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PERUVIAN MEATBALLS?

Constructing the Other in the performance of an inclusive school

Abstract

In Swedish schools, newly arrived refugee and immigrant students are provided with a language introductory programme, designed for integration into the mainstream school system. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork on classroom conversations in one such introductory programme, this study analyses how Swedish as second language (SSL) students are positioned and position themselves in everyday discursive practices. The participants strive to qualify for mainstream programmes through performing a 'regular' student identity. Although educational aim and the students' investments coincide, in doing the inclusive school, the institution calls for the students to perform ethnicity. The student identities thus emerge in and through a cluster of performative effects of how they are addressed by the school as 'ethnic' students, and how they manage those very positionings. Paradoxically, an institutional construction of an inclusive school draws on a discourse of Otherness in which the student's voices are invited but seem to be ignored.

Keywords

Second language education • identification • inclusive school • the (ethnic) Other • school ethnography

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Introduction

Newly arrived students constitute a growing group in Swedish schools, who (in most cases) are provided with an introductory language programme in which they receive intensive tuition in Swedish as a second language (SSL) alongside other core subjects. The purpose of this programme is to prepare the students for integration into the mainstream school system. Participating in these introductory SSL programmes means more than just learning a new language—it means simultaneously learning situated conversational and cultural norms. This is clearly expressed in the curricula for both Swedish compulsory schooling (the Swedish National Agency for Education 2011a: 9) and upper secondary schools (the Swedish National Agency for Education 2011b: 4). Therein, it is explicitly stated that the school is a social and cultural meeting place, fostering opportunities as well as responsibilities to strengthen students' abilities to 'understand and empathize with the values and conditions of others'. The curricula further state that 'awareness of one's own cultural origins and sharing in a common cultural heritage provides a secure identity which it is important to develop', and that schools 'must help students to develop an identity that can be related to and encompass not only what is specifically Swedish, but also that which is Nordic, European, and ultimately global' (ibid: 4).

This means that the students need to not only acquire linguistic structures, but also cultural communicative competence, identities, values and ideologies – all of which constitute and are mediated in and through discursive practices (Duff 2012; Duff & Talmy 2011). The curricula stresses on Swedish values, which, in developing an identity, migrant students are supposed to encompass and relate to. But what are these values? And what identity is to be developed?

The overall aim of the present study is to explore how SSL students are addressed as the non-Swedish Other in everyday school practices, and how the students position themselves when being encouraged by school institutions to perform ethnicity and identity. Moreover, we do not solely take an interest in the students' identification in this study. A related concern is with the situated construction of the institution. We will, with three case examples, highlight how teaching and events constructed by the school become interpellated calls because they require students to perform ethnic identities. These interpellations are part of discursive resources through which the school staff are constructing what is viewed as an open, democratic and inclusive Swedish school.

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Identity as a social practice in second language research

Research on second language acquisition (SLA) among students who experience migration has a long tradition. However, identity issues surrounding second language classes have only gained attention in the past two decades. Several important contributions have called for a reconceptualisation within SLA research (Block 1996; Firth & Wagner 1997; Norton Peirce 1995; Rampton 1997), so as to enhance the awareness of contextual and interactional dimensions of language use and learning, as well as to achieve an increased responsiveness towards participant-relevant categorisations. Concomitantly, there has been a shift in the field – from a predominantly psycholinguistic, cognitive approach to alternative approaches to SLA. This social turn in SLA (Block 2003) has invoked a greater focus on sociological and anthropological dimensions of second language learning and use. These include, *inter alia*, socio-cultural approaches, language socialisation, poststructuralist as well as critical theory.

In a seminal text, the education theorist Norton Peirce (1995: 12) argues for a post-structuralist approach on identity research on SLA, placing emphasis on the socially constructed nature of identity formation. A post-structuralist approach illuminates a complex set of relationships that language learners must negotiate, including access to and interaction with members of a specific language community. At times, this can result in the learners' ambivalent desire to participate within these settings. Norton (2013) highlights that while second language learners may be highly motivated to learn the new language, their investment in language practices might be minimal if a given classroom appears to them as for example racist, sexist or elitist. As a consequence, despite being motivated, 'discrepancies between a language learner's conception of good teaching, and the practices of a given classroom' (Norton 2013: 3) may lead to the student being excluded from or resisting certain language practices that circulate and are (re)produced in the classroom, and therefore be positioned as unmotivated or as performing poorly academically (see also Stroud 2004).

