Online public language policing as a biopower: Enforcing and challenging language norms and language ideologies in Finnish Facebook language discussion groups

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The pervasive integration of the internet and social media into contemporary society has provided ordinary language users with a far-reaching and ever-vigilant surveillance tool that can be used to monitor, regulate, and control social norms, including language norms. When the target of this regulation is language, the practice is known as language policing. By categorizing and analyzing micro-level, community-based language policing practices in posts and comments from three Finnish Facebook language discussion groups, this article examines language policing as a form of biopower. It serves as a mechanism through which ordinary language users can police written Standard Finnish, control each other's language usage, reproduce dominant language ideologies, and, conversely, challenge them. Using a theory-driven content analysis approach and drawing upon the concepts of shaming types developed by Murumaa-Mengel and Muuli, as well as Foucault's theory of biopower, the analysis reveals two distinct techniques. Firstly, it demonstrates that normation occurs through language policing practices such as denunciatory, recreational, pedagogic, and participative approaches. These practices serve to reinforce established language norms and are in line with standard language ideology. Secondly, the analysis highlights the technique of normalization, in the forms of reflective and normalizing language policing practices. These offer a more critical view of codified language norms and are more accepting of norm-deviations, aligning with more critical language ideologies.

Keywords: language policing, language norms, language ideologies, biopower, online spaces

1 Introduction

Many have likely encountered instances of metalinguistic discourse that laughs at, corrects, or mocks the language use of others. Its target is often written language, which is usually evaluated against the norms of its standard variety. This form of micro-level *language policing* refers to a broad array of practices and mechanisms that monitor and regulate language use in accordance with language ideologies (Cushing et al., 2021). The prevalence of the internet and social media since the 2000s has made online spaces both platforms and tools for language users to assess compliance with (perceived) language norms and police those who deviate from them. Previous studies have noted that online public language policing tends to enforce established language norms, those that concern standard language (e.g., Heuman, 2020; Porras, 2022; Reyes & Bonnin, 2017; Sherman & Švelch, 2014). The pervasiveness of standard language norms in online spaces is often attributed to dominant language ideologies, especially *standard language ideology* (Lippi-Green, 2012). What remains unexplored, however, are the underlying power structures behind situated practices of online public language policing of Finnish and how this practice negotiates language norms.

Critique on language policy in the early 2000s (e.g., Blommaert et al., 2009; Shohamy, 2006; Wright, 2003) has argued against the notion that governments and institutions alone hold the exclusive power to drive sociolinguistic change. Language policy is, instead, a holistic practice regulated by multiple actors and activities across social scales (Blommaert et al., 2009, p. 203). Thus, it is essential to not construe language policing solely as an overt–covert mechanism utilized by institutional actors (Shohamy, 2006), but as a practice that defies easy categorization within established dichotomies (Blommaert et al., 2009, p. 204). Similarly, research on language ideologies has reshaped the traditional understanding of the relationship between language, power, and policy (Blommaert, 2019). Language ideologies are multifaceted and dynamic, cultural and socially shared beliefs about language (Irvine, 1989) that permeate all levels of language use (Woolard, 2020), from national politics to everyday interactions. Power in the context of language is thus widely distributed and consistently reproduced, as it is enacted within various societal structures and contexts.

This article[1] focuses on an everyday political form of online public language policing practiced in Finnish Facebook language discussion groups. I consider language policing a social practice that not only comments on language but also produces social reality. Ideological debates on language have developed outside institutions, and the social values of language norms and use are negotiated in online spaces (Reyes & Bonnin, 2017). Studying language policing, however, requires a theory of power that can effectively encompass its non-coercive, distributed, and continuously reproductive nature. Following the example of Blommaert (2019) in the context of family language policy, this article uses Foucault's (e.g., 1978, 2003) *biopower* as an alternative lens through which to examine the dynamics of power in language policing. This concept of power operates through surveillance, discipline, and normalization with the goals of intervening, controlling, and regulating all aspects of human life. It is constantly actualized through ordinary interactions and activities (Foucault, 2000, p. 341). The article examines how this power is perpetuated and used in regard to language by using and expanding upon Murumaa and Mengel-Muuli's (2021) categorization type of online shaming. The types of language policing are denunciatory, pedagogic, recreational, participatory, reflective, and normalizing, and these have been identified by analyzing the characteristics of different language policing activities and practices in the examined groups.

