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Coordinating, communicating, and combining languages in local immersion education policy reform in Finland

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to examine local enactment of new curriculum policy, paying special attention to combining the language of instruction in the school (Finnish) and the immersion language (Swedish) in an early total one-way Swedish immersion programme in Finland at a programmatic level. The study combines ethnography with educational language policy by focusing on coordinative and communicative discourses surrounding local immersion curriculum. The participatory observation data consist of 36 hours of audio-recorded curriculum working group meetings with immersion teachers and researchers. The findings showed that the curriculum task assigned to municipalities and cities providing immersion education was extensive. They also revealed how discursively oriented policy research on immersion education opens up new ways to develop immersion education. The actual curriculum decisions implied that the Swedish portion of the immersion programme is multilingual and rich in connections between multiple languages, contesting the common belief of monolingual practices in immersion instruction.

Key words

Curriculum reform; Discourse; Discursive Institutionalism; Language-awareness; language immersion; language policy; Local Curriculum

1. Introduction

Immersion education is one the most extensively studied educational programmes when it comes to teaching practices, learning processes and learning outcomes (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2013), but less focus has been given to a critical examination of immersion curriculum planning outside classroom boundaries or individual schools. It has also been unusual to promote the use of multiple languages in immersion classrooms, even if the aim of immersion education—and one of the main pillars of the ideology underlying it—is functional bilingual competence. Both these discursive ideas, language separation and bilingualism, can be assumed present in educational policy planning in immersion education. The question that remains, then, is how, and by whom, are these partly clashing policy ideas communicated and legitimated in immersion education? There are voices arguing that educators should ease up on strict language separation principles to fully embrace "the creative and dynamic practices human beings engage in with multiple named languages and multiple semiotic and cognitive resources" (Wei, 2018, p. 27; see also Gorter & Cenoz, 2017). Interestingly, these debates tend to refer only to instruction given in an immersion language (e.g., McMillan & Turnbull, 2009), and less is known about the potential of cross-linguistic pedagogies during the instructional time allocated to the societal majority language (Björklund et al., 2013).

Motivated by the above-mentioned, this study examined policy work related to renewing a local immersion curriculum and was oriented towards the use of multiple languages in immersion. Therefore, it adds to immersion research in general, beyond the specific Swedish immersion context presented in the study. Swedish immersion is a programme that starts, at the latest, in pre-primary education and continues until the end of basic education (ages 7 to 16 years), with part of instruction delivered in a school's language (Finnish) and the rest

rendered in an immersion language (Swedish) (National Board of Education, 2014). The aim of this research was to shed light on the complexity of communicating and coordinating policy ideas in immersion as part of the local enactment of the renewed national core curriculum in Finland. To this end, the research inquired into how the language of instruction in school (Finnish, L1) and an immersion language (Swedish, L2) are combined in an early, total, one-way Swedish immersion programme. The study was intended to contribute knowledge about discursive local/district-level curriculum planning by active policy actors in multi-professional working groups. This resulted in a new perspective on immersion education policy research, which has only seldomly been performed at the holistic and cross-linguistic programmatic level. As pointed out by Wahlström and Sundberg (2018), there is a need in general for theories and analyses of how discourses and discourse recontextualisations affect the communicative understanding of policy transfer and enactment from the national to the local level (and to the classroom setting). The authors proposed a way of approaching empirical data called discursive institutionalism (DI), which was adopted in the present study (Wahlström & Sundberg, 2018; see also Schmidt, 2010, 2015).

2. Discursive institutionalism

This study followed up on the recent trend within language policy studies, wherein focus is directed towards understanding the role and agency of different policy agents. These agents are instrumental in reconstructing national and even supranational policies in local contexts (Johnson & Ricento, 2013) instead of simply implementing policies declared by political decision makers. Bonacina-Pugh (2012) used the terms *declared* and *perceived* as well as the concept *practiced language policy* to refer to intertwined dimensions of language policy. The terms and concepts highlight the changes that may happen in the policy process as it is enacted by different agents. Those in power shape declared policies on the basis of how they

perceive the world, but these declared policies become interpreted by different macro-, meso- and micro-level policy agents, who in turn, perceive the world from a specific perspective that aligns with their own particular beliefs and ideologies.

DI is an approach that focuses on how policy ideas are generated and changed in an institutional context in the hands of thinking and acting agents. It centres both on the ideas and on the interactive processes of discourse in communities. It is aimed at deepening understanding about the interplay of policy-relevant ideas, discourse and institutions in context (Schmidt, 2015). This approach is suitable for the current study as it connects educational policy to (educational) language policy, revolving around discourses that surround the local implementation of ideas stipulated in the national core curriculum. Rather than looking at ideas in documents, DI emphasises the need to understand the roles of different policy actors in the implementation and reconstruction of national—and even transnational—policies in local contexts (Johnson & Ricento, 2013). Local policy work entails *collective sense making* or *policy appropriation*, in which different actors draw upon their prior knowledge and resources in interpreting new reforms and analysing whether they find the reforms meaningful and significant in their local environments (Hardy & Melville, 2018; Levinson et al., 2009; Soini et al., 2017). Language policy can be understood in many ways. One such form of understanding is that put forward by Spolsky (2004), who divided the concept into three dimensions: *management*, which refers to the explicit, often official plan for language use; *ideology*, which pertains to what people think should be done with languages; and *praxis*, which is what people actually do with available languages. An important consideration, however, is that combining language policy with education policy accentuates the need to consider institutional factors; therefore, Spolsky's (2004) model does not offer a clear structure for understanding the different functions in which institutional policy actors are engaged and the process of producing and reproducing policy documents.

