering the classroom, recent studies and international assessments (e.g. PISA) have started to suggest a significant gap between the learning outcomes of native Finnish speakers and pupils with an immigrant background (Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2014; Vettenranta et al., 2016).

Traditionally, Finnish and Swedish have been the languages of instruction in Finnish classrooms. Officially, instruction can also be in Sami, Romani, and Finnish Sign Language. For a long time, the use of either Finnish or Swedish has created a society where bilingualism, or rather parallel monolingualism (e.g. Heller, 1999), is present and sets a framework for school culture. That is, each school has its language of preference, which automatically enforces people to use either Finnish or Swedish separately. Despite the legal status regarding languages, the traditional setting recognises only a fraction of languages spoken in today's schools (Honko & Mustonen, 2018). Even though a growing proportion of the pupil population consists of speakers of, for example, Russian and Estonian (languages that already have a long history in Finland) and speakers of Somali and Arabic (languages with a more recent presence), the media of instruction in classrooms often remains monolingual—either Finnish or Swedish (Alisaari et al., 2019; Tarnanen et al., 2017).

In response to societal changes and to highlight the role of language in learning, the Finnish National Core Curricula for primary and upper secondary level education (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014; 2015) has been reformed to promote cultural diversity, language awareness and multilingualism as key values guiding the development of school culture. The National Core Curricula includes the objectives and core contents of different subjects and provides a common direction and basis for renewing instruction in all Finnish schools. Today, the guidelines require every teacher—regardless of their content area and specialty—to be a language teacher in their own subject. That is, every teacher in Finland is expected to examine the language demands embedded in academic texts and learning tasks and to teach subject-specific literacy skills to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to succeed. Further, the curricula guidelines advocate multilingualism in its broadest sense, promoting the use of pupils' home languages as a resource for learning and encouraging the use of multiple languages side by side in the classroom.

At the policy level, the Finnish curricula reform has been identified as very progressive compared to the curricula in other countries (Zilliacus et al., 2017). At the practical level, however, there is concern about the practical implementations given the preparation of current teachers (Alisaari et al., 2019). The curriculum is considered abstract and mastery of it challenging. Yet, the organisation of teachers' PD is sporadic in Finland,

and there is no predetermined curricula governing its focus and content (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019).

1.2 Research questions

Given that teachers in Finland are expected to notice the central role of language in learning, the study examines the ways in which teachers narratively construct their encounters with MLLs. At the time of the study, the language-aware curricula had been valid for almost one academic year. The following two research questions were set to describe the typical narratives elicited in discussions on teaching linguistically diverse pupils and to carefully identify the discourses of teachers' narratives. The aim is to outline, categorise and critically analyse how teaching MLLs is constructed.

1. What kind of narratives do teachers produce when discussing the teaching of multilingual learners?
2. What are the characteristics of the discourses emerging from the narratives?

Teachers' talk (non-written texts teachers produce) consists of "instances of discourse" (cf. Johnstone, 2018, p. 17). As these texts contain pieces of a story from multilingual schools, the instances of discourse are considered *narratives* in the current study. Among researchers, several definitions of a narrative exist (see e.g. Moen, 2006; Heikkinen, 2002; Mieke, 1997). In this study, a narrative or a conversational narrative is seen as a discursive recourse and tool through which informants "make sense of and order their experiences, construct reality and understand and adjust their life, events and relationships" (Pietiläinen & Mäntynen, 2009, p. 104). Teachers' narratives represent conversational storytelling that has utilised an interactional approach in an interview situation (see more about the method in chapter 3), thus adapting the way Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) use the concept of a 'small story'. Instead of a canonical, prototype 'big' story with a beginning, a middle and an end, small stories can be co-constructed stories about past, present, future or hypothetical events.

2. Linguistically responsive teaching as the theoretical framework of the study

Recent studies suggest that language and content are inseparable and learnt in parallel (e.g. Cummins, 2001; Swain, 2006; Gajo, 2007; Mortimer & Scott, 2003). Therefore, teachers working with linguistically diverse learners need a specific understanding of second language (L2) development, an understanding that provides a foundation for designing instruction and facilitating pupils' learning (Villegas et al., 2018). Moreover, teachers need practices to create learning environments that purposefully build on the learners' linguistic and cultural resources, as these are suggested to be the most effective when teaching MLLs (e.g. de Jong & Harper, 2011; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Genesee et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992).

To spotlight the linguistic issues in learning, Lucas and Villegas (2013) have listed three orientations and four types of pedagogical knowledge and skills fundamental to teaching MLLs successfully. Together, these form a framework for the preparation of linguistically responsive teaching (LRT), as presented in Figure 1.
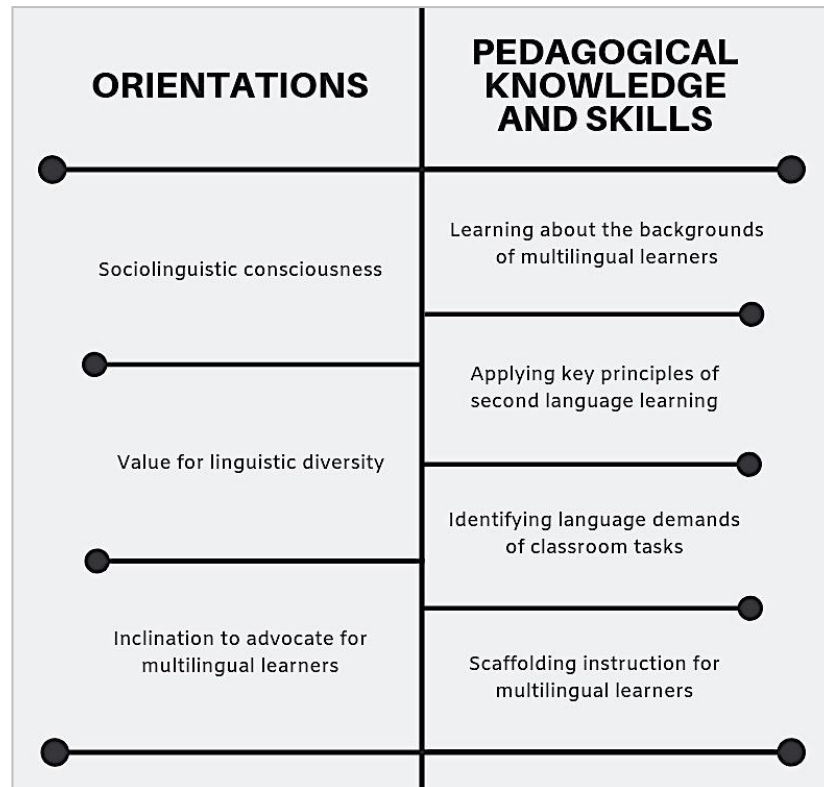

Figure 1. Framework for the preparation of linguistically responsive teaching by Lucas and Villegas (2013)

Whereas the Finnish National Core Curricula (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014; 2015) discusses '*language-awareness and multilingual pedagogies*', Lucas and Villegas (2013; Lucas et al., 2008) talk about '*linguistically responsive teaching*'. In the current study, the concepts are used somewhat synonymously, as both aim to recognise "the essential role of language in learning, interaction, identity development and socialisation" (Alisaari et al., 2019; cf. Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014, p. 28; Lucas et al., 2008, p. 362). The documented policies create 'macro-level' support for multilingual practices. Therefore, the study is based on the assumption that the orientations and pedagogical knowledge and skills in the framework exist in a school that successfully encounters MLLs. The way this study interprets the framework is discussed below.

