

”That door is closed”: Struggle for accession and belonging in a school context focusing on power, migration, and future

This presentation is based on a research project about English education for newly arrived students at The Language Introduction Program (LIP) in Sweden. The aim of the presentation is to show how English-language education at LIP is connected to power struggles (Foucault, 2022) and language ideologies (Kroskrity, 2000) that affect students’ access to equal education. The method is based on linguistic ethnography (Copland & Creese, 2015) with observations and interviews at two schools for the duration of one school year.

The Swedish National Agency of Education (SNAE) (2013) describe LIP as an individual transit program with an emphasis on Swedish as a second language. LIP’s main goal is to enable a fast transit to further education or the job market. SNAE (2022a, 2022b) describe English as an important factor in accessing higher education, gaining employment, and participations in domains such as politics, education, and economy. Insufficient knowledge of English therefor risk precluding LIP students from participation in these domains and may in the long run lead to inequality in society.

This presentation is based on observation and interview data in combination with photographs where access and belonging in a school context is portrayed. The result show how LIP students often verbalize aspirations for a future academic career, but because of difficulty attaining a passing grade in English, they are often steered towards vocational programs instead. Also, struggles of power linked to Foucault’s (2002) term governmentality can be observed in this process, where discourse related to migration, language proficiency, and education, surface. Metaphors describing languages as keys (Nuottaniemi, 2023) that open society’s doors are problematized, when English often is positioned as a form of gatekeeper instead of a door-opener to LIP students.

References

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