The expansion and pluralisation of theoretical approaches to SLA research has, in turn, yielded a substantial number of studies on second language education and social identities, illuminating the relationship between language learners and the larger social world (Block 2007a, 2007b; Blackledge & Creese 2010; Canagarajah 2004; Duff 2012; Norton & Toohey 2011; Talmy 2008). Much of this work has taken place in formal educational institutions, exploring school curricula, social organisation and how students in relation to issues of power conform and resist imposed categorisations and identities (Duff 2002; Harklau 2000; Talmy 2008).

In exploring the multi-directionality of language socialisation processes and identity in an Hawai'ian multilingual public high school, Talmy (2008) illuminates locally situated performances of agency, negotiations and resistance displayed by participants in an English as a second language (ESL) classroom. Talmy (2008) shows how two competing 'cultural productions of the second language student' are constructed and enacted. The first, manifest in ESL program structures and instruction, was school-sanctioned or 'official'. Talmy shows, however, that the socialisation of local ESL students into this schooled identity was anything but predictable; the students consistently subverted the actions, stances and activities that constituted the schooled identity. The students' oppositional practices had contradictory results though, since they were still labelled as ESL and were placed into a stigmatised program. Talmy concludes that the students' resistance to the imposed second language identity often led to the reproduction, rather than disruption, of existing social hierarchies. In other work, Talmy (2009) has examined how local constructions of respect in an ESL classroom served as a powerful socialising resource in producing order in the form of classroom control. In juxtaposing the second language students' classroom behaviour against normative well-behaved mainstream students, the teachers reinforced an institutional hierarchy, in which mainstream students were the models against which ESL students were to be judged and evaluated.

Duff (2002: 310) focuses on language use and socialisation in a Canadian upper secondary school mainstream class housing first and second language students, including both 'newcomers' and 'old-timers'. Examining explicit and implicit references to issues surrounding cultural identity and difference in teacher-led class discussions, Duff shows how one teacher attempts to have students make cultural connections, drawing on their own backgrounds and experiences, by way of inclusive specific course content and through allocating conversational turns. Yet, in implementing an official, as well as a personal, ideology promoting respect for cultural diversity and difference, and fostering a sense of empathy for others, the teacher attributed identity positions to students they did not take up.

Drawing on work in this vein, our article provides a contribution to how second language identities are co-constructed in a SSL classroom. As mentioned, the Swedish context contains some interesting details concerning this interest. One such important feature is that the official curriculum so clearly and explicitly recognises issues surrounding cultural diversity. As we will show, this officially sanctioned discourse has some crucial normative implications.

Identification in an SSL classroom

We concur with the general call— made within certain areas of SLA research—for more studies that focus on context, social interaction and the construction of identities in second language education and, in particular, the introductory class programme. Our analysis stresses the importance of language use in the construction of identities (see Butler 1999), i.e. the newly arrived student or the SSL student etc., is understood as being constituted *in* interaction *through* talk.

Drawing on Austin's (1975) notion of the performative and his theory of language as action, Butler (1999) urges us to see identity categories as enactments based on reiteration. Butler thus directs our attention towards the performative effect that the use of various linguistic resources have in interaction. However, as Cameron and Kulick (2003: 128) write in a comment on an often neglected point in Butler's theoretical framework, there is a distinction to be made between identity and identification – what is expressed and performed is always linked to all that which cannot be expressed, told or achieved in communication (see also Kulick 2003). A focus only on the explicitly expressed performance of identity risks 'a kind of conscious claim-staking by a subject who knows exactly who s/he is, or wants to be' (Cameron & Kulick 2003: 128; Milani & Jonsson 2011).

Identification, on the other hand, is about how subject positions emerge as a performative effect, which evades the full and conscious control of speakers; depending on what is possible to express and what remains repressed in and through communication. This is in line with Davies and Harré's (1990:62) idea of subject positioning

as 'the central organizing concept for analyzing how it is that people do being a person', reminding us that identities are always context-dependent.