The *orientations* in the framework refer to beliefs and values regarding language and linguistic diversity: i) A '*sociolinguistic consciousness*' includes the understanding that language, culture and identity are intertwined and that language use and policies are intimately tied to larger historical and sociopolitical contexts (cf. Nieto & Bode, 2012). Sociolinguistically conscious teachers recognise that power and privilege associated with speakers of particular languages affect pupils' sense of belonging (De Jong & Harper, 2011; Paris, 2012; Nieto, 2002), and teachers therefore see affirming all languages as vital. ii) The '*value for linguistic diversity*', then, stands for using MLLs' linguistic repertoires as a resource in learning and permitting multilingual practices in the classroom. Supporting this, a number of studies (e.g. Mehmedbegovic & Bak, 2017; Proctor et al., 2010;

Collier & Thomas, 2007; Cummins, 2000) prove that if pupils' home languages are allowed in the classroom, it results in positive educational outcomes and L2 and literacy development. iii) The '*inclination to advocate for multilingual learners*' is about improving MLLs' access to educational opportunities and social and political capital. That is, teachers should be inclined to develop a nuanced understanding of linguistically and culturally diverse communities and the challenges they face to advocate for home–school communication and to empower pupils intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically (cf. de Jong, 2008; Rogers et al., 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The *pedagogical knowledge and skills* in the framework are intended to provide optimal learning conditions for linguistically diverse pupils. This study understands and talks about knowledge and skills as *strategies*, as all four involve some kind of action. i) The strategy of '*learning about the backgrounds of multilingual learners*' means knowing about the variations in the prior experiences of MLLs, their academic literacy skills and the ways they use their home languages and Finnish. Additionally, it means practices to become familiar with MLLs, even when they are not yet able to communicate in the language of the school. It also includes the ability to take into account pupils' knowledge, prior experiences and performance styles in lesson planning in ways that the instruction legitimises those topics the pupils are already familiar with (cf. Herrera, 2010; Nieto, 2002; Gay, 2000; Moll et al., 1992). ii) The strategy of '*applying key principles of L2 learning*' refers to the knowledge of sociocultural, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic processes involved in learning an additional language and the ways to use that knowledge in instruction. From a sociocultural perspective, language learning requires classroom practices that provide pupils with opportunities to negotiate meaning as individuals and as a learning community (cf. Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Pupils' language learning arises from participating in repetitious social interactions and from dialogues with other language users (cf. Mitchell et al., 2013; Suni, 2008). In such interactions, language learners need affordances just beyond the zone of proximal development (van Lier, 2000; Vygotsky, 1987).

iii) The strategy of '*identifying the language demands of classroom tasks*' requires teachers to understand that the *academic and subject-specific language* of school differs fundamentally from *everyday conversational language* (Schleppegrell, 2004; Gibbons, 2002; Cummins, 2000). This strategy refers to the preparedness to identify the linguistic features of academic subjects and activities likely to pose challenges for MLLs. This means the skills to analyse the syntactic and semantic characteristics of different academic texts, the role of oral and written language use according to the situation, audience and genre and the distinction between context-embedded and context-reduced registers (cf. Fillmore & Snow, 2002; Cummins, 2000; Unsworth, 2001). For instance, the successful command of academic language demands from pupils the ability to seek, analyse and interpret information, to understand and explain subject-specific abstract concepts, to produce and edit written documents in a language appropriate to the school and to understand their teachers and peers—all in Finnish (Lucas & Villegas, 2013).

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iv) The strategy of '*scaffolding instruction for multilingual learners*' includes applying temporary support to provide MLLs with access to learning the language of instruction and the content being taught by drawing on learners' current linguistic resources (Walqui & van Lier, 2010; Cummins, 2001). On one hand, scaffolding allows language learners to accomplish academic tasks they could not do alone. On the other hand, it allows teachers to keep the cognitive demands of instruction high (cf. Villegas et al., 2018; Gibbons, 2002; Vygotsky, 1987). When teaching MLLs, scaffolding means, for instance, using extra-linguistic supports such as visual tools (videos, pictures, and drawings) and graphic organisers (maps, graphs, and timelines), supplementing and modifying written texts (developing study guides, aid-questions, and instructions to scrutinise pictures, captions, highlighted words, and summaries when reading a school book chapter) (Bransford et al., 2000), reducing the speed of teaching, avoiding idiomatic expressions (Hite & Evans, 2006), pausing and giving time for processing and responding (Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008), giving clear and explicit instructions and definitions of concepts, providing transparent lesson outlines, splitting themes into smaller questions, repeating key ideas (Gibbons, 2002), engaging pupils in meaningful collaborative activities to promote negotiations of language (Aalto & Tarnanen, 2017) and establishing classroom routines and modelling what is expected from pupils linguistically (Willet et al., 2008).

In this study, the theoretical framework for LRT, as presented above, will be applied to analyse the data. The three orientations and four strategies in the framework will be adopted as coding units to examine the teachers' narratives.

3. Data and methods

The qualitative data were collected in spring 2017 using semi-structured group interviews at two multilingual lower secondary schools in Southern Finland. In total, 16 teachers participated. The schools were chosen due to the high immigrant concentration in their area (20–35% according to Statistics Finland, 2015). The lower secondary school teachers participating were working with pupils from the higher grades of the basic education system (basic education in Finland encompasses 9 years and caters to pupils aged 7–16). Participants reported their regular class size as being 2–25 pupils and the number of pupils with an immigrant background in the classroom as being 5–100%. Each participant had at least one year of experience working with MLLs.

The participants each had a Master's degree (5-year programmes) and taught different school subjects (physics and chemistry; Finnish and literature; mathematics; biology, geography and health education; special education; home economics; religion and ethics; music; English and Swedish; history and civics). However, to guarantee anonymity, the participants were not analysed separately according to their subjects. In addition to having a Master's degree, each participant also had to complete at least one year of pedagogical training in teacher training schools (which are part of universities and offer arenas to bring pedagogical theories into practice) to qualify as a teacher in Finland. Thereafter, the teachers have autonomy in their work. This also means that participation in PD tends to vary depending on the teachers' own activity, as the organisation of

PD in Finland is based on voluntary participation (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019). This meant that at the time of data collection even though the National Core Curriculum required all teachers to be language teachers of their own subjects, not all the participants had necessarily acquired access to PD about the topic.

The interviews took place in groups that were formed randomly by selecting two to four participants at a time from the school staffroom during recess. The data was gathered from six group interviews, each lasting 30 minutes to one hour. Group interviews were chosen as a method to enable sociocultural understanding, as in such a setting the teachers reflect on each other's comments and produce socially acceptable explanations and narratives that they live by in multilingual schools (cf. Hyvärinen et al., 2017). All interviews were conducted in Finnish and audio-recorded. Participation was voluntary, and before the interview informed consent for the research was obtained both at the institutional and individual levels. Participants' privacy rights were respected by anonymising the data, and the current legal regulations were followed.

3.1 Interview data

The interview questions focused on teachers' beliefs and actions regarding MLLs, teaching methods and materials and the challenges and opportunities teachers address in a multilingual school. On one hand, the questions were designed to be unequivocal (e.g. *What methods or practices have proven to work well with pupils with an immigrant background?*) and on the other hand to simultaneously elicit spontaneous pieces of a story from multilingual schools. The interest lay in the ways of talking and ways of thinking about encountering MLLs (cf. Johnstone, 2018). For instance, the question '*What methods or practices have proven to work well?*' was expected to elicit participants' conversational narratives regarding linguistically responsive orientations and strategies. With what kind of linguistic choices did the teachers discuss their experiences of teaching MLLs, and how did the teachers appear to *apply principles of L2 learning*, *identify the language demands of classroom tasks* and *scaffold instruction for MLLs* in their daily work (cf. Lucas & Villegas, 2013)? Appendix 1 presents the interview themes and questions. Among the questions was a specific set of questions related to second-generation immigrants, as their learning achievements are proven to lag almost two years behind those of native Finnish pupils (Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2014).

In addition to the interview questions, the conversation allowed for spontaneous follow-up questions and clarifications. In this regard, the dialogical nature of the interview must be acknowledged. Interviews are co-constructed (Georgakopoulou, 2013), and therefore my position as a researcher and other participants in the group had an effect on the related narratives. On one hand, I was only able to get answers to questions I asked. On the other hand, participants could have easily started agreeing with the groups' general opinion. Additionally, the analysis only included data from those teachers who agreed to participate in the interview; consequently, the material did not cover the whole teaching spectrum of a multilingual school. All names of places and persons in the data examples have been changed. Audio recordings were transcribed in Finnish but

will be published in translation, acknowledging the fact that translation is to some extent a transformation of a text (Johnstone, 2018). Transcriptions were reviewed by a professional native English-speaking language consultant with whom all data examples were discussed, preserving details of language form and function as meticulously as possible.