In this article, I argue that contemporary online public language policing is a language ideologically motivated form of biopower. Through a theory-based content analysis

of online public language policing data, I examine 1) what and whose language is policed and 2) what kind of language policing is done in habitualized media usage. The aforementioned provides insight into how language policing perpetuates or challenges dominant language ideologies and how Standard Finnish language norms are negotiated in these online spaces.

2   Theoretical background

In this section, I will outline Foucault's biopower as a concept and suggest its applicability to language. Subsequently, I will examine the concepts of standard language and standard language ideology in relation to language regulation, as well as online public language policing as a phenomenon and form of biopower.

2.1 Foucault's biopower and language

Biopower is an essential concept in Foucault's work (1978, 2000, 2003) concerning the emergence and development of a regime of power and political rationality in which human bodies, individually and collectively, have become the object and primary concern of politics. It is centered on the positive direction, regulation, development, and protection of life (Foucault, 1978, p. 136). In Foucault's analysis, this power regime characterizing the modern world takes two forms: disciplines and biopower. These forms are not contradictory but rather represent two conjoined modes of functioning (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). Biopower, for example, incorporates some aspects of discipline (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014). Disciplinary power is individualizing, and it seeks to increase the utility and malleability of the human body by giving it a normative, useful, and desirable standard (Foucault, 1978, p. 139; Foucault 2003, pp. 242, 249). Disciplinary power was later supplemented and modified by biopower, which is massifying and focuses on a population, its mass characteristics and biological processes (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). In summary, biopower controls and regulates the general behavior, productivity, and social life of a population.

Biopower works through norms (Foucault, 1978, p. 144), and Foucault identifies two ways in which norms and what is considered normal are created. *Normation* is a disciplinary technique that enforces existing norms and compels individuals to conform to them (Foucault, 2007, p. 57). Contrariwise, *normalization* establishes the norm by studying the "normal curves" of a society: Different normalities are observed, from which the "optimal normal" is deduced as the norm (Foucault, 2007, p. 63). In sum, normation establishes the normal through norms, while normalization establishes norms through normalities. Simultaneously, boundaries are created between what is the norm and normal and what is not. That which deviates from the norm or does not conform to it is labeled abnormal (Foucault, 1995, p. 178). The production of norm is key, highlighting that power is not only repressive but also productive.

Both techniques are based on the evaluation of an adherence to norms, which is a way to measure and appraise life and behavior (Foucault, 1978, p. 144). This task requires the observation, assessment, and categorization of self and others. Thus, biopower operates as universal surveillance, wherein power structures have shifted from overt and easily recognizable forms to a more subtle and pervasive system (Taylor, 1984, p. 157). Consequently, individuals begin to behave as though they are constantly being observed (Havis, 2014, p. 110). As such, norms become an internalized guide in the production of a normative self (Cover, 2016, pp. 136–137). Through self-regulation and self-management, individuals take compliance with norms and their enforcement upon themselves. Thus, the focus is not only on how external forces guide behavior but also on how individuals direct themselves.

In Foucault's analysis, power is not fixed to institutions or held by certain groups but it is rather seen as a relationship of domination that can be produced everywhere (Foucault, 1978, pp. 92–93). It is exercised, and individuals serve as the vehicles of this power (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). Perspectives on power are numerous (see Avelino, 2021) and cannot be exhaustively explored in this article, but it should be highlighted that the understanding of power as repressive, an asymmetric social relationship where one party exercises *power over* another through coercion, authority or dominance represents merely one view. Understanding power as productive, as the capacity to act, is an important contrasting view. It encompasses the *power to* bring about outcomes, ranging from empowerment to domination. (E.g.,Haugaard, 2022; Pansardi 2012.) To conclude, power is exercised in multiple ways: It can change or (re)produce systems of domination. It can constrain or enable behavior. It can be used with others or in opposition to them.

The concept of biopower has mostly been applied to studies focused on the physical body (e.g., Cagle, 2019; Saltes, 2013). However, it has also been utilized in the examination of various topics not necessarily body-focused (e.g., national identity, Makarychev & Yatsyk, 2017; political economy, Terranova, 2009; digital identity, Cover, 2016; language learning, Sung-Yul Park, 2021). Human corporeality includes social, political, and cultural underpinnings. The body itself is not a "biological machine" separate from culture, language, social discourse, and cultural practices but dynamically tied to and produced through them (Cover, 2016, pp. 106–107). Biopower deals with the creation of identities and communities by establishing norms and standards. It continuously negotiates and establishes boundaries that define what is considered normal or abnormal. Biopower can thus offer insight into existing power dynamics and the ways and reasons why they are consolidated or contested. (Makarychev & Yatsyk, 2017.) As this article focuses on language[2] in relation to its standard variety, the concept of biopower offers insight into how and why this aspect of human life and behavior is surveilled, evaluated, and disciplined, and how normative or non-normative language is defined.