Within such an analysis, we will look for what Althusser (2001) calls 'interpellation' – how students are addressed by classmates or school staff in the classroom, and how they answer those interpellative calls, and thereby are called into existence in social interaction. As we will show in the selected classroom examples, the newly arrived students are surrounded by specific ways of being addressed – certain questions, categories, names or topics – which both provide and limit a space as regards what is possible to say, perform or tell about themselves and others. The concept of interpellation refers to this process, according to which the subject is called into existence and is constituted as an ideological subject (Althusser 2001: 114). From a Butlerian perspective, though, this process is not to be understood in structuralist terms. The subject positions that emerge in classroom conversations are also an effect of how the students themselves pick up and react to such calls.

The study and the school context

The data-set analysed in the present paper is part of a six-month ethnographic study at a so-called language introduction programme (literally *språkintroduktionsprogram*) for newly arrived or refugee and immigrant students. The research site was a public upper secondary school (*gymnasium*; years 10–12) located in a large metropolitan area, which can be described as middle class or upper middle class. The school offers four national programmes (*nationella program*, henceforth referred to as regular programmes) as well as a language introduction programme at a basic level. Although situated in an upper secondary school, the academic content of the SSL curriculum includes Swedish as a second language, English, mathematics and history. The syllabus is equivalent to year nine in the Swedish compulsory school system. In order to qualify for regular programmes for higher education (*gymnasium*) or for university studies, a pass in these core subjects is required. The school has partnerships with schools across Europe and takes pride in its international profile.

The 10 student participants were 16–18 years of age. At that point in time, they had lived in Sweden between six and eight months, and had, at most, one semester of educational experience of Swedish and the Swedish school system. None of the student participants lived in the same area as the school. Instead, many of them lived in areas where languages other than Swedish dominated their daily conversations with both peers and family members. Nonetheless, it should be noted that most of them were already multilingual speakers. All had at least nine years of educational background and some of them had graduated from upper secondary school (12th grade) before migrating to Sweden. The students have diverse migration and ethnic backgrounds, towards and around which on numerous occasions both they and the teacher oriented themselves. The fact that the students have a heterogeneous background (Afghanistan, Cuba, Ghana, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Peru, Serbia, Somalia and Turkish-Bulgarian) is, as we will show, made relevant and treated as important in line with the school's discourse on cultural diversity.

As part of a larger study, Anna Åhlund attended lessons three times a week during a six-month period, observing and video-recording 40 hours of teacher–student and student–student interaction in an SSL class. In addition, the fieldwork featured informal interviews with all participants in the class—including the teacher—as well as observations of social interaction during lunchtime and breaks. The data has been selected from three cases that illuminate the ubiquitous, and often paradoxical, practices in which identity positionings and negotiations simultaneously involve inclusion as well as the construction of Otherness. The names of all participants have been anonymised.

'In the borderland'

During several weeks of the semester, the SSL classes are dedicated to preparation for the National Test in Swedish, a test that all students in Sweden take. However, for this particular group of students, it is one of the decisive factors as they have to secure a passing grade in SSL to be eligible for higher education. Needless to say, much is at stake here and the national tests are given much attention and are treated as especially important. At the same time, these national tests, constructed by the Swedish National Agency of Education, also disclose something crucial about what counts as important educational content, and what constitutes official school values.

As part of the preparations for the national test, the students read a booklet compiled of various texts, the content of which serves as the basis for the actual examination. The students do not receive any information on what questions they will be asked. The booklet is entitled *In the Borderland* (*I Gränslandet*), and consists of different text genres. The title opens up for various associations, experiences and identity positions. One of the students in the SSL classroom puts forward that being a teenager serves as an example of living on the borderland. In claiming this, the student is suggesting a universal experience of adolescence, as a possible interpretation of the borderland theme. However, this suggested topic is not picked up in the class room discussion. The theme of being a teenager is not further explored by the teacher who instead draws attention to one of the texts in the booklet, the poem 'Both and Neither Nor' (*Både och och varken eller*) by Özgür Kibar, underlining another possible interpretation. Interestingly, the chosen poem the students read and discuss departs from the experience of belonging to different cultures. In the poem, Kibar provides his own personal answer to the question of who he is:

> I'm both, and I'm neither
> because I'm a foreigner, and I'm native
> I'm a fiery Turk, I am a calm Swede
> I'm garlic, olives and cabbage rolls
> and I'm Midsummer Eve in the archipelago of islets
> (Our translation)

The class goes through the text, discussing what the words literally mean, as well as to analyse what the author might want to convey with the poem. The teacher provides her own interpretation by explaining that the author is playing with generalisations and stereotypes, and then asks the students how they understand all the identity contradictions that the author brings up in his poem[1]:

Teacher: Why all these contradictions?