3.2 Discourse analysis

The data processing was divided into two parts: 1) initial coding and 2) discourse analysis. The process is illustrated briefly in Figure 2.
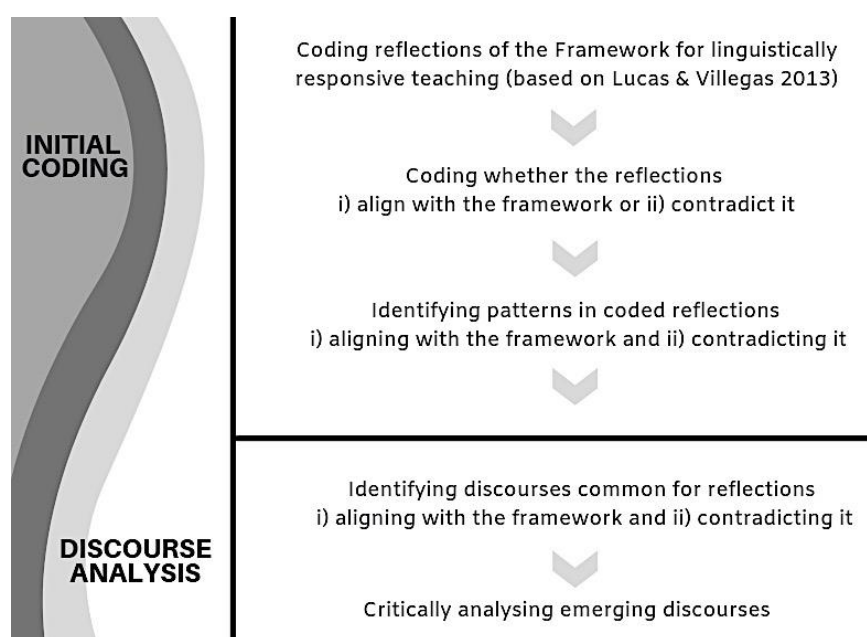

Figure 2. Data analysis

Initial coding

First, the transcribed data was subjected to initial coding (e.g. Saldaña, 2008) to identify what orientations and strategies from the framework for LRT exist in the interviews conducted. When seeking to find reflections of the framework, it became evident that orientations and strategies contradicting the framework could also be found in the teachers' narratives (hereafter referred to as contradictory orientations and contradictory strategies). The following two-part coding was applied:

      i) The narrative aligns with the framework

      ii) The narrative contradicts the framework

For example, a contradictory narrative could include a belief in a 'Finnish only policy' instead of narrating how to cultivate linguistic diversity in a classroom. The coded units from all interview transcripts were placed together so that patterns of contradictions could be identified, and analytic memos were kept to summarise what was typical of the narratives that were in line with the framework and typical for those that contradicted it. Figure 3 shows a sample of an analytic memo about patterns extrapolated regarding the orientation 'value for linguistic diversity' (cf. Lucas & Villegas, 2013).
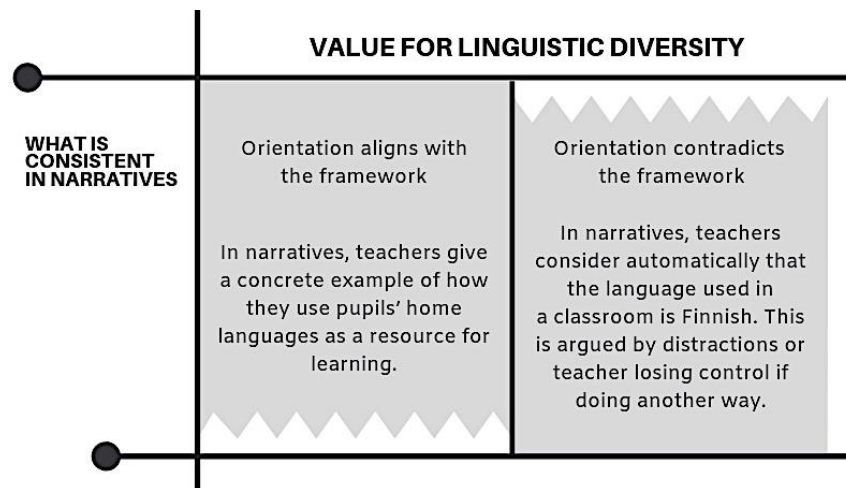
Figure 3. Example of an analytic memo

Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis has a long tradition in the social sciences and humanities (e.g. Gee & Handford, 2012). It enables people to produce and interpret paragraphs, stories, conversations and arguments and to explore the patterns and regularities of phrases, clauses, sentences and other structural conventions influencing the discourse (Johnstone, 2018). In that sense, the grammar and discourse intersect, as grammar allows choices within a language and choices among ways phrasing a sentence can reflect ideological agendas, explicit or unconscious (Johnstone, 2018). In the current study, the analysis concentrated on the narratives positioned as reflections of i) orientations and strategies aligning with the framework or ii) orientations and strategies contradicting it. All aspects of the framework and the identified patterns in the analytic memos were scrutinised simultaneously, reading the data with different levels of abstraction in mind and systematically taking different perspectives on the data. For instance, memos of what is consistent in the orientation 'value for linguistic diversity' (cf. Figure 3) were compared with the memos of other orientations and strategies. Eventually, this heuristic approach led to identifying discourses that will be presented as the results of this study.

Throughout the analysis, it was kept in mind that even individually produced discourses could be contradictory and overlap domains. Given the qualitative nature of the study and the relatively small sample size, it is impossible to make generalisations from the findings. Nevertheless, the analysis provides a window into teachers' realities, motives and reasoning regarding linguistic diversity issues.

4. Results: Discourses on encountering multilingual learners

The interview questions elicited pieces of a story where the teachers as tellers co-construct their encounters with MLLs and introduce contradictions (cf. Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). To answer the first research question, in a group interview setting story plots, narrated experiences and characters were managed interactionally between the participants rather than putting all responsibility on a teller (cf. Hyvärinen et al., 2017). Thus, the conversational narratives presented as data examples of the analysis are not necessarily the

linear sequencing of past events in linguistically diverse schools but the non- or multilinear unfolding of experiences and relationships, as many of our stories are messy in reality (cf. Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Emphasis is on world-making and the telling of ordinary encounters with linguistically diverse pupils.

When discussing the teaching of MLLs—even when answering the same interview question within a co-constructed group interview—participants' individual choices about grammar, style, wording and other aspects of discourse reflect the different ways teachers make sense of their experiences. Regarding the framework for LRT, the teachers produce narratives that reflect all the orientations and strategies from varying perspectives—aligning with, contradicting and at the same time individually overlapping. The language patterns in the small stories demonstrate differing *orientations* regarding language and linguistic diversity and manifest varying *pedagogical skills and knowledge* to provide optimal learning conditions for linguistically diverse pupils. Interestingly, when it comes to second-generation immigrants this group of pupils is incorporated into the talk of linguistically diverse pupils in general. In fact, most teachers say they do not even know which pupils have a second-generation immigrant background and which have arrived more recently.

The analysis results in six discourses that can be arranged in three contradictory themes concerning a) agency, b) acceptance and c) readiness to change (on teacher agency and beliefs, see e.g. Kirsch et al., 2020; Biesta et al., 2015). The discourse themes echo the differing motives and reasoning surrounding the topic and reflect the gradual shift that is occurring regarding teachers' beliefs and actions vis-à-vis the present curricula reform.