DI is strongly associated with the ideology dimension of Spolsky's (2004) model, and it is concerned with the interactive process in which policy actors are engaged within certain institutional structures. It also focuses on ongoing institutional change rather than seeing institutions as static (Schmidt, 2010). Two types of discourses are relevant to interactive policy processes: *coordinative* discourses, which refer to the construction of policy amongst policy actors, and *communicative* discourses, which refer to the legitimisation of policy between policy actors and the general public (Schmidt, 2010, 2015). However, as DI was originally used in the political sciences, it requires slight modification to fit the educational context (Uljens, 2018). Wahlström and Sundberg (2018) also pointed out that in empirical studies, such as the study at hand, a useful approach is to distinguish between one-way *persuasive* communicative discourse and the more reciprocal *deliberative* communicative discourse. In persuasive discourse, a policy maker informs the public about policy and persuades them to follow it, whereas in deliberative discourse, there is room for negotiation and the formation of different opinions about policy.

To analyse institutional discourses, one should consider what constitutes an institution. Wahlström and Sundberg (2018) provided an analytical theoretical framework for understanding educational reforms at different institutional levels (that is, on societal, programmatic, municipal and classroom levels). *Institution* is here understood to include all these levels and evolves through interactive processes between relevant actors. In their model, Wahlström and Sundberg (2018) placed teachers and teacher educators, as policy actors, at the 'lowest' level of educational reform (i.e., the classroom). This may be motivated by analytical reasons, but it risks simplifying the nature of multi-site educational reforms, in which a single actor can take on different (temporary) roles and positions within all the above-mentioned institutional levels. Johnson and Pratt (2014) concluded that even in language policy and planning activities, a variety of intermediary settings and contexts could

fall under the category of 'meso' level. The authors stated that many of these intermediary settings are understudied. They discussed the importance of analysing the power of the meso level with examples from the United States, where state-level policies have dramatically different impacts on local-level educational practices regarding bilingual programmes. Similar different effects can be assumed to be actualised in immersion education policy reforms at the local level.

3. Immersion education in a changing society

Finland has been recently distinguished at the European level in terms of having educational policies that stringently emphasise both the diversity dimension and the whole-child approach (Eurydice, 2019). In the Finnish national core curriculum, the pluralistic approach to languages (Candelier, 2017), labelled *language awareness*, is integrated in parts that steer language education and in general components that direct the principles of a good learning environment, pedagogical working approaches and the concept of learning. This approach is also taken up in sections describing pupil assessment, special needs education, pupil welfare and educational guidance. This change reflects the historical multilingualism and recent demographic changes in Finnish society (Halinen et al., 2015). Finnish education is developed in dialogue with wider European educational discourses. An example of these European policies is the European Commission's (2019) *Council Recommendation on a Comprehensive Approach to the Teaching and Learning of Languages.* It states that language awareness in schools support reflections on the language dimension in all levels of school organisation, teaching and practice. It also promotes close cooperation amongst different members of a school community.

In line with wider European policies, the Finnish national core curriculum requires schools to guide pupils to become aware of the multi-layered linguistic and cultural identities

that they and others have (National Board of Education, 2014). This means that supporting the multi-layered identity growth and development of pupils is an educational task of every teacher, not only language teachers. The core curriculum considers cultural diversity a fundamentally positive resource, and it reminds the reader that each community and community member is multilingual, points out the naturalness in parallel use of various languages in the school's daily life and is aimed at ensuring understanding of the key importance of language for learning, interaction and cooperation and for the building of identities and socialisation (National Board of Education, 2014, section 4.2, para. 9).

Swedish immersion in Finland was built on the Canadian immersion model in the late 80s. The idea of separating languages from one another to maximise the language input in an immersion language has been a cornerstone of Swedish immersion, as with other such programmes. However, renewed transnational and national policies guide even immersion education. The general parts of Finland's core curriculum are normative even for immersion education, including the statement about the naturalness of the parallel use of various languages. Therefore, the language separation ideologies previously emphasised in immersion education (Cummins, 2007) might be at odds with the Finnish national core curriculum. The section guiding immersion education states that the principle of bilingual education is reflected in the entire school culture. The learning of immersion and school languages should be supported in a holistic way, and these languages should not be treated as separate entities. Furthermore, the section explicitly indicates that "the programme also supports encounters with other languages and cultures, thus reinforcing the pupil's multilingual and culturally layered identity in a positive way" (National Board of Education, 2014, section 10.1, para. 3). Although the core curriculum does not clarify how these encounters with other languages and cultures are to be arranged, it notes that in-depth cooperation between teachers working in different languages is required. A more detailed

description of these issues should be decided upon at the local level, which accentuates that discourses surrounding multi-lingual and cross-linguistic pedagogies need to be considered in local-level policy work. These discourses were the focus of this study.

4. The study

The point of departure for this research was a process-oriented approach to a case study (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017) about reforming a Swedish local curriculum on immersion education in a bilingual city in Finland. The majority of the population in the city (68%) is registered as Finnish speakers. A total of 23% are Swedish speakers, whereas approximately 9% speak other languages. The city offers mainstream Finnish education, preparatory education for immigrants (in Finnish) and education delivered with English–Finnish as medium (content and language integrated learning, CLIL) as well as Swedish immersion. It also offers mainstream Swedish-medium education, preparatory education for immigrants (in Swedish) and English–Swedish CLIL education. The local curricula for Finnish-medium and Swedish-medium schools were prepared separately, as were the local curricula for immersion and CLIL education, although the groups responsible for these preparations occasionally consulted one another.

In Finland the local-level agents are autonomous in their local-level decisions, as long as the decisions follow the general goals set by the core curriculum (Soini et al., 2017). In general, clear guidance on the developing and implementation processes for curriculum policy is essential if the policy is to be transferred to practice through teachers (Priestley et al., 2014). In the case of immersion education, however, no further guidance was provided how to decide and describe immersion on local level. The succeeding sections centre on the interaction involving deciding on and describing the following mandatory questions in the local immersion curriculum:

- What are the key linguistic objectives of subjects taught in the immersion/target language?
- What are the objectives and contents of the immersion/target language by grade?
- Which content areas of the mother tongue and literature are taught in the language of instruction in a school and which are delivered in the immersion language?