Fayad: Because he tries to understand him [because who he is

Aydin: [tries to understand

his identity

[1]Transcription key at the end of the article.

Misko: He doesn't understand himself or?

Teacher: He has two cultures [that [(.) within himself he has =

Ana: [There is difference yes

Fayad: [Sit inside

Teacher: = two cultures that struggle almost it is a struggle in there [(.) an identity- (.) issue a big identity crisis =

Hadji: [((Laughs))

Teacher: = maybe who am I? Am I Turkish or am I Swedish or can I be both?

Hadji: Or?

Teacher: Maybe my family says to me (.) you have to choose you cannot be Swedish you are still Turkish a Turk who lives in Sweden [that doesn't mean that you are (.) then =

Hadji: [((Laughs))

Teacher: = maybe he says to himself but I- I feel more Swedish (.) I speak more Swedish than Turkish (.) I eat more Swedish food I have more Swedish friends but does that mean that I am Swedish? No because I have Turkey in me as well (.) I have the Turkish culture (.) two cultures two identities that he tries to think how should he do to live with this (.) can you relate to that?

Fayad: Yes

Teacher: Yes

Fayad: Four cultures sit here

Teacher: Four cultures mm (.) go on

Fayad: My mother Russian culture [and my father Uzbekian =

Teacher: [Yes

Fayad: = culture and Kazakhi culture where I lived [and now only =

Teacher: [Yes

Fayad: = Swedish ((Jokingly))

Teacher: [And now we just throw a Swedish culture on top =

Hadji: [((Laughs))

Teacher: = [((Jokingly)) yes what do you think about that?

Hadji: [((Laughs))

Fayad: It is difficult

Teacher: Ye:s and what is it that is difficult?

Fayad: To celebrate every day he

All: ((Laugh))

Teacher: Celebrate every day?

Fayad: Yes (.) different cultures' parties ((laughs))

Teacher: ((Laughs)) Life becomes one endless party ((laughs)) yes (.) that can be a problem (.) to keep track of what is it that we are celebrating today? (.) Anyone else who has thoughts on this? Yes ((to Emre))

Emre: Ehm (.) he made a big problem it is not a big problem if one is half Swedish or half Turkish am I this or am I that (.) you are a person (.) no one only from what nation you are what's it called (.) nationality

Teacher: Mhm (.) exactly (.) write about that

Note how the teacher highlights 'contradiction' as a keyword which is worthwhile discussing and being explained in the classroom. She launches an interpretation of the poem as being about identity and about what it means to live in more than one culture. This suggests a possible problem, eliciting experiences of in-betweenness. Moreover, the question that the teacher puts twice to the students about whether they can recognise this feeling is itself crucial. It takes as its point of departure the idea that the poem is about them, specifically. They belong to a student category to which the issue of identity, multiple cultures and an experienced contradiction is ascribed as well as drawn upon as important and relevant. These questions of who you are and to what cultures you belong surround the SSL students, and to this interpellative call, the students provide various answers.

Fayad and Aydin confirm the teacher's interpretation of the poem, and the teacher, in turn, encourages Fayad to further develop his utterance 'four cultures sit here'. This call for an extended elaboration on self-reported multiple ethnic and cultural identities can be seen as the teacher's implementation of an inclusive ideology of respect for cultural diversity and difference, in line with the official curriculum. It is also an invitation to engage the students in a conversation about identity struggle, drawing on their own experiences and backgrounds (e.g. Duff 2002: 310). Interestingly, though, Fayad's accounts about four cultural identities takes a new direction when he jokingly ends his utterance with 'and now only Swedish' – an utterance that may be seen as a declining of the teacher's invitation. Initially the teacher joins in the joke by saying 'and now we just throw a Swedish culture on top', however, she continues by asking Fayad to elaborate on that.