To answer the second research question, the results are organised according to the discourse themes presented in Figure 4. First, Chapter 4.1 discusses the discourse of actively contributing to the integration of MLLs compared to the discourse on contracting out of the integration (agency). Second, Chapter 4.2 presents the discourse of advancing inclusion in contrast to the discourse of creating exclusion (acceptance). Third, Chapter 4.3 introduces the discourse of embracing change in contrast to the discourse of conserving traditions (change).
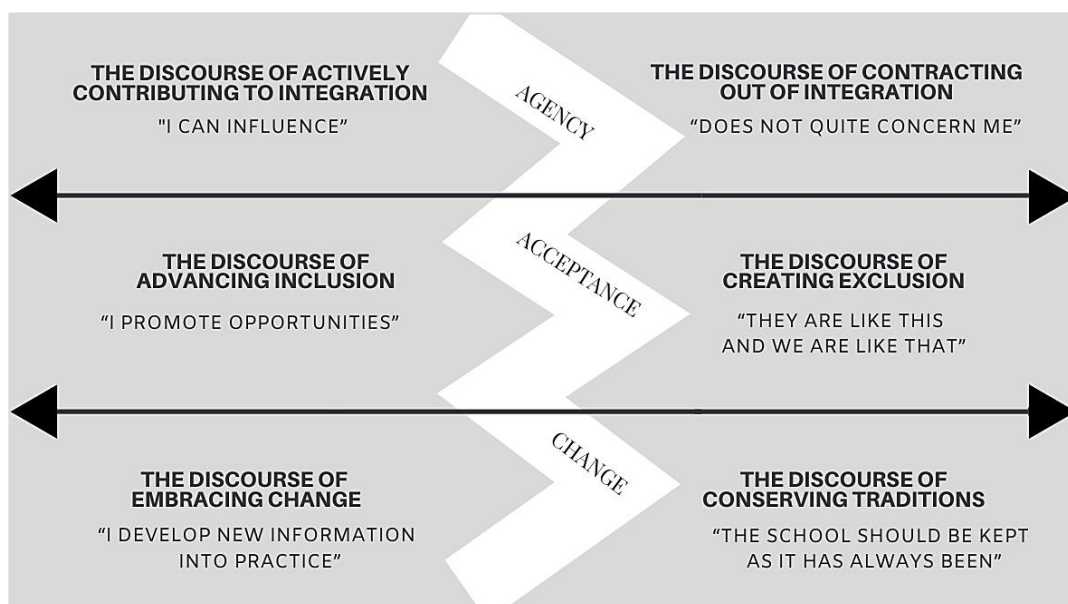

Figure 4. Discourses on encountering multilingual learners

It is noteworthy that each of the 16 participants could be positioned as manifesting several of the discourses presented in Figure 4. Therefore, the results will not be reported as figures but as a thick description of the findings, striving for a complex and many-sided understanding of the phenomena. However, among the participants relating 'the most extreme' narratives, there appears to be a tendency to take a position on one or the other side of the themes. However, profiling teachers separately in this way is outside the scope of this analysis.

4.1 The discourse of actively contributing to the integration of multilingual learners compared to the discourse of contracting out of the integration

The first pair of discourses concerns agency. In the teacher narratives, integrating MLLs can appear as a task teachers believe they are able to actively contribute to or as a task they find does not concern their work – in the latter case, it rather a task that should be outsourced to other teachers and institutions. The ways both discourses manifest will be described with references to the framework of LRT (in brackets) and with data examples.

The discourse of actively contributing to integration manifests as narratives of actions to improve MLLs' access to educational opportunities. This means systematic solutions to take into account MLLs' home languages and prior experiences in instruction (cf. Lucas & Villegas, 2013; strategy 'learning about the backgrounds of MLLs'). When asked about issues challenging for pupils with an immigrant background, one is narratives starting with '*I have done*', '*I have tried*' or '*I have made*' in the perfect tense, after which a teacher introduces an orientation or strategy making a difference. In Finnish, the perfect tense describes processes that are ongoing or otherwise still relevant at the time of speaking (Hakulinen et al., 2004: VISK, § 1534). Example 1 illustrates such a narrative of ongoing action.

Example 1, teacher #6:

> *I have started doing different things when I teach English in the primary school. There is one boy, well – if I am allowed to say names here – Zahra's little brother who is quite difficult. He didn't want to come to the small group and so on. But then I realised that if he teaches me a couple of words in Arabic every time we meet, then, I get to teach him English as an exchange. So, all of the sudden, he has got really excited about it. And, when he learns through his own mother tongue, that works really well.*

Semantically, the verb '*start*' indicates change. The grammatical choice, then, communicates both a record of history in the given matter and a continuing engagement in the practice. Interestingly, by using the past tense ('*I realised*'), the teacher refers to a moment in the past when they experienced a sudden language-aware moment of enlightenment (cf. Hakulinen et al., 2004: VISK, § 1530).

When discussing academic language demands and practices proven to work well, teachers further demonstrate an eagerness to facilitate integration. This manifests as narratives of firm beliefs about the teachers' personal

actions, and the offered scaffolds are necessary to support content learning of different school subjects. Example 2 demonstrates such beliefs of '*must*' when moving on to a new topic in school.

Example 2, teacher #5:

Anyway, I must reiterate the key concepts many times. And I must go through the concepts over and over again. The concepts must become heard, said, and seen by the pupils. So that their learning will not only depend on whether or not a pupil finds the information in a book by themselves.

As seen in example 2, it is typical during the discourse to offer lists of the temporary supports that actively contribute to linguistic integration (cf. strategy 'scaffolding instruction for MLLs', Gibbons, 2002; Vygotsky, 1987). Example 2 emphasises repetition ('*over and over again*') and activating multiple senses ('*heard, said, and seen*'). In all the narratives alike, the support draws on MLLs' linguistic resources (cf. Walqui & van Lier, 2010; Cummins, 2001) and covers elaborate practices regarding both academic content and language learning, lesson structuring and meaningful collaborative activities.

In the same vein, the teachers candidly relate how information boxes, summaries or bolded keywords alone are not enough to help the reader, as texts in the study books are structured as heavy paragraphs and several pages-long chapters. These formulations relate back to the strategy of 'identifying the language demands of classroom tasks'. Furthermore, if the language of the curriculum is not sufficiently accessible to MLLs, the teachers' inclination to provide support results in spending time rewriting texts and creating handouts, or as they called it '*cutting, gluing and collecting together materials*'. The following example 3 presents an activity of this kind, as a reflection of the orientation 'value for linguistic diversity'. It is an answer to the question '*in which ways does the learning material take into account pupils with an immigrant background?*'

Example 3, teacher #12:

If I think about it, those study books of foreign languages do not, by any means, take into account how – in the Finnish society – how we could compare the home languages of pupils with an immigrant background. Then, I must do such a comparison in my instruction by myself, without making use of the study book. It is important that we compare languages.

Some teachers described how they especially consider the language when choosing suitable books for the following year and often settle for material that explains content clearly and concisely and that includes many visual aids.

Moreover, the discourse of actively contributing includes advocating interaction with culturally diverse families, that is, providing solutions for establishing collaboration. When meeting the families, the teachers invite interpreters and cultural interpreters to be present. Interpreters are seen as important when getting to know the backgrounds of MLLs. The teachers also narrate how they—with the interpreters' help—find it crucial to explain to parents how the Finnish school system works (cf. orientation 'inclination to advocate for MLLs'). Narratives of collaboration are presented as self-evident actions of a multilingual school, with expressions such as '*of course, we invite*' and '*naturally, we collaborate*'. This way, an interest in diversity is

clear. When asked about the matter, the teachers have exact knowledge about where their MLLs come from, how long they have lived in Finland and what languages pupils speak at home and during recess (cf. strategy 'learning about the backgrounds of MLLs').

The discourse of contracting out of integrating multilingual learners, then, manifests as narratives of disbelief in the ability to influence when discussing MLLs' educational success. In contrast to speaking about putting orientations and strategies into practice in an agentive voice, as in the discourse of actively contributing to integration, the following narratives of indifference appear in a passive voice. Examples 4 and 5 elicit when the participants were asked about practices proven to work well with pupils with an immigrant background.

Example 4, teacher #16:

> *Well, it [language-awareness] has been discussed, but I do not know whether it has been implemented anywhere in practice. In my view, nothing has changed. There has been a discussion about it probably over the last 4–5 years, but everything continues as it used to be. […] It is even written there [as the development focus of the city], but I do not know. I have not seen any differences in practice. It is hard to tell. But maybe in other subjects more.*

Example 5, teacher #11:

> *It [language-awareness] surely should be the development focus of the city. It has been written into the documents. But nothing has changed.*

The voices in examples 4 and 5 construct an opposition to actively contributing to the integration of MLLs. By narrating in a passive voice, the teachers observe language awareness—which is required from all teachers—from the perspective of an outsider. Contracting out of integrating MLLs occurs via linguistic choices at the institutional policy level ('*has been written into the documents*'), the school community level ('*there has been a discussion over the last 4–5 years*') and the classroom level ('*nothing has changed in practice*'), thus putting the development of LRT on someone else's shoulders.