Two overarching research questions guided the analysis. The first pertains to whether DI as an approach (Schmidt, 2010, 2015; Wahlström & Sundberg, 2018) provides suitable analytical tools for documenting and describing the process by which a national education policy is transferred to the local level. The second is concerned with how the ideas of supporting multi-layered linguistic identity and using multiple languages in instruction in the national education policy are transferred to local immersion curricula.

The ethnographic approach was implemented in data collection to document the nature of the language policy process, which moves quickly and goes beyond one site or community (Johnson & Johnson, 2015). The data, which were collected through participant observation, consisted of 36 hours of working group meeting interactions that were audio recorded in autumn 2015 and spring 2016 at a school that provides immersion education. The role of the author in the studied working group was multi-faceted: She served as a researcher, pre-service and in-service teacher educator, immersion representative for the national core curriculum and mother of two bilingual pupils. In addition to the author's long-term participation in local immersion initiatives carried out at the school, the ethnographic approach to data collection was supported by the fact that data were collected in a bilingual city with a long history of immersion education. The city cooperates closely with the local university on research, programme development, and immersion teacher education.

The members of the working group agreed on the need to document the process in order to find common ground for developing immersion education at the national level and provide

support for future policy reforms. The working group for the immersion education curriculum consisted of six regular members and four visiting members. The chairperson of the group was a vice rector with extensive experience as an immersion classroom teacher (henceforth referred to as VR). The other members were an immersion classroom teacher (CT), a teacher of Finnish language and literature (L1), a teacher of the immersion language (L2) and two immersion researchers/teacher educators (R1 and R2). The visiting members represented four different school subjects (ST). The working group also participated in a regional network of cities providing immersion education, but these regional meetings were not audio recorded and were thus excluded from the data collection. Given the long-term connections amongst the different members of the working group, their roles and positions were established prior to the creation of the group. This resulted in a relaxed meeting atmosphere but also fostered a slight unwillingness to directly criticise the ideas or practices presented in meetings by different actors.

The active participation in the meetings enabled the author to form a preliminary understanding of the *coordinative* and *communicative* discourses in the audio-recorded data (for definition, see section 2). At times, several simultaneous conversations took place in different languages and, sometimes, conversations were carried out mainly through silent writing. Several national and local curriculum documents were also consulted in the analysis when needed as they were frequently referred to in the recordings. However, these curriculum documents were not examined as independent data in this study.

The analysis was qualitative, and the author listened to the recordings, paying attention to occasions wherein cross-linguistic matters were discussed. The term *cross-linguistic matters* was used to label any occasion during which more than one instructional language was discussed. However, it was surprisingly difficult to pinpoint sequences in which only *one* language was discussed. References to Finnish and Swedish were so intertwined in the

recordings that they were present in some form most of the time—a possible core insight of the study. For analytical purposes, therefore, focus was instead placed on (1) explicit mentions/naming of languages *other* than Finnish or Swedish, (2) instances when the group reflected on the need to work in cross-lingual teams or (3) mentions of the need for multi-lingual awareness in non-linguistic school subjects.

The identified sequences were transcribed and loosely categorised in accordance with Schmidt's (2010, 2015) concepts of *coordinative* and *communicative* discourses (see section 2). To examine and discuss the use of DI for empirical policy data, representative data extracts were chosen to show different aspects of the transfer of policy ideas from the national to the local level. The excerpts presented in the following sections were chosen so that they would illustrate how the ideas of supporting multi-layered linguistic identity and using multiple languages in instruction were supported or contested in the working group. Excerpts that were reasonably short and easy to interpret without requiring any deep knowledge of local immersion arrangements was chosen to be included. Another prerequisite was to allow the voices of different participants to be reflected in the data. The analysis of the excerpts included dimensions of *what*, *why* and *how.* This means that situational background information and aspects such as *tone* and *emphasis* were considered in the interpretation of the excerpts. In the succeeding sections, coordinative discourses are illustrated through excerpts that are labelled *curriculum thinking*, *immersion language objectives* and *multi-lingual language awareness*, whereas communicative discourses are illustrated using excerpts labelled *horizontal cooperation*, *vertical cooperation* and *subject-specific language awareness.* The excerpts were translated from Finnish or Swedish.

5. Findings

5.1 Coordinative discourses

Coordinative discourses relate to the policy construction and they were naturally foregrounded in the data because the aim of the meetings was to produce texts that meet the requirements of the national core curriculum. These discourses included coordinating descriptions of school subjects provided in various policy documents and by various policy actors. The curriculum work was done both digitally and manually and both within the group and in interaction with other relevant stakeholders. The discourses emphasised the need to find solutions to immersion-specific problems in the context of curricular reform.

5.1.1. Collective sense-making about curriculum thinking

Although the task was to write a local immersion curriculum, not all the challenges were directly connected to immersion education only. One issue related to coordinative policy work was to understand and adjust to the renewed Finnish curricular thinking. For example, the new core curriculum was oriented towards *transversal competencies*[1] which refer to knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and will connected to all school subjects and to the ability to apply knowledge and skills in a given situation (see Uljens & Rajakaltio, 2017). At the local level, then, reforming immersion policy meant balancing amongst transversal competencies (T), core contents (C) and learning objectives (O). These concepts were not always easy to keep track of as is shown in the following excerpt focussing on linguistic playfulness:

R1: Are objectives something that need to be assessed?

L1: Wait a second, let me think.