When Fayad then defines his own identity struggle as a question of keeping track of all the festivities from various cultural traditions, he challenges the idea of the migrant student existentially struggling with cultural belonging, as is proffered through the teacher's interpretation of the poem. Rather, Fayad takes the opportunity to elaborate on the joke, and thus does not reproduce the SSL student identity implied in the teacher's understanding. Although the teacher again plays along and joins in with the joke (she says, 'Life becomes a never ending party!'), nonetheless she persists by turning to the rest of the class and asking if there are any other thoughts on the matter. Through this example in the national test, and through the classroom conversation, the students in the SSL class are ascribed multiple cultures. As such, both issues of identity and cultural belonging stand out as inextricably bound up with their everyday existence.

This assumption is contested though by Emre's final critical point: 'It is not a big problem if you are half Swedish or half Turkish am I this am I that. You are a human being no one only from what nation you are what is it called nationality'. In their responses, both Emre and Fayad display an orientation away from the institutional positioning of them. Although the teacher's encouragement indicates that their stories are indeed tellable, Fayad and Emre seem to be trying to avoid being positioned as victims, as vulnerable or exposed to cultural clashes and contradictions. We interpret their answers as ways to avoid the position of the newly arrived student—that is, as being different from others—by making the question more universal and, relatedly, by downplaying the importance of culture and national belonging. In so doing, both Emre and Fayad decline the call to draw on personal experiences in terms of identity and culture. However, as we shall discuss in the following section, to resist the position of the ethnic Other, is not something that goes un-contested. Much like other migrants, the students can be seen to contest and re-negotiate the ways they are categorised and labelled by the majority culture.

The International Day

The school life of those students in the SSL class could be said to take place on the periphery: the class is allotted a very narrow classroom on the fringes of the school building, and the students are seldom at the centre of other students' or school staffs' attention. Once a year though, the spotlight is directed towards these students when the school's main hall is transformed into an exhibition space for what is called 'the international day'. The ceiling is decorated with pennants displaying the different nationalities represented at the school, and a stage is even built for the event. The event is framed in a way that promotes the expression and sharing of cultural diversity through cuisine and through performance. Students are thus invited to perform an act on stage that is representative of their 'own language and culture'. The SSL students are in charge of setting the tables; they are asked to prepare and bring enough food 'from their culture' for four other students. In this way, they are treated as experts, as knowledgeable, when it comes to the issue of culture.

During one of their lessons, the SSL class discusses the imminent event. The following excerpt starts with an explicit question from the teacher: what is she to respond when the organisers of the international day ask her what food her students will bring to the event?

Hadji: Nothing

All students: ((Laugh))

Alan: Meatballs

Aydin: [They will look just teach us

Misko: [Meatballs with xxx

Teacher: [Yes then it will have to be Peruvian meatballs ((sighs))

The organisers of the international day clearly address the SSL students as those having culture; it is they who are told to bring their 'cultural food' for the event. However, this call is met by Alan's (ironic) answer, to choose meatballs — a dish, which has become iconically Swedish (see also Karrebæk 2014). By suggesting meatballs as his pick of cultural food, Alan orients towards what is most Swedish and common. His answer might be understood as a type of resistance — he performs the 'regular (Swedish) student' in response to the interpellative call that would otherwise serve to construct him as the exception, as the international or exotic Other. He is performing the common when it is a practice of differentiation that is expected.

This unexpected turn is followed up by the teacher who, with a sigh, ironically comments that if Alan chooses to bring meatballs, it has to be Peruvian ones – thereby confirming the very point of the task, namely that the students are not supposed to perform Swedishness, but ethnic Otherness. Through her comment, and her dispirited way of expressing it, the teacher takes a critical stance towards the international day project. At the same time, however, her comment on the putative nationality of meatballs, underlines that the position as a 'mainstream' or 'regular' student is not really an option for Alan. Now, as they continue speaking about what to eat, the classroom conversation takes a new turn:

Misko: Will there be lunch tomorrow?

Teacher: I hope so I hope there will be food tomorrow because if no one brings food you will be very hungry I don't know how this day will play out I haven't been a part of it before and I'm not that (.) involved in it I don't have any responsibility for this day but eh (.) it is mainly Malin the teacher next door who-

Hadji: Yes teacher Malin

Teacher: Malin yes she is very dedicated to this

When faced by the students' reluctance to enact the culturally and ethnically Other, the teacher is placed in a dilemmatic situation of not wholeheartedly supporting the event and yet still having to perform the task appointed to her by the school administrators. By drawing on the fact that, just like the students, she is taking part in the event for the first time, she distances herself from it by saying that she is not to be held responsible for the idea that the students should bring food; in fact, it is the teacher in the adjacent classroom who is the driving force behind this decision.