In addition to declining oneself, outsourcers talk about what '*everyone else does*' or '*should do*' but not '*what I do*' (cf. contradictory orientation 'inclination to advocate for MLLs'). Instead of making a difference, an outsourcer does not necessarily know how long their MLLs have been in Finland and what languages they speak at home and during recess. This way, the MLLs' educational success depends on other agencies—school principals, the National Agency for Education, cities' housing policies, weak communication with culturally diverse families, over-friendly supervisors in group homes for immigrant pupils, poorly organised measures and resources of support, the undeveloped state of diagnostics for recognising difficulties or even the poor nutrition of immigrant mothers during their pregnancy that affects pupils' neurological development.

Similarly, the responsibility for the language learning of MLLs remains either a task for Finnish language teachers or special education teachers. When discussing the linguistic features of academic language that pose challenges (even for pupils with a good command of Finnish), the teachers prefer to contract out of having to

examine their subjects from a language learner's perspective. Here, the set of questions related to second-generation immigrants brings up relevant contradictory strategies for identifying the language demands of the classroom. Examples 6 and 7 are answers to the question '*Thinking about the second-generation immigrant pupils with low achievement, what kind of language-related difficulties do they usually have?*'

> Example 6, teacher #12:
>
> *I could imagine that the second-generation immigrants simply have such a good competence in Finnish so that will not cause problems.*

> Example 7, teacher #11:
>
> *When it comes to these second-generation immigrants, it [educational success] is more about their attitude than their linguistic competence.*

Instead of perceiving schooling as a linguistic process, the teachers turn their attention to the pupils' attitudes and behaviour and thus demonstrate disinterest in analysing academic language and L2 learning principles. Further, by starting a narrative with '*I could imagine*', the teacher creates a hypothesis about their pupils' linguistic competence, suggesting they do have first-hand knowledge of the matter. In some cases, contracting out manifests as narratives of difficulty learning about the linguistic competence of pupils. When asked about positive effects and challenges pupils with an immigrant background bring to school, the teacher in example 8 talks about their unawareness of how much of the teacher's instruction the pupils understand.

> Example 8, teacher #10:
>
> *From time to time, I find it difficult to estimate how much these pupils [multilingual learners] – especially in such a dialogic subject as the one I teach – that how much they understand of what I am talking about. As for some of them, producing language is like very very very very difficult.*

Examining the role of language in learning is described as '*difficult*', '*time consuming*' and 'a *terribly hard job*' (cf. contradictory strategy 'applying key principles of L2 learning'). The teachers also argue how difficult it is to assess the exam answers written by language learners if the teachers do not grasp what the learner is trying to say, or they complain about the lack of proper wordlists for different subjects but do not act to make one themselves. Similarly, example 9 portrays the challenging task of finding suitable materials when asked to unfold experiences with the current study books and learning materials.

> Example 9, teacher #16:
>
> *In my opinion, the challenge is that it is a terribly hard job to try to search for suitable materials. If, for instance, when I order study books for the next year, what kind of work load do I need to start looking for, like, every single book? I see nothing but the cover of the book online. Seriously, do I really need to read through the book myself and estimate whether or not it suits? Where and when am I then supposed to do that?*

Further, the teachers struggle to name practices that work as temporary supports should there be language learners in the classroom. The ones who do pay attention to MLLs' linguistic resources suggest it is still the

pupils' task to learn bolded key concepts from the books on their own (cf. contradictory strategy 'scaffolding instruction for MLLs').

4.2 The discourse of advancing inclusion in contrast to the discourse of creating exclusion

The second pair of discourses concerns acceptance. Narratives indicate that teachers can strive to advance MLLs' inclusion or create exclusion in school. The discourse of advancing inclusion manifests as empathic narratives aiming to understand the behaviour, challenges and success of MLLs. The discourse of creating exclusion explains educational success by categorising pupils into groups.

In the discourse of advancing inclusion, acceptance appears in narratives where a teacher puts themselves in a situation of a pupil who has recently encountered a new language and culture. Linguistically, this often happens by using the conjunction '*if*' and a conditional verb that, inter alia, expresses a hypothetical and imaginary state of affairs in Finnish (Hakulinen et al., 2004: VISK, § 1592). Semantically, narratives include understanding of how language, culture and identity are deeply intertwined and how the connection affects pupils' inclusion in the school community (cf. orientation 'sociolinguistic consciousness'). Example 10 illustrates such an empathic narrative in answer to the question '*What challenges do pupils with an immigrant background bring to school?*'

Example 10, teacher #7:

> *The challenge is that "how to include everyone" if I can crystallise this somehow. I would say that in a way, I understand it. If I went to a school that spoke Arabic, it surely would be that I would think about all other matters than topics being taught in the school, as I would not understand a thing. It is good for one to look at it this way.*

In example 10, constructions in the conditional tense fulfil the function of imagining, which enables a narrator to move from a real world to a fictional one (cf. Kauppinen, 1998). Interestingly, at the end of example 10 ('*it is good for one to look at it this way*'), the teacher uses the 'zero person' construction in Finnish, which means a construction without an overt subject and a predicate verb in the third singular form (cf. Laitinen, 2006). By leaving the subject of the situation implicit, the construction facilitates the narrative to be openly entered by anyone, suggesting an empathetic positioning for the listener of the narrative as well (cf. Laitinen, 2006).

Characteristic of the discourse is to address diversity in a permissive, broad-minded and participative manner, that is, seeing diversity as an asset. An accepting teacher is eager to take up the learner's position, in which case the roles of the learner and the teacher reverse. The teachers use verbs of perception, such as '*I hear*', '*I see*', '*I notice*', '*I watch*' and '*I listen*', when describing how to give pupils the role of an expert, as seen in example 11. It is a piece of a story of the positive effects multilingual pupils bring to school.

Example 11, teacher #7:

> *In this work – if I think about my years here – I do listen to the pupils, and I ask, and I hear about their experiences from school, from their home countries, their studies, their worldviews. And that, like, broadens my horizon.*
> *Researcher: Yeah.*
> *Teacher #7: In that sense, I find it very educative. So, that is something I would say I pick up for myself. And perhaps the other pupils as well.*

The narratives describe similar situations where the variation in backgrounds of culturally diverse pupils is employed not only to advance their inclusion but also to broaden all pupils' worldview (cf. strategy 'learning about the backgrounds of MLLs'). That is, when a teacher is asked about the positive effects of pupils with an immigrant background, the discourse concretises as lists of advantages. Teachers mention MLLs' politeness, activity in class and courage to perform, for example, in music and theatre plays (cf. orientation 'inclination to advocate for MLLs'). Further, the teachers recognise how thankful, motivated and appreciative culturally diverse families are regarding Finnish schools.

A part of the discourse of advancing inclusion is to recognise the importance of becoming a member of social communities in language learning. In example 12, a teacher analyses the connection between social interaction and language learner's linguistic competence. A teacher is asked whether there is, in their view, a group among pupils with an immigrant background that succeeds better in school than others. Emphasising social memberships in such a way, a teacher demonstrates awareness of sociocultural and usage-based processes involved in learning an L2 (cf. strategy 'applying key principles of L2 learning').

Example 12, teacher #4:

> *How and in what kind of groups these pupils [multilingual learners] spend their free time is important. If one does not get a chance – for one reason or another – to spend time with Finnish-speaking peers, then, learning Finnish is clearly more difficult in comparison to the ones who do have Finnish friends also off school. They learn faster.*

Further, when talking about the educational success of MLLs, a typical narrative proposes that linguistically diverse pupils' challenges in school relate to the amount of time pupils have lived in the country and their linguistic competence. The teachers understand that the ways of reading and looking at pictures vary from culture to culture and that today literacy functions as a key to participating in academic contexts (cf. orientation 'sociolinguistic consciousness'). An accepting teacher is able to examine the context-reduced register of the new information (e.g. syntactic and semantic characteristics of subject-specific genres) from a language learner's perspective. Furthermore, the teacher is able to examine the information against a pupil's prior experiences and accept the pupil's behaviour in that regard. Example 13 illustrates a narrative of acceptance as an answer to the question of whether a teacher thinks there is a group that succeeds to a lesser extent in school.