2.2 The standard and its ideology

Given the profound influence of culture on human behavior, particularly when examining a society and culture through a codified language, the recognition of standard language is paramount. It is a variety of natural language, typically a national language, that has codified, prescriptive linguistic norms, and is perceived as uniform in form and naturalized as common sense (Milroy, 2001). It serves as a comparison point for other language varieties (Agha, 2007, p. 146), especially in written language (e.g., Harris, 1981; Linell, 1982). However, standard language is best understood as an abstract ideal that does not necessarily conform to reality, to actual language use (L. Milroy & J. Milroy, 2012, p. 19). A striking feature of standard language is its perceived non-ideological neutrality (Agha, 2007, p. 146), despite its definition, grammar, and use being built on value-laden ideologies. Its creation process, standardization, results in standard language being inherently a socio-cultural product, possibly more characterized by its underlying ideologies than its linguistic structures (Milroy, 2001). Consequently, standard languages play an integral role in perpetuating widely accepted beliefs about language as a closed, limited system with fixed boundaries (Shohamy, 2006, p. xvii).

Internalized beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about language give rise to language ideologies. These are shared cultural and societal beliefs about language, language users, and a language's role in a society (Irvine, 1989, p. 255). As these factors permeate all levels of language use, they tend to be commonsensical and rarely questioned (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, pp. 57–58). Language ideologies thus not only define what constitutes a language but also its sociolinguistic context. In sum, language ideologies represent

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2. Additionally, some anthropological (Cimatti, 2017) and biolinguistics perspectives (Smith, 2018) consider language to be literally part of the physical human body.

idealizations of language that are always intertwined with societal values (Woolard, 2020, p. 2), not only reflecting but also reproducing social order and structures (Jaffe, 2020, p. 72). This is evident through the concept of *indexicality*, which links linguistic forms with specific language users, contexts, and various social attributes (e.g., Eckert, 2019). Thus, conclusions about language use are inherently language-ideological and legitimize and justify societal structures (Heuman, 2022a, p. 40). To conclude, language ideologies can act as an internalized form of social regulation.

Monologic views that strongly associate a national language, standard language, and written language with each other (Dufva et al., 2011, p. 27) form the foundation of standard language ideology. It is the belief in one correct and prestigious language (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 68) which is usually represented in its codified written form. Although standard language ideologies are dominant in European/Western standardized linguistic regimes (Gal, 2006, p. 14), language ideologies are rarely hegemonic. They are dynamic and contextual in nature, often subject to (re)negotiation (Heuman, 2022a, p. 40). Thus, as dominant ideologies are perpetuated, they are also contested by opposing and expansive ideologies that acknowledge the relationship between language and power (e.g., critical language ideology, Flores & Rosa, 2015; Metz, 2018) and place value on language variation (e.g., heteroglossic ideology, Bakhtin, 1981; Jenks & Lee, 2016).

Standard languages, their language planning, policies, and ideologies are shaped by local cultural and societal contexts (Gal, 2006, p. 17; Kristiansen & Coupland, 2011). As it is in many Western countries, the written Finnish standard language (Standard Finnish) carries symbolic capital, economic, and social rewards and serves as a marker of status and social bonds. It is linked to broader social phenomena, including nationhood, education, and prestige (e.g., Lehtonen, 2015, p. 223; Mäkelä, 1986). It holds historical, cultural, and political significance (Kolehmainen, 2014, p. 13–51). Although the current linguistic landscape of Finnish allows for a wider variation of language use and many of the standard's norms have been made more flexible (Mantila, 2010, p. 192) – in line with the trend of destandardization (Ayres-Bennett & Bellamy, 2021) – Standard Finnish has a strong presence in the public sphere. Prior research has identified standard language ideology, linguistic purism, and monolingualism as the dominant underlying language ideologies of Finnish (Kalliokoski et al., 2018, pp. 480, 482; Pajunen, 2023; Pietikäinen, 2012, pp. 425–426; Rintala, 1998).