The students, however, are not satisfied with her disclaimer and move on to question school procedures and the local positionings of them: 'I mean they don't ask if we can prepare food and then it bring to school, they decided it themselves and then say you must or you should', Aydin critically states, adding that there does not seem to exist anything like an official international day at other schools. The teacher supports his critical point, at the same time as she tries to explain the purpose of the day: 'No no, they call it international day because it is about other countries than *Sweden* for once. All the other time it is only Sweden, Sweden, Sweden, but now it is also *other* cultures'. Through her comment, the teacher further distances herself from the event by referring to the organisers, '*they* call it international day'. When Aydin later persists: 'They should like ask first', the teacher also backs up his point and says that she fully agrees. At the same time, she confirms the idea of the school's efforts to create a stage, for one day, for other cultures.

Aydin's critical questions, on the other hand, elucidates that their participation is not voluntary. The bringing of cultural food is not a task possible to reject. The teacher's repeated exhortations framed as a pragmatic reason – to bring their own food in order to have something to eat – supports Aydin's point that they really cannot just ignore the

task, even if they wanted to. It is required, not requested. The teacher reformulates this 'requirement' though, into something more positive, that is, as a celebration to which they are all invited: 'It is a party, and the name of the party is international day'. Aydin, at this point, quite agitated, continues to question the premise of the event: 'Have they asked other classes?' 'Ehm I don't think so it is just…', the teacher begins. 'Oh my God!', Alan interrupts, and adds: 'Take it easy, don't stress'. Thereby, Aydin's efforts to criticise being positioned as the ethnic Other by the school institution is also met with his peer Alan's evaluative comment that Aydin should not be so upset, but rather should remain calm and not make so much fuss about it.

The classroom discussion can be seen as an example of an identification process. The students are asked to display their cultural Otherness, and this is met by various kinds of reactions like Alan's suggestion to bring ordinary meatballs or Aydin's more explicit questioning of why the SSL class is treated differently from other classes. At the same time, their efforts to perform a student position that is not ethnically marked are not undertaken without restrictions. Although many of them orientate towards the figure of a 'regular' student, with the goal of attending 'mainstream' classes, their efforts are framed by the category to which they are ascribed by the school institution, that is to say as a SSL student who is asked to bring cultural food to school.

The teacher's position in relation to the international day seems to be complex. She agrees with her students' criticisms in their somewhat heated discussion. Yet, at the same time, she tries to underplay the issue, to defuse the situation, when the discussion seemingly gets too intense. One way of doing this is by stressing that the event is not just for SSL classes, it is for all students. However, in order to make that point, the teacher says: 'there will also be regular Swedish students' who will perform with music, song and dance. With this comment, she is simultaneously saying that the 'regular student' is 'Swedish'. Moreover, this 'regular Swedish student' is supposed to sing, play or dance, but not to bring dishes or other examples from her 'own culture' to school.

After the international day, the teacher makes a more openly critical comment of the event: 'It was horrible. There is no thought behind the event. Why are we doing this? For whom?' she rhetorically asks, in a conversation with the researcher, Anna Åhlund. She provides the answer to her own question by telling the following story of what had happened that day: 'A guy stands solo on stage and sings in Farsi with great expression. In the middle of his performance, the teacher M. enters the stage and physically repositions him'. According to the teacher, the class had reacted strongly to M's conduct: 'Several of the students said, "it is very disrespectful and demeaning in our cultures to do that". I replied: "In your culture? In every culture!" ' By the moral stance point, made in her story, she erases culture and underlines the universal, a moral standard that all (except for her colleague, as she puts it) have in common.

The international day is itself paradoxical. On the one hand, the day coheres around students' nationalities – with the pennants in the main hall, the ethnic and the culture-specific frame of each performance marking Otherness from the nationality Swedish. At the same time, the international day comprises of a set of practices aimed to include the students in the school by emphasising that Otherness. The paradoxical nature of the day is brought further into focus by the school asking students to make public performances as members of the category 'SSL student' at the same time as these students remain individual representatives for the whole of nations, participating in generalised inter-cultural expectations. The institutional category SSL student connotes a monolithic out-group of recently arrived cultural and linguistic 'Others', that is, an iconic stereotypical SSL student (see Talmy 2008: 626).