Example 13, teacher #7:

> *If one does have courage to use the language and is unable to follow the instruction, then, one starts doing other, "own" things. And the one cannot concentrate. The concentration is difficult if you do not understand a thing. We have had such young immigrants here. Such Somali boys. A young Somali guy who studied here as a pupil in mainstream classes for three years. Then, he once said on a Biology lesson that – when he first had not had a clue about anything as he had arrived from a refugee camp – "this Biology is quite fun once you understand it a bit".*
> *Researcher: Yeah.*
> *Teacher #7: So, if everything goes far beyond one's understanding, like in mainstream classes, then, the one cannot get the hang of the information. And, then, it feels boring, unpleasant, and miserable. But if you do get supports in class – this is how I see my own job here as we begin with small questions which sort of link to pupils' prior experiences – then, that is the way to start answering also the bigger questions later on.*

In example 13, the Finnish 'zero person' construction appears several times ('*one does not have courage*', '*one is unable to follow*', and '*one cannot concentrate*'), which again invites narrated experiences to be recognised and empathised with by anyone (cf. Laitinen, 2006). Moreover, by presenting an individual case about a young Somali man, a teacher avoids stereotyping and categorising pupils into groups. The example suggests awareness of what it takes to ensure inclusion. That is, the teachers' task in a multilingual school is to modify instruction to make content accessible for learners who are not proficient in the language of instruction, that is, to form links to pupils' prior experiences, such as '*Biology is quite fun once you understand it a bit*'.

Similar narratives of acceptance appear to advance inclusion. For instance, a teacher understands that if a pupil has difficulty following the teacher's instruction during a lesson in the first place, '*reading the whole book chapter independently is not necessarily the most suitable homework*' (cf. strategy 'identifying the language demands of classroom tasks'). Further, another teacher acknowledges that even for the advanced language learners with a good command of the language, the academic register is a challenge and causes clashes in school if the pupils unintentionally use the language they would use with their peers in an academic context (cf. strategy 'applying key principles of L2 learning'). Moreover, the teachers know that if a pupil has been used to a school with a strong hierarchy and authoritarian teachers they might struggle with the 'freedom' and self-directed learning in Finnish schools (cf. orientation 'sociolinguistic consciousness').

Finally, yet importantly, the teachers indicate how, despite diversity, humans are alike in many ways no matter where they come from. Often, as a teacher states, the learning difficulties of MLLs are very similar to the learning difficulties of pupils with a native Finnish background (difficulty concentrating, dyslexia or challenges regarding cognitive control).

In contrast, **the discourse of creating exclusion** manifests as narratives that explain educational success by categorising immigrant pupils into groups. As a result, MLLs are discussed as coming from '*good*' and '*bad*' school cultures. Examples 14 and 15 present how the teachers talk about '*these groups*', suggesting that the challenges of pupils' schooling originate in the attitudes, beliefs and actions of the immigrant community. The participants were asked '*What positive effects or challenges do pupils with an immigrant background bring to school?*'

Example 14, teacher #15:

There are these second-generation groups here who have no interest in learning Finnish, no interest in graduating to a profession, no interest. Of course, there are other ones too, but there are such communities who have this type of thinking that "we do not need to". They have adopted such a role in the society that tells them "we do not need to integrate".

Example 15, teacher #11:

Some of these Somali boys have no idea of work. Neither do their parents. One cannot make them do anything when they learn at home how to live easy on social security benefits.

In Finnish, the demonstrative pronoun system is a three-way system, and the pronouns express whether a narrator is interior or exterior to the referent (Etelämäki, 2006). When using the pronoun '*these*' in examples 14 and 15, the teachers imply spatial inclusion (cf. Hakulinen et al., 2004: VISK, § 1413). However, despite being positioned close to the narrator (as pupils in school naturally are), the teachers group the whole immigrant community together and discuss '*them*' in plural, as if all members of the community were alike. Excluding manifests as identifying characteristics, such as disinterest in learning the language or acquiring a job, that make the group different from '*us*'. 'We' or 'us' in the discourse of creating exclusion are the Finns or the immigrants who know how to succeed in Finnish schools by working hard, behaving as expected and learning the academic language easily. Such a contradictory orientation of sociolinguistic consciousness neglects the power and privilege associated with pupils speaking particular languages and coming from certain cultural backgrounds, devaluing the challenges of being a language learner in a new culture. Example 16 introduces a narrative where a teacher identifies '*quitting school*', '*not gaining a profession*' and '*writing social security benefit applications*' as characteristics of an immigrant group that differ from those of a group that does what is expected to become successful in the school system. The experience elicits when discussing certain groups' opportunities and challenges of succeeding educationally.

Example 16, teacher #11:

Here 16-year-old Somali girls quit school two months before finishing basic education and find a 45-year-old husband. Just so as not to get the basic education certificate. And not to end up in a vocational school and not to gain a profession. The only competence they need is a sufficient competence in Finnish to write social security benefit applications.

The discourse manifests in narratives presenting diversity as a worry. MLLs appear to bring several and various kinds of challenges to school. One characteristic is to describe pupils as '*restless*', '*loud*', and '*impulsive*'. As an example of diversity as a worry, a teacher states that the pupils take advantage of '*all rights and freedoms of different cultures*' or '*play the racism card*' if a teacher reprimands them for their behaviour. Narratives demonstrate clashes of cultures where the practices that culturally diverse pupils bring collide with the expectations of the Finnish school system. Example 17 presents such a clash.

Example 17, teacher #15:

> *Also now, you [a colleague] have that one girl in your class. The one who is like "do not be so Finnish, do not be so racist!" and "I do not have anyone in my family who goes to work".*

Whereas the discourse of advancing inclusion recognises the language learner's position (with a need to gain membership to social communities and links to prior experiences), the discourse of creating exclusion emerges as contradictory strategies. For example, the teachers narrate the frustration of pupils of Finnish origin if the teacher spends time explaining concepts and the lesson proceeds slowly (cf. contradictory strategy 'scaffolding instruction for MLLs'). Similarly, seeking the common ground in pupils' prior experiences to make the content coherent proves to be chaotic, as one teacher states: '*In Physics, some of my native Finnish pupils were astonished when it turned out that THEY [pupils with an immigrant background] did not know that the Earth is spherical. Finns were like aaargh could we just move forward?*' Further, in some narratives, exclusion happens in a contemptuous voice. That is, a teacher ironises the unemployment situation of families of Arab backgrounds by referring to their '*attempts of entrepreneurship*' or talks about pupils with Somali backgrounds as '*future customers of social security benefits*'.

When the teachers are asked about the positive effects pupils with an immigrant background bring to school, some struggle to name any positive effects (cf. orientation 'inclination to advocate for MLLs'). Even the common home languages of pupils are seen as harmful and the use of home languages as something that causes distractions (instead of seeing them as a resource for comprehending the content). The argument is that pupils gravitate too much to their peers from the same linguistic background and paradoxically that the lessons need to be kept '*comprehensible*'. Further, creating separation concretises, for instance, when a teacher is not aware of what the pupils do in their home language lessons or what the home language teachers look like. Example 18 presents how home language lessons are categorised beyond regular school day activities. The conversational narrative elicits when discussing practices proven to work well in a multilingual school.

Example 18, teacher #12 and teacher #13:

> *Teacher #13: Home language? Are we supposed to have home language teachers here [in the school]? Do we hardly have any?*
> *Teacher #12: What? Well, we do have them here. But we really never communicate.*

This example indicates how the teachers do not necessarily identify home language teachers as their colleagues, as part of '*us*', even when the official documents (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014; 2015) state otherwise.

4.3 The discourse of embracing change in contrast to the discourse of conserving traditions

The third pair of discourses concerns change in the school culture as a response to the increasing proportion of MLLs in the classroom. On one hand, teachers demonstrate readiness to change their instruction following

the guidelines of the National Core Curricula and the research-based knowledge of how to teach MLLs well. On the other hand, contradictory orientations and strategies resist change; that is, voices of conserving traditions appear in narratives.

The discourse of embracing change manifests as positive reception of the increased emphasis on language in the National Core Curricula. Embracing change starts with noticing that pupils' competence in academic language does not always develop automatically. The teachers recognise that changing emphasis on language benefits everyone, including native Finnish-speaking pupils. Example 19 presents a teacher's eagerness to develop linguistic scaffolds '*now that we have language awareness*' (cf. strategy 'scaffolding instruction for MLLs'). Here, a teacher shares their experiences regarding practices that work well.