[1] The core curriculum (National Board of Education, 2014) states the following seven transversal competencies: thinking and learning to learn; cultural competence, interaction and expression; taking care of oneself and managing daily life; multi-literacy; digital (information and communication technology) competence; working life competence and entrepreneurship; participation, involvement, building a sustainable future.

R1: So, every objective needs to be assessed or at least be a part of the assessment and every content is something that you *do* during the instruction. So, can you assess playing with language?

VR: No, that's content.

CT: But that means that we have had a lot of content as our prior objectives.

L1: Why cannot you place *playing with language* there [as an objective]?

L2: Because you cannot assess it.

L1: Why would you not be able to assess it?

In this excerpt R1 was questioning how core contents and learning objectives relate to assessment. She was trying to figure out whether playfulness should be conceptualised as a content or as an objective. However, as the assessment had also been renewed, as was later reminded by L1 (see excerpt below), the answer required reconceptualising the role of assessment too:

L1: But even the assessment has changed. It's also about peer assessment and self-evaluation now.

In this excerpt L1 concluded that assessment is not necessarily done by the teacher only. CT further reminded (in the excerpt below) that although some assessment criteria is indeed described in the national curriculum, they should not be treated as a description of the objective itself:

CT: Learning objective is not the same as assessment criterium. The criterium is only a description of how well one has reached the objective.

Furthermore, the way transversal competencies (T), contents (C), and objectives (O) are presented on the new digital platform, developed solely for the purposes of mainstream curriculum reform, added to the conceptual challenge. The process of adjusting one's

conceptualisation in line with the complexity of the new curriculum sometimes led to frustrated outbursts such as the following:

R1: This gives me a headache.

L1: Yes, because every single thing is connected with O, C, T, local and national!

As shown in the extract above, R1 commented despairingly on the complexity of the work, to which L1 agreed, pointing out that every move necessitates taking both local and national contexts into consideration. This entails not only local and national curricula but also local, regional and national immersion education in general given that all municipalities offering immersion education should try to develop and implement similar local curricula to keep the programme somewhat coherent. It seemed difficult for the participants to keep track of the objectives of instruction (O), content areas related to the objectives (C) and transversal competencies (T) at this stage. This highlighted the fact that curriculum implementation has what Uljens and Rajakaltio (2017, p. 417) referred to as "a paradoxical relation to praxis": Teachers were treated as though they were already able to manage the new curriculum thinking that they were expected to *become able to* manage in the future. This implies that immersion education, as with any other type of education, is evolving along with new educational policy ideas.

5.1.2. Deciding on and describing the objectives and contents of immersion language by grade

The core curriculum has no immersion-specific syllabus for advanced Swedish that fits the needs of immersion education. Deciding on and describing immersion Swedish are left to local policy actors. Coordinative discourses regarding decisions and descriptions of the immersion language thus included deliberating over how to navigate allocated resources (in terms of lesson hours); identifying suitable language content from existing national

descriptions for core Swedish,[2] native-level Swedish[3] and Swedish as a second language[4]; and identifying a suitable level of immersion language skills in *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001, CEFR). This coordinative discourse resulted in a concrete product (Appendix 1) loosely based on the CEFR. An additional column to the CEFR was added include core cultural objectives of instruction for Swedish, such as the learner is able to "cite reasons why Swedish is spoken in Finland and describe the linguistic diversity in the Nordic countries" and "make observations on the differences and similarities related to the structures, vocabulary, and other features of Swedish and his or her mother tongue or another language he or she knows" (National Board of Education, 2014, np). The product consisted of eight pages and included text for each of the columns of the table (Appendix 1). It was deemed useful for classroom-level curriculum planning; as pointed out by CT, "this kind of instrument is a concrete guidance in the planning of the instruction."

This coordinative discourse targeted the Swedish language from various viewpoints and required the coordination of different syllabi intended for different target groups. However, the coordination has touched upon only Swedish, not other languages. As pointed out earlier, Swedish and Finnish need to be combined to form a symbiotic whole rather than addressing these as separate entities (or "solitudes," as termed by Cummins, 2007). This means that both Finnish and Swedish should be examined together, side by side. To make sense of this co-existence, the group coordinated *time allocated*, *contents,* and *languages used* (see also Bergroth, 2015, 2016). Teaching initial literacy in Swedish is possible because according to Finnish legislation, only half of the combined lesson hours for the school subjects Finnish

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[2] Mandatory advanced/A syllabus or intermediate/B1 syllabus in Swedish

[3] Advanced syllabus in Swedish intended for children with a bilingual Finnish–Swedish family background and studying within Finnish-medium education

[4] Intended for children with an immigrant background and offered within Swedish-medium education

Language and Literacy and Swedish must be taught in Finnish (Finnish Government, 2012). The objectives of immersion language instruction also account for those Finnish Language and Literacy objectives that are taught in Swedish in immersion:

> R2: If we compare these [learning objectives in Finnish Language and Literacy] with the learning objectives in immersion language, they should match with the table we compiled. Here is this kind of a text: 'The pupil can use holistic phrases as means to express their own ideas and thoughts in a group'. I cannot recall that we would have defined things like this for the immersion language; does this mean that we should [include] even these?

Whilst browsing content areas related to learning objectives in Finnish Language and Literature, R2 became aware that the typical CEFR descriptions that they had used to describe immersion language objectives were oriented mainly towards language studies. The descriptions differed as Finnish Language and Literature is aimed at, amongst other goals, developing pupils' literacy, interaction skills and gaining awareness of themselves as communicators (National Board of Education, 2014). The group acknowledged the need to include these kinds of literacy-related objectives to the description of objectives for the immersion language but decided to return to this coordinative task at a later period. During the remaining meetings, however, the immersion language objectives (Appendix 1) were left as they were, perhaps because of extensive workload. Instead, another concrete product (Appendix 2) was compiled. This product consisted of 28 pages, in which all the content falling under Finnish Language and Literature was divided between the languages by grade. Most of the content was indirectly connected to a specific language (e.g., visiting the school library or local library) and were thus treated as content shared by both languages.