By arranging an international day, and presenting the students with an opportunity to publicly perform, for example, a song, a dance or to recite a poem 'specific for their culture', as well as preparing and bringing 'ethnic' food for four other students, the school presumes that the students know about and 'automatically affiliate' (Talmy 2008: 626) with the culture and customs of 'their countries'. The school asks, moreover, that the students perform as representatives of *a* culture, mono-culturalising separate nations as well as the students themselves, who might express multi-cultural identities and reject being reducible to one cultural or national identity. In addition, the reasons for some students migrating to Sweden are related to their minority statuses within the very countries from which they have migrated.

The school institution's performance of being inclusive—through efforts like arranging the international day—might have exclusionary effects. The students question the event, the premises of the event and their expected participation within it. In this case, the 'school-sanctioned production of' (Talmy 2008: 625) the SSL student, could be seen as being part of the telling of the fair inclusive Swedish school—to do Swedishness is to organise the event with the purpose of inclusion by turning the spotlight on and towards cultural and ethnical differences. However, this story of an inclusive Swedishness simultaneously frames who the SSL students are expected to be.

The ideal lesson and the ideal student

The class has its first lesson of Swedish as a second-language for the week. After a few minutes of catching up, the teacher asks the students to recall that they previously held a class council during which they discussed their sense of comfort and well-being in the school. She explains that the school principal has, as a next step, sent an e-mail to all teachers and students, asking them to discuss the ongoing improvement work that is conducted at the school. In consultation with teachers, students are supposed to provide suggestions about any further improvements. The students take turns reading the e-mail. It is addressed to all class councils and head teachers, and states that the school in many ways provides a good study environment. Furthermore, the e-mail states that members of the school staff have taken a course at Harvard University. The course was about inclusivity and how to create a school in which all students feel welcome, and in which everyone makes progress in their knowledge acquisition.

The e-mail concludes by requesting students in each class to discuss and jointly provide suggestions on what they regard as the most favourable conditions for a learning environment. The principal welcomes suggestions on how one learns the best, what is significant regarding knowledge acquisition considering work procedures, structure, the best situation for their class, suggestions on some different types of ideal lessons, etc. As a final point, the e-mail is co-signed by the 'Harvard group' and the school administrators.

The principal's e-mail could be read as a performance of a successful and inclusive school, with prestigious academic contacts; additionally, it underlines a commitment of getting everybody to work together to improve the school environment even more. This e-mail therefore constitutes an example of the institution's own storytelling about a democratic and successful school, which (a) welcomes students' to formulate good teaching practices, (b) gives priority to inclusion and the promotion of the well-being of all students, and which (c) even has its own 'Harvard group' educated in inclusive schooling.

After asking the students if they have understood what is being asked of them and why, the teacher sums up the content and, as seen in the excerpt below, frames the task by telling the students that they are special: 'Nowadays in school we talk about noticing every individual and what that specific student needs but then you are special you are ten here right and so then it is possible to do that to a certain extent but there are programmes where there are 30, 32 students in the class, so then one is trying to find a way of working that fits everyone'.

By making this distinction between a regular class and the SSL-class – which, in turn, is called special – the teacher is saying that the SSL student is different from other students and that the principal's e-mail might not concern them in the same way that it would for other classes. This is done in a supporting manner though, as her point is that the question of meeting each individual student's needs might be a problem in the big regular classes but not so in the smaller and familiar SSL class, where this condition already characterises the classroom atmosphere. As a response to this description, Misko shares his knowledge from attending classes at a regular programme, which he has done on a couple of occasions.

Misko: But they are silent (.) almost everyone in the regular program is silent raise their hands speak only when teacher gives permission (.) teacher says never they should raise their hand they just do it (.) when teacher say you must be quiet no one talks

Teacher: Mhm (.) no it has to work that way when you are that many in the class uhm in here we have what we call an open attitude (.) one can talk and we don't have to sit and raise our hands right (.) we talk more (.) we have an ongoing conversation [all the time

Misko: [Yes but it is always like so (.) that teacher says nothing but when teacher ask question they just raise their hand (.) teacher doesn't say you must raise your hand

Teacher: No but everyone knows that right (.) most of them have attended the

Swedish comprehensive school for nine years the first thing you learn almost is to raise your hand [it's part of school culture so to speak