Example 19, teacher #2:

> *Now that we have language-awareness, it is good for everyone if – right at the beginning of the lesson – I split the learning content into smaller sections. And be like "in this lesson, we learn these and these concepts", for instance. Then, I explain the concepts briefly at first, if nothing else. And, then, when the concepts appear in the actual instruction it works kind of like repetition. When understanding of a larger content at once can be challenging.*

By quoting self ('*in this lesson, we learn these concepts*'), the teacher in example 19 imitates their classroom voice, indicating that practices aligning with the curricula are already embraced in the instruction.

During the discourse of embracing change, the voices indicate an acquaintance with theories on teaching MLLs. When discussing learning material and academic success, the teachers are able to name the dimensions of language, that is, '*conversational language*', '*subject-specific language*', and '*academic language*' (cf. Cummins, 2000). Example 20 illustrates such a narrative of acquaintance. A teacher was asked about the challenges of pupils who speak languages other than Finnish as a home language.

Example 20, teacher #4:

> *If they are still learning that so-called "basic Finnish", that conversational Finnish. And, then, if on top of that there comes the requirement of academic and subject-specific language, that makes it [succeeding] challenging for them. When one does not necessarily know even the basic vocabulary and would need such a subject-specific one.*

Similarly, the discourse of embracing change manifests as meticulous reports regarding the linguistic features of academic language that pose challenges for MLLs (cf. strategy 'identifying the language demands of classroom tasks'). Characteristic of the discourse is to narrate, for instance, the language demands of concept definitions ('*quantity, symbol and unit*') in physics, abstract phenomena ('*periodic system, structure of an atom and the structure of the Earth*') in chemistry and geography and intangible vocabulary ('*ethical perspectives, proverbs and ideologies*') in religion studies, civics and history. The features narrated demonstrate that the teachers are well read about the topic and perhaps had access to PD on language

awareness. Simultaneously, the teachers recognise how often it happens that they use vocabulary and sentence structures the language learners are not familiar with without noticing.

Further, in the discourse of embracing change, the narratives of multilingualism reflect the realities of today's classrooms where linguistic diversity is seen as a valuable resource. The teachers appear to understand that MLLs learn subject-specific content better if they are allowed to acquire the information in their home languages (cf. orientation 'value for linguistic diversity'). Examples 21 and 22 depict teachers' interactionally constructed observations about how allowing multilingualism works as a scaffold for both the content and academic language learning. The dialogues elicit when the teachers were asked about the methods proven to work well with pupils with an immigrant background.

Example 21, teacher #3:

> *In Maths, it works better if there is a peer pupil sitting nearby. I mean – even when working independently – one can still ask and discuss about the topic with that neighbour. That often seems to facilitate learning.*

Example 22, teacher #3 and teacher #4:

> *Teacher #3: Especially, the way I think about this, they understand the content much better if they have first learned it in their own home languages. Because, then, they have something to compare it to=*
> *Teacher #4: =Yes.*
> *Teacher #3: Because, then, for instance, the words in Physics, they are known quite well=*
> *Teacher #4: =Yeah, because, then, they can just learn the "word" in Finnish if they have understood the content elsewhere.*
> *Teacher #3: Yeah, they have a reference point to attach the new information to.*

When discussing the instructional methods, the teachers constructed comparisons by using adverbs and adjectives, such as '*works better*', '*makes understanding the instructions easier*' or '*learn more widely*'. Such comparative constructions create an assumption that in today's school there still exist other kinds of instructional methods and pedagogies (cf. Hakulinen et al., 2004; VISK, § 633). In examples 21 and 22, the comparative constructions may reflect a shift away from maintaining monolingual discourses while recognising the benefits of cultivating the multilingualism of pupils.

Additionally, the instructional methods draw on sociocultural and usage-based language learning theories (cf. strategy 'applying key principles of L2 learning'). That is, when asked about the practices proven to work well with pupils with an immigrant background, the teachers promote a pupil-centred setting, participation and dialogues with other language users, that is, the pupil as an active participant constructing information on top of their prior experiences in collaboration with peers. In the discourse of embracing change, the teachers suggest pupils' linguistic competence arises from having opportunities to participate in repetitious social interactions. Example 23 presents readiness to organise the instruction so that it follows the curricula guidelines.

Example 23, teacher #6:

> *Such inquiry-based methods work well, so that the pupils by themselves can participate in the project work. If they get topics that they are themselves interested in, then, we will achieve absolutely great outcomes. Maybe in such a way that the topic can be linked to their own home cultures.*

Similarly, in history one teacher states how '*empowering it is for the pupils of Arab backgrounds to learn that, in the Middle East, there were developed civilizations far before there was anything in the region of Finland*'. In biology, another teacher talks about developing conversational assessment tools to let beginner language learners show their competence. In all the narratives alike, the teacher-centred instruction is mentioned only when guiding the classroom conversation in a culturally responsive manner.

The discourse of conserving traditions manifests as contradictory regarding the central role of language in the National Core Curricula. Instead of embracing change, some teachers appear to be sceptical about language and cultural awareness as key values guiding the development of school culture. For instance, the teachers see linguistically responsive practices and scaffolds as part of '*culturalisation*'. According to the teachers, '*culturalisation*' allows schools to have low academic expectations for immigrant groups, '*letting culturally diverse pupils take an easy way out in the school system if a characteristic of the culture is not to go to school*'. The discourse manifests as narratives of paradox, as taking into account the backgrounds of MLLs is narrated, eventually, to lead to a situation where the linguistically and culturally diverse pupils underachieve. Further, as one teacher states, the teachers consider examining language demands and teaching literacy skills as '*pampering of pupils, a besetting sin of culturally diverse schools*'. The teacher raises a concern about MLLs' success in further education: '*What if in the next school there happens to be no teacher to modify content accessible enough for a language learner who is used to getting supports?*'

When asked about the methods proven to work well with pupils with an immigrant background, the discourse of conserving traditions manifests as promoting contradictory practices compared to pupil-centred and collaborative learning. Examples 24 and 25 introduce narratives of teacher-centred instruction as the only way to ensure the pupils learn the content.

Example 24, teacher #1:

> *In my view, as stupid as the teacher-centred instruction is, in a way, then, I can be sure that the pupils know what they are expected to do. And, then, they all will get the same information, for sure. Then again, if they do something experimental or functional [in Physics or Chemistry], it often remains on the level where pupils with an immigrant background are like "hey, something is happening - bubbles are coming". And they are very happy about it, and be like "yay, I did great job". And meanwhile, the other ones are like "it changes from a liquid phase to a gaseous phase, and these and these chemical elements are formed".*

Example 25, teacher #15:

> *I also go along with a teacher-centred setting. The traditional teaching which is often belittled today works unfortunately.*

By using negative evaluations such as '*as stupid as*', '*often belittled today*' and '*works unfortunately*', the teachers construct assumptions of someone who belittled 'traditional teaching'. In this way, one characteristic for both discourses concerning change is to compare the quality of instructional methods in an implicit dialogue with an assumed contradiction of views. The teachers in examples 24 and 25 appear to be conscious of existing contradictory orientations and strategies yet resist shifting away from 'traditional teaching'. Resistance is shown by the lack of teacher's control and pupils staying on the level of concrete observations ('*something is happening – bubbles are coming*') if trying inquiry-based methods and collaborative learning. In the same vein, pupil-centred projects of MLLs are narrated to remain inadequate, even when the pupils themselves think they are doing excellent work. However, in the discourse of conserving traditions, the teachers do not translate '*bubbles are coming*' into academic language as a potential strategy of teaching subject-specific language simultaneously with the content (cf. contradictory strategy 'scaffolding instruction for MLLs').

The discourse of conserving traditions manifests wishes to keep the school 'as it has always been', regardless of societal changes due to increasing diversity. Such wishes appear when nearly every teacher still holds a view that the language of the classroom is—and should remain—Finnish (cf. contradictory orientation 'value for linguistic diversity'). The teachers narrate that if allowing the use of home languages they often become used for other purposes than learning subject-specific content, such as '*bullying*', '*gossiping*' or '*disturbing others*'. In some narratives, allowance seems to happen on the level of vocabulary, for instance, by translating an individual concept but not explaining a whole abstract phenomenon. Interestingly, when discussing multilingualism, the discourse of conserving traditions manifests as maintaining the use of 'traditionally visible' languages in Finnish schools. That is, the teachers do not promote the use of MLLs' home languages but using English as a supporting language. In the narratives, English is described as '*a key to universe, to every part, to every corner*', neglecting the power and privilege already associated with its speakers (cf. contradictory orientation 'sociolinguistic consciousness').