5.1.3. Making sense of multilingual language awareness in immersion education

The final coordinative discourse discussed in this section, *multilingual language awareness*, is not attached to the concrete tasks required for decision and description in local immersion curricula, but it is related to the discursive idea of language awareness promoted in the core curriculum in general. The researchers, both of whom specialise in societal and individual multilingualism, took a clear leading role in initiating the coordinative discourse. They had an agenda to promote the awareness of languages beyond Finnish and Swedish in immersion education. To this end, they used the national core curriculum as a way of legitimating the agenda, thus *communicating* rather than *coordinating* the policy. The following excerpts show that the discourse involved awareness of variations *within* a language and *between* languages. As presented in the first excerpt, R1 is reading about the local mainstream curriculum for Core Swedish on a digital platform accessed through her laptop, whilst the rest of the group was engaged in another conversation. She recalls an earlier conversation about differences and similarities between the Swedish spoken in Finland and the Swedish spoken in Sweden.[5] In that conversation, L2 argued that the topic should be introduced in immersion education, at the earliest, in grade 7 because this is how it was prescribed by the previously established curriculum still being enacted at the time of the meeting. She calls to L2 to make her aware of the changes in the new curriculum:

> R1: Here it is [L2]: Swedish in Finland and Swedish in Sweden. They have entered it in the Core Swedish curriculum already in the fourth grade.
>
> L2: Yes, what about it?

[5] The written language norm for Swedish in Finland is the same as that for Swedish in Sweden, but the standard spoken language in Finland (*finlandssvenska,* in English *Finland Swedish*) is one of five regional versions. The difference is somewhat similar to that between British and American English.

> R1: I mean, they have entered them ‘Swedish in Finland’ and ‘Swedish in Sweden’, there, so the pupils should be very well acquainted by the seventh grade, by any standards.

The excerpt above suggests that R1 was genuinely surprised to find the two versions of Swedish language in grade 4 in the Core Swedish curriculum or that she was trying to persuade L2 to raise her expectations for pupils’ *future awareness* of languages. This is another case of a “paradoxical relation to praxis” (Uljens & Rajakaltio, 2017, p. 417), with the practitioners reforming the curriculum being expected to do what they are anticipated to *become able* to do in the future.

The rest of the group continued to discuss issues related to the objectives of Finnish Language and Literature. R1 switched her attention back to this topic as R2 kept reading about Core Swedish. Perhaps inspired by the earlier discussion, R1 noticed additional demands on cross-linguistic practices stated in the objectives of Finnish Language and Literature:

> R1: “To observe and compare differences and similarities between English and Finnish”; so, these kinds of contrastive perspectives should be added to the immersion language curriculum also. To discuss—so to speak—strategies, one should, in one way or another, be enabled to discuss how they are being expressed in those different [comparisons].
>
> R2: Why is it English and Finnish?
>
> R1: Yes, it could preferably be *one’s own languages*.
>
> R2: Yes, and I mean, why name certain languages? Especially when it is stated here [in the objectives for core Swedish] that “the pupils acquire information about and discuss the national and minority languages in Finland”. It is not English and Finnish.

R1: Yes, German and . . .

R2: Minority languages, Roma and Sámi and . . .

The excerpt reflects that R1 was reading a passage in the objectives of Finnish Language and Literature stating that different languages should be compared with one another. She concluded that this kind of formulation should be added to the immersion language objectives. The core curriculum explicitly mentions Finnish and English, but this was questioned by R2. R1 agreed that this content could refer to pupils' *own languages* instead of Finnish to acknowledge the linguistic diversity in classrooms. R2 built upon this argument, stating that comparison can occur between any two languages, not only Finnish and English. She went on to read the objectives of Core Swedish (grade 3) and pointed out that pupils are expected to discuss national and minority languages in Finland.[6]

The others in the group did not listen to this conversation between the researchers. Unlike the situation in the previous excerpt, the researchers did not call for the others or try to discuss or legitimate whether items should be added to the immersion language objectives (presented in Appendix 1). It is worth mentioning that in the division of contents between the languages (Appendix 2), the objective indicated therein ("to observe and compare differences and similarities between English and Finnish") is placed under "content in Swedish," resulting in a comparison between Swedish and English.

5.1.4. Coordinative discourses: A summary

The excerpts discussed in this section show that the coordinative discourses involved close reading and familiarisation with the texts provided in the national core curriculum as well as a discussion of how different components should be combined to create an immersion

[6] Finnish, Swedish, the Sámi and the Roma, as well as other language groups and users of sign languages, are acknowledged in the Constitution of Finland (Ministry of Justice, 1999) https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1999/en19990731.pdf.

language-specific curriculum. However, as the excerpts about *curriculum thinking* show, the members needed to first develop a shared understanding and learn how the new curriculum is conceptually organised and how it is concretely structured on the digital platform. In this sense, immersion education policy reform can be argued as encompassing the coordination of both the languages and the new ways of structuring learning and teaching in the guiding document. Nevertheless, the excerpt concerning *immersion language* reflects that the complexity of the concept and the challenges in coordinating the policy regarding such a concept was the main focus of the meetings. Because no national official syllabus for immersion Swedish existed, the group needed to create one by combining different documents. This task was further complicated when they endeavoured to combine the learning objectives concerning both Finnish and Swedish, proving to be a partially completed task during the meetings. The final excerpt highlights the coordination of *multilingual language awareness*, a topic that gained heightened attention as the national core curriculum for all basic education was being established and the topic of interest in this research. The two excerpts on multilingual language awareness show that this topic was taken up mainly by the researchers, but even in their case, it was only fleetingly dealt with. It was not, to any greater detail, part of the actual coordinative discourses, indicating that more developmental work needs to be done in immersion to ensure that awareness of the multiple languages is part the programme. Otherwise the programme risks to treat the two primary languages as separate from a more general societal multilingualism.