Hadji: [Ye:s

Teacher: But we want to work with how to make the classes as good as possible (.) and of course you are going to take part and have opinions about this too (.) you don't have quite the same frame of reference (.) you don't have the same experience but that can make it twice as interesting to hear then your thoughts about what a good class is (.) how it should work (.) what does ideal mean? What does an ideal class look like? Hello and welcome ((a student enters the classroom))

Misko's comment on the ideal student being quiet and waiting for his or her turn to speak displays his knowledge of classroom practices in a regular programme. By explaining to his teacher and his classmates how students in regular classes do things, he displays his participation in a larger school discourse. This is after all the purpose with the SSL programme – to learn the language, as well as other skills needed in order to move on to a regular programme. Thereby, Misko performs the requirements of a goal-oriented student, who displays knowledge of and participation in the (imagined) community into which they are socialised and of which they, in the future, are to become members.

However, this display of knowledge and experience of regular classes in the Swedish school is met by the teacher's efforts to emphasise the uniqueness of the SSL students—they are described as not sharing the same frames of references or experiences as Swedish students do. Therefore, their opinions are twice as interesting to listen to, the teacher adds, at the same time as Misko's idea of the ideal quiet student is rejected.

Admittedly, this description of difference between SSL and regular classes is made in favour of the former: those attending SSL class are the ones who are described by their teacher as having 'an open attitude' and who are included in interesting talks instead of quietly waiting for their turn. Her description of the open atmosphere in the SSL classroom is also an example of the construction of a fair and democratic, Swedish school, without hierarchies and where everybody's voice is treated as equally important. However, another way of portraying the ideal classroom is jointly constructed among some of the students. Misko's request for more discipline in the classroom is not in line with the school's narrative of being an open and democratic school. A paradox, since the teacher, on the one hand, pleads for the importance of letting all students make their voice heard, and, on the other, the students themselves ask for more discipline (when taking the opportunity to express their own opinions).

Furthermore, the discourse of inclusion has its normative effects. Within this discourse, the SSL student is treated as special, and the classroom is characterised by a more convivial atmosphere than in other programmes. In this classroom, the students are taught to express themselves, as a way to be socialised into Swedish school culture, while they orient themselves around the standards expected as regular students—for example, in the know-how about how one ought to behave in ordinary classrooms. Yet, at the same time, students are reminded about their very uniqueness.

Concluding remarks

We have tried to make one crucial point in this article: despite the fact that many of the students in the SSL classroom strive to do exactly what is expected of them—namely to qualify for regular programmes by adapting to the school system, learning the Swedish language and to pass as 'regular' or 'mainstream students'—they are continuously addressed as 'students with ethnicity', whose perceived cultural belonging is treated as their essential and authentic identity, and as something that requires to be recognised and talked about. In other words, the position as a 'regular student' seems not really to be an option for them.

This is not done within an openly racist or discriminatory discursive regime though. On the contrary, the students are addressed as the ethnic Others within an inclusive school discourse. However, on the one hand, the students can be seen to co-construct a parallel local unofficial discourse, in classroom conversations, in which a non-ethnic identity is negotiated, alongside the official one. On the other hand, the school acknowledges and emphasises heterogeneity among the SSL students with regards to nationality and cultural backgrounds. This school-sanctioned discourse simultaneously (re)

constructs a homogeneous Otherness in relation to the majority of students enrolled in regular programs. We have identified an institutional narrative which needs the ethnic Other in order to display its celebration of diversity. We conclude that this is crucial for the school's performance of inclusion.

Therefore, SSL student positions are not a matter of what the students themselves prefer to perform in the classroom. Instead their positions emerge in everyday school life dependent on: (i) how they are addressed as ethnic students with an ascribed different culture and (ii) how they answer, contradict or reproduce those interpellations. The SSL students are thus invited into the inclusive school, but above all as ethnic Others. This, then, is the paradox: the institutional construction and reproduction of an open and fair, inclusive Swedish school draws on a discourse of Otherness, and a form of exclusion, undergirded by institutional politics, in which the student's voices are invited but seem to be ignored.

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Transcription key

=	continuing turn
_	emphatic
[	encloses overlapping talk
:	prolongation of proceeding sound
(.)	pause
-	cut-off sign; self-editing marker
(xxx)	inaudible
?	question intonation
(())	transcribers comment

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