Overall, characteristic of the discourse is to estimate whose linguistic competence is sufficient enough for studying in the Finnish school system. For instance, allowing the use of English in class appears to happen only if the pupils' competence in English is advanced enough. There seems to be a voice in traditional teachers' talk that disvalues communication with limited resources, the use of '*broken languages*' and pupils' linguistic resources, which often refer to competences in their home languages. The following narratives 26 and 27 present contradictory strategies relating to 'applying key principles of L2 learning'. Examples are answers to the question '*What languages do the pupils use during your lessons and during recess?*'

Example 26, teacher #15:

> *Unfortunately, they speak very bad English with each other. They think they know English. It is pathetic. Many could speak Finnish better, but they start stuttering that broken English together.*

Example 27, teacher #16:

> *At the moment, none of them speak English to a level high enough to be capable of having a conversation.*

It is difficult to estimate to what extent examples 26 and 27 demonstrate a lacking knowledge of sociocultural, sociolinguistic and usage-based theories regarding learning an additional language and to what extent, then, disinterest in legitimising what languages the pupils already know. Either way, in the discourse of conserving traditions, language learning appears to become recognised mainly when it happens in a teacher-led classroom setting with pen and paper. In that case, linguistic competence acquired in social interactions beyond school days becomes overlooked.

5. Conclusions

The findings of this study outline the contradictory discourses on encountering MLLs at the period when changing realities in Finnish schools are increasing due to linguistic and cultural diversity. The complex and multivoiced ways in which teaching MLLs are discussed echo the times of transformation at the educational policy level and require language awareness from every teacher. As LRT (Lucas & Villegas, 2013) intertwines with the current Finnish National Core Curricula (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014; 2015), it proves to be a sensible framework for analysing narratives of lower secondary school teachers, focusing on the discourses on encountering MLLs at the practical level. The results strengthen and reiterate the understanding of the slow process of developing teachers' preparedness for linguistically diverse classrooms. In that regard, the study aligns with current understanding of teachers as policy makers (cf. Tarnanen & Palviainen, 2018; Biesta et al., 2017; Biesta et al., 2015). Zooming in on teachers' narratives makes it possible to get a sense of how language education policies cannot be considered one-way, tow-down implementation (cf. Hornberger & Johnson, 2007).

The significance of the study lies in the effort to shed light on the reasons that can explain the gap between the learning outcomes of native Finnish speakers and pupils with an immigrant background. Earlier, this in-depth analysis on teachers' discourses concerning MLLs has not made in the Finnish context, and, in fact, the reasons for MLLs' lesser success have either remained unclear (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017) or the explanatory power of background variables (e.g. in PISA assessments) regarding immigrant pupils has been weak (cf. Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2014). Yet, further research is needed, but in light of this study, there are problematic issues in teachers' expertise in relation to a) agency, b) acceptance and c) change when encountering MLLs and supporting their schooling. The analysis suggests three themes of contradictory and overlapping discourses that partly reveal a superficial understanding of linguistic diversity and struggles in locating teachers' work while considering the long-term purpose of education as an integrative method (cf. Biesta et al., 2015). The contradictions indicate that today, despite the language-aware curricula, there seem to be voices in teachers' talk that construct an opposition to actively contributing to integration, thus categorising immigrant pupils into groups of 'us' and 'them' and resisting shifting away from what the

practices in Finnish school used to be. Then again, there also appears to be voices aligning with the reformed curricula. Mastering and implementing the guidelines manifests as a talk that reflects belief in making a difference, indicating the empathy to put oneself in the place of a newcomer and demonstrating readiness to put new information into practice. In conclusion, the findings suggest that to truly advocate for all newcomers becoming members of society, teacher education programmes need to systematically emphasise providing teachers with the expertise to work with MLLs (as also noted by Alisaari et. al, 2019; Ball & Tyson, 2011; Lucas, 2011; Lucas et al., 2008). In the new social reality, paying special attention on each pupil's opportunity to reach her/his potential would benefit not only the individual pupil, but also society as a whole. Overall, the results align with the ongoing sociopolitical discussions on immigration and integration in which voices regarding sustainability, humanism and civil rights collide with spreading nationalist, xenophobic and racist discourses in the media and on the streets.

This study has some limitations. The most important is the limited number of interview participants. Analysing the narratives' discourses, however, offers qualitative suggestions on how the shift in teachers' beliefs and actions could be more strongly promoted towards LRT. If part of the problem seems to lie in the contradiction of discourses regarding MLLs, teacher education and PD could be developed to be a place where pre- and in-service teachers are exposed to and have the opportunity to engage with a range of educational discourses. That is, the teachers should be given time to reflect on the impact of their beliefs and actions. We can also conclude that although the different teacher education departments and units work autonomously in Finland, it would be beneficial to guarantee that all programmes start mediating knowledge to create language-aware and multilingual learning environments, building on pupils' linguistic and cultural resources. Based on the analysis, teachers' preparedness to encounter MLLs could be improved multidimensionally, bearing in mind agency, acceptance and readiness to change. Agency could be strengthened by offering teachers practical perspectives, materials and concrete scaffolding examples. Acceptance could be developed by organising opportunities for teachers to interact with linguistically diverse groups, exchanges abroad and language immersion experiences where the teachers participate in lessons taught in a language they do not completely understand. Further, change could be supported by providing the teachers theoretical expertise in L2 development, multiliteracy and genre pedagogy, metalinguistic awareness and multilingualism as resources in learning. Hopefully, the study will stimulate much-needed discussion of how to make school systems worldwide linguistically more responsive.

Note

Transcription key:

[ ] content added for clarity
[…] some content left out
'word' imitated speech or stressed content
—word— meandered speech
=word= latched utterances

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Themes and questions of the interview

Next to each theme in the table, information is provided about the orientations and strategies of the framework for LRT. The questions were designed to elicit pieces of a story regarding the mentioned orientations and strategies.

Themes and questions of the interview	Orientations and strategies of the framework for linguistically responsive teaching
1. Background information	
A. What subject(s) do you teach? B. What is your regular class size? C. On average, approximately what percent of your pupils have an immigrant background?	-
2. Beliefs about languages and cultures	
A. Where are the pupils with an immigrant background in your classes mainly from? B. What languages do the pupils use during your lessons? C. What languages do your pupils use in their free time and during recess?	- Value for linguistic diversity - Learning about the backgrounds of MLLs
3. Beliefs about multilingual classrooms	
Thinking about the behaviour of pupils with an immigrant background in the classroom, A. what positive effects or challenges do pupils with an immigrant background bring to school?	- Sociolinguistic consciousness - Inclination to advocate for MLLs - Identifying the language demands of classrooms tasks
4. Beliefs about MLLs	
Thinking about the educational success of pupils with an immigrant background, A. is there a group that does better in the school than others? B. is there a group that does worse in the school than others?	- Sociolinguistic consciousness - Learning about the backgrounds of MLLs
5. Beliefs about second-generation immigrant pupils	
Second-generation immigrants are born and raised in Finland. Both of the parents have moved to Finland from somewhere. A. where do you think second-generation immigrant pupils succeed better than pupils with Finnish origins? Thinking about the second-generation immigrant pupils with low achievement, B. what kind of difficulties do they usually have? C. what kind of language-related difficulties do they usually have?	- Inclination to advocate for MLLs - Applying key principles of second language learning - Identifying the language demands of classrooms tasks
6. Beliefs about linguistically responsive practices	
A. What issues or themes are challenging in your subject for pupils with an immigrant background?	- Applying key principles of second language learning

B. What methods or practices have proven to work well with pupils with an immigrant background?	- Identifying the language demands of classrooms tasks - Scaffolding instruction for MLLs
7. Beliefs about subject-specific academic language	
A. If you consider the current study books and learning material for your subject, in which ways does the material take into account pupils with an immigrant background? B. When using the material, what challenges are there with pupils whose mother tongues are not Finnish?	- Learning about the backgrounds of MLLs - Identifying the language demands of classrooms tasks - Scaffolding instruction for MLLs
8. Beliefs about collaboration with linguistically and culturally diverse families	
If you think of the collaboration with parents with an immigrant background, A. what works well? B. in what areas are you encountering challenges?	- Inclination to advocate for MLLs