5.2. Communicative discourses

Communicative discourses emerged in all the meetings, but compared with the coordinative discourses, they required more interpretation by the author. As communicative discourses entail persuasion and policy legitimation, they are dependent upon distributed power. Rather than comparing static excerpts from the different policy documents used by

the group, the analysis involved relying on an intuitive understanding of the culture-bound ways of expressing persuasive discourses or open-ended invitations to participate in deliberative discourses. The communicative discourses did not offer solutions, but they highlighted the *battle of ideas* underlying immersion education policy decisions.

5.2.1. Consensus on horizontal and vertical cooperation

The task of the group was to create an immersion education curriculum for the whole city. The members were to share and rely on their own expertise in immersion education whilst simultaneously distancing themselves from their everyday tasks as immersion teachers/researchers. The ability to see immersion as a programme that covers all basic education, from grades 1 to 9 (ages 7–16 years), required willingness from the actors to step beyond their comfort zones. This raised tensions and highlighted the need for policy legitimatisation between horizontal levels as grades 1 to 6 are taught by class teachers, whereas grades 7 to 9 are taught by subject teachers. These tensions can be read between the lines in the following excerpt:

> VR: And then the division of mother tongue, the division of the school subject, what [is taught] in Swedish, what in Finnish? Would it be the one we are focusing on now? What do you think?
>
> L2: But that's for primary education, then, that mother tongue, immersion language, because . . .
>
> VR: Well, yes, I don't know, because . . . is it so? Or should we, despite it all, think about it all the way to grade 9, even if, I really don't know. We have to open it now and see how it looks.
>
> L2: Well, yes. Yes.
>
> VR: And because, I do understand that maybe not on this level of detail, but should we still enter something from 1 to 9? Some kind of a thing.

L1: Not too binding, but . . .

VR: What is [taught] in Finnish, what is [taught] in Swedish? But then we should certainly think about both Swedish and Finnish as school subjects.

CL: Absolutely.

VR: So, it would be good to enter those, too, even if they have not previously been entered, so in some way. . . I don't know how, but . . .

L2: Yes.

VR: Let's not rule that out yet at this stage.

The group finished discussing the immersion language objectives (Appendix 1) in the previous meeting and were starting to work on coordinative tasks that would eventually result in another document (Appendix 2). The L2 teacher, who works in grades 7 to 9 (which, in this city, are located in a different school building than that housing grades 1–6), argued that the tasks apply only to grades 1 to 6. This view was contested—but not explicitly identified as false—by the other members. On the surface, the chair of the group, VR, opened the possibility for more deliberative communication by acknowledging her lack of clarity three times ("I don't know") and raising inclusive questions ("should we. . . ?"). At the same time, she clearly used her power and authority as the leader claiming that, even if the division was not stated in the previous curriculum, it is a requirement in the new version. This view was supported by L1 and CT. VR expressed that the manner by which this task will be done can be open to discussion but that the task itself should "not be ruled out at this stage". Although L2 agreed, her tone revealed scepticism.

Communicative discourses also arose in relation to the vertical cooperation between Finnish and Swedish languages in grades 7 to 9. As L2 was the only regular group member working at this level, she easily ended up in a position where she had to defend her views against the reality that she was facing. As indicated in the excerpt below, the group members

continued to coordinate the division of literacy-related contents between Finnish and Swedish.

> L2: They do want to give their lessons in Finnish. But yes, surely, we can plan that they will not write their essays in their Finnish lesson, and that we write the essay in the Swedish lesson instead, but I cannot change the hours allocated [for the languages].
>
> CT: But you have to remember that we are planning a programme here. You have to look at the whole picture.

L2 is clearly agitated, declaring that the policy being collectively created by the group will be impossible for her to implement as she "cannot change the hours allocated" to language lessons and make demands on the Finnish teacher. CT reminds her of the dual task she must fulfil whilst creating the immersion policy. Problems at the practice level in a specific school should not drive policy to be written in a certain way; rather, practical issues should be solved by a policy that sets guidelines for a holistic programme.

The group went on to discuss that L2 could refer to the working group when communicating the policy to her colleagues, which would both increase the legitimacy of the communicative discourses and help her ensure distance between her personal professional identity as a teacher and the communicative task at hand. Note, as well, that when the Finnish teacher for grades 7 to 9 participated in one meeting as a visiting member, she was very open to deepening the cooperation between languages, implying that the new immersion curriculum will lead to changes in practices at the school.

5.2.2. Subject-specific language awareness

One of the goals of the coordinative tasks and discourses was to define the key linguistic objectives in (non-linguistic) subjects taught in the immersion language (for a suggested conceptual framework, see for example Morton, 2017). This partly involved regional

cooperation designed to cover a greater number of subjects in grades 7 to 9 seeing as the teaching of subjects in Swedish varies between cities. The task resulted in a third policy document, which includes a general description of language awareness in all subjects and subject-specific linguistic key objectives. The excerpt reproduced below was extracted from the work of the group on the general description. The communicative discourse relates to the understanding of subject-specific language:

> CT: What I'm trying to get at is that how can we—about the subject-specific vocabulary—how can we explain it better so that they do not think it's all about learning the terms, basic terms in . . .
>
> R1: So, they should learn to interpret and use the vocabulary and ways of expressing them.
>
> ST: Ways of expressing. If we write *ways of expressing* there . . . ?
>
> CT: Vocabulary.
>
> R1 And ways of expressing. Do we want to keep [the word] *vocabulary* there? Somehow, it's like that, *ways of expressing*, because it can be, even a text can be a way of expressing in a way, to construct the text in some . . .
>
> R2: Yes, if we remove *vocabulary* altogether and only have . . .
>
> ST: Yes, only have . . .
>
> R1: It's included; one has to have words to be able to express.

CT is concerned by some immersion teachers' lack of understanding regarding the linguistic dimension of all subjects. She argued that the group has not been able to communicate the key linguistic objectives in different subjects clearly enough. In a sense, this discourse involved not only coordinating and communicating discursive ideas but also trying to *educate* teachers about the ideas. CT wanted to make sure that the teachers are able to see language beyond lists of subject-specific terms and labels given to specialised concepts. R1 agreed,

saying that pupils “should learn to interpret and use the vocabulary” and argued for the importance of having ways to express phenomena connected to terms rather than focusing on words themselves. The visiting ST, a visual arts teacher, was sitting by the computer and writing. She wrote down the phrase “ways of expressing”, which was spontaneously used by R1. This eventually uncovered the insight that mentioning vocabulary is unnecessary because subject-specific ‘ways of expressing’ already covers subject-specific vocabulary.

5.2.3. Communicative discourses: A summary

The three excerpts presented in this section show that the communicative discourses did not follow from the coordinating discourses but happened simultaneously with the latter. In two of the excerpts, the communicative discourses were directed towards the other members of the working group. It was either about legitimating the choices made and exercising authority as a leader or trying to persuade others to reconsider their viewpoints. In the final excerpt, the members seemed to anticipate future reactions from wider audiences of the policy. Correspondingly, they wanted the formulations in the policy to be clear and educative, so that communication to the general public, in this case, other teachers, would be easy. This was the case in the excerpt labelled *subject-specific language awareness.* To summarise, the communicative discourses were actualised when the members switched perspectives from abstract policy formulations and descriptions to real-life experiences in their professions. This shift implies that communicative discourses surface when there is a need to adjust someone’s beliefs or current practices.

6. Discussion and conclusions

This study examined the renewal of a local immersion education curriculum in Finland with selected excerpts from audio-recorded meetings on the interaction involving deciding on mandatory questions. The selection of excerpts was narrowed to sequences where languages

other than Finnish or Swedish, the need to work in cross-lingual teams, or the need for multi-lingual awareness in non-linguistic school subjects were mentioned. The excerpts presented in the article were representative for the data and the conclusions are not dependent on selecting these specific excerpts as the analysis focused on both *what* kind of ideas and *how* these ideas were expressed. The excerpts were also provided with necessary background information and connected to the policy task.

The aims of the research were two-fold. The first was to determine whether and how DI (Schmidt, 2010, 2015) can guide an understanding of how immersion education policy is transferred to the local level, especially with respect to the complex issue of combining multiple languages within the educational programme. The analysis showed that DI was a fruitful framework for structuring multi-site policy reform data. Both *coordinative discourses*, i.e., the construction of the policy, and *communicative discourses*, i.e., the legitimation of the policy, simultaneously emerged in all the excerpts analysed, although their importance differed depending on whether a coordinative or communicative task was foregrounded. This implies the necessity of carrying on with untangling the internal hierarchy between the two dimensions of DI as a lens from which to analyse empirical educational data. The findings also showed that immersion teachers and researchers, as policy actors, worked within multiple interwoven networks to construct educational policy. Networking occurred both vertically and horizontally, and the policy legitimisation happened amongst different networked policy actors, not only from policy actors to the general public. This implies that it is necessary to conceptualise educational institutions as fluid and multi-sited networks of multi-professional groupings of actors to fully grasp the complexity of the institutional interaction processes in which educational policy ideas and discourses evolve.

The findings related to communicative discourses highlighted that the rather simplistic division of coordinative and communicative discourses did not take into account all the

nuances of human interaction. Given the nature of the actual communicative acts used to mediate the communicative discourses arising in this work, the objective analysis of the data was complicated. These findings support the conclusions made by Wahlström and Sundberg (2018), who stated that the communicative dimension needs to be divided into *persuasive* and *deliberative* discourses when dealing with empirical data. However, the findings also showed that many of the communicative discourses suggested openness to dialogue but in reality were used to legitimate the policy description as it was perceived by some of the group members. This suggests that the understanding of intertwined discourse functions can be enhanced by analysing the ways by which deliberative discourses are used to mask underlying persuasive discourses. As demonstrated in the excerpts, masking was done through borrowing of the authoritative voice of the existing policy document, as was the case with the legitimation of the early comparison of different versions of the Swedish language (Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish), or through borrowing of the voice of another actor as a means of legitimating a chosen discursive position, as was done when the assumed needs of a Finnish teacher were used to legitimise the need to deviate from the national policy norm. The findings provoked further questions about how power is distributed whilst policy works are legitimated and accepted by different policy actors. These questions led to a connection between curriculum policy discourses and educational leadership, consistent with the suggestion of Uljens (2018).

Another aim of the study was to examine how the ideas that promote general multilingual language awareness in schools and support the use of multiple languages and the growth of multi-layered linguistic identity (Halinen et al., 2015; European Commission, 2019) were transferred to the local immersion curriculum, despite the tradition of separating languages in immersion education. In this study, the answer was sought by exploring coordinative and communicative discourses regarding the three issues for addressing in the

national core curriculum: What are the objectives and contents of the immersion language (Swedish) by grade? Which content in Finnish Language and Literature is taught in Finnish, and which is taught in Swedish? What are the key linguistic objectives in (non-linguistic) subjects taught in Swedish? As none of these issues required the group to explicitly coordinate how the immersion education programme guides immersion pupils towards a multi-layered identity, the discourses related to this aspect emerged whilst the group was occupied with coordinating the three above-mentioned issues. This led to the conclusion that all the coordinative discourses presented in this study involved collective sense-making of the complex concept *immersion language*. The entire coordinative policy task can be argued as legitimised by the need to support immersion language instruction and, consequently, the strong ideology of separating languages along with the original ideology of immersion education.

Despite the primary focus on immersion language, the excerpts show that discourses on cross-linguistic language awareness arose in the policy task. However, these discourses were brought up mainly by the researchers in the group when languages other than Finnish and Swedish were referred to. This indicates that only fleeting attention is given to the possibilities of cross-linguistic language awareness in immersion education. Thus, there is a need to further reflect on how to transfer this policy idea to the local immersion curriculum and immersion classrooms. The overall dominant role of English as a foreign language in Finland was evident in the excerpts as it is mentioned in the national core curriculum. The excerpts likewise illustrate that the researchers reflected upon the core curriculum specifically with respect to the statement on pupils making connections between English and Finnish under the guidance of Finnish Language and Literature teachers in mainstream education. Similarly, the task of teaching students about minority languages in Finland and closely related languages in other Nordic countries is assigned to national second language (i.e.,

Swedish) teachers. Interestingly, although this was not reflected in the audio-recorded conversations, the learning objective concerned with connections to English was placed under the lesson hours allocated to the immersion language (Appendix 2). Swedish and English are closely related languages (whereas Finnish and English are not), rendering connections easy to find. This policy solution clearly contests the idea of immersion instruction based solely on monolingual practices. It indicates that the Swedish portion of the programme is multilingual and rich in connections between multiple majority (Finnish, English, Swedish and closely related Scandinavian languages such as Norwegian and Danish) and minority languages (Roma, Sami and sign languages), whereas the Finnish dimension of the immersion programme remains, more or less, monolingual in the light of the learning objectives. If this is truly the case, then the solution is likely unaligned with the general policy ideas and aims of the national core curriculum with regards the Finnish-medium portion of the programme. The finding calls for examining cross-linguistic practices, beliefs and ideologies in the instruction provided in the official school language even in other immersion contexts.

Overall, this study showed that the task of writing the local immersion curriculum, assigned to immersion education providers, was extensive and revealed how discursively oriented policy research on immersion education opens up new ways to develop immersion education. This study also touched upon a few issues that emerge in institutional curriculum work regarding both coordinative and communicative discourses. In future research, more attention should be given to how the use of information and communication technologies, face-to-face conversations (i.e., interaction order) and actors' prior experiences affect coordinative and communicative discourses (Hult, 2015). Regarding the former, the digital platform that was created for mainstream education had a structure unsuitable for the immersion-specific products that were created in the city. As a result, the answers written to

satisfy the requirements of the national core curriculum were not made digitally available and therefore uncommunicated to the general public as intended. The three documents produced by the working group are referred to in the local curriculum, but they are not actually included in the digital document. Thus, whether the city has indeed fulfilled the requirement to describe these issues in the local curriculum remains a subject of debate.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Objectives for instruction for immersion language based on CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) by each grade level. The final assessment criteria for good knowledge and skills in mandatory Core Swedish (advanced syllabus) is highlighted.

Grade	Listening comprehension	Speaking	Reading comprehension	Writing	Growing into cultural diversity and language awareness
1	A2.2	A1.3	A1.3	A1.2	
2	B1.1	A2.1	A2.1	A1.3	
3	B1.2	A2.2	A2.2	A2.1	
4	B1.2	B1.1	B1.1	A2.1	
5	B2.1	B1.2	B1.2	A2.2	
6	B2.2	B2.1	B2.1	B1.1	
7	B2.2	B2.1	B2.1	B1.2	
8	C1.1	B2.2	B2.2	B2.1	
9	C1.1	B2.2	B2.2	B2.1	

Appendix 2. An overview of the division of contents between languages in the school subject Finnish Language and Literature in a Swedish immersion education programme.

Content areas in Finnish Language and Literature	Contents in Swedish	Shared contents	Contents in Finnish
Acting in interactive situations			
Interpreting texts			
Producing texts			
Understanding language, literature and culture			

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Abstract in a language other than English (Finnish)

Artikkelin tavoitteena on tarkastella uuden paikallisen tason opetussuunnitelman käyttöönottoa huomioiden erityisesti koulutusohjelmatasolla tapahtuva koulun opetuskielen (suomi) ja kielikylpykielen (ruotsi) yhdistämisen kokonaisuudeksi ruotsin kielen varhaisessa täydellisessä kielikylvyssä Suomessa. Tutkimuksessa hyödynnetään sekä etnografista että kielikoulutuspoliittista lähestymistapaa keskittymällä paikallisen kielikylpyopetussuunnitelman koordinoiviin ja kommunikatiivisiin diskursseihin.

Tutkimusaineisto koostuu kielikylvyn paikallisen opetussuunnitelmatyöryhmän äänitetyistä kokouksista (36 tuntia). Työryhmään osallistui sekä kielikylpyopettajia että kielikylpytutkijoita. Tutkimus osoittaa, että kielikylpyopetussuunnitelman laatiminen oli kielikylpyä tarjoaville kunnille ja kaupungeille mittava tehtävä. Tulokset osoittavat myös, että diskursiivisesti suuntautunut kielipoliittinen tutkimus voi avata uusia näkökulmia kielikylpyohjelman kehittämiseen. Varsinaiset opetussuunnitelmaan liittyvät päätökset puolestaan osoittivat, että ohjelman kielikylpykielellä toteutettava osuus on monikielinen ja sisältää monitahoisia yhteyksiä eri kieliin. Tämä tulos poikkeaa selkeästi aikaisemmasta uskomuksesta, jonka mukaan kielet pidettäisiin kielikylvyssä tiukasti erillään.