2.3 Online public language policing

As norms in general are the primary social control mechanism on the internet (Klonick, 2016, p. 1044), "norm-patrolling" is common in online spaces. Because digital technologies have made widespread cultural participation and interaction possible (Balkin, 2003, pp. 6–8), the perception of social norms and their enforcement has changed (Klonick, 2016, pp. 1051–1053). The internet and the integration of social media into contemporary society have provided individuals with a powerful surveillance tool and platforms they can use to monitor others' compliance with social norms, for example body or behavior shaming (Cagle, 2019; Skoric et al., 2010). As noted by Cagle (2019), this phenomenon has become a means for biopower to be leveraged against others. Similarly, I contend that online public language policing represents a form of biopower exercised by language users to regulate language use.

As social norms, language norms are often reinforced and maintained through informal social sanctions (de Vries, 2015, p. 2055). Hence, language users often take it upon themselves to police language norms when encountering language that fails to meet social expectations and standards. Previous research has demonstrated that language policing in online spaces functions as a mechanism for ordinary language users to put their language-ideological beliefs into practice and reinforce them. Despite the potential for linguistic diversity in online spaces, prior studies have indicated

that there is a tendency to conform to standard language norms and elicit dominant language-ideological responses (e.g., de Bres & Belling, 2015; Jones, 2013; Porras, 2022). Furthermore, online public language policing is used to showcase cultural capital and define community boundaries (e.g., Heuman 2020; Sherman & Švelch, 2014). As a result, it serves as a guardian of a normative culture, emphasizing and reinforcing compliance with established and codified norms.

Language policing usually involves three steps: a (perceived) deviation from a language norm is made and noted, an act of language policing is initiated, and the deviation is corrected by the norm deviator (Amir & Musk 2014, p. 101). However, in online public language policing, the process rarely reaches the last step. Instead, the (perceived) norm deviation is noted and reported, followed by acts of language policing, such as shaming or offering a correction. However, according to Sherman and Švelch (2014), online public language policing rarely aims to design an adjustment to the deviation or implement it, for example telling a norm deviator about the deviation. While online public language policing may lack explicit punitive measures and may not overtly or consciously seek to dictate language use, it nonetheless reinforces the assumption of standard language ideology that a right and wrong way to use language exists.

However, the mechanisms of online public language policing can also be used to challenge dominant ideologies and resist policing efforts that prioritize the standard (Shohamy, 2006, p. 57). Although rare, instances of language policing that diminish the importance of standard languages have been documented (Heuman, 2021, 2022b; Humphries, 2019). Promoting tolerant language ideologies is more challenging as they are less recognized and established. Moreover, they oppose the act of language policing altogether, as their fundamental principle is to refrain from commenting on the language of others. (Heuman, 2022b.) Thus, critical views on standard languages and dominant ideologies may be overshadowed by views that support them and may struggle to gain influence in metalinguistic online discourses, at least in the context of similar online spaces.

3   Data and method

The data was collected from three public and open Facebook groups dedicated to discussing Finnish language phenomena, linguistic problems, and unusual linguistic expressions. The groups' members and content are visible to the public and non-members and had approximately 30,000 to 60,000 members each at the time of collecting the data. The groups are moderated and have their own guidelines for appropriate and prohibited content. For example, while all groups permit and encourage humor, groups 2 and 3 express that it is not their primary purpose. Although social media is generally considered public and open to mass public scrutiny and participation, with posts being semi-permanently recorded (Aitchison & Meckled-Garcia, 2021, p. 5), the Facebook language discussion groups exhibit characteristics of a "personal public" where curated information is tailored to personal relevance and shared within intended social networks conversationally (Schmidt, 2014). As the "nitpicking" of someone's language can be considered rude, the Facebook language discussion groups provide a safe space for the group members to openly share and critique linguistic problems (Sherman & Švelch, 2014).

The data[3] includes 150 Facebook posts, 50 from each group, and 1,767 comments. The data consists of user-initiated other-policing, where both posters and commenters police strangers, or commenters police posters and other commenters. The main criterion for the data collection was that a post had to include policing of written Finnish, which could include screenshots or photos of it. Posts that did not explicitly state or display the policed language were excluded. Data collection began in early February 2023. The timelines of each group, where content is shared, were chronologically set up to display the posts from newest to oldest. Then, 50 posts were collected from each group, excluding cross-postings (repeated content shared across multiple groups). This resulted in a data sample consisting of posts published between December 2022 and February 2023. The data additionally includes comments made on each post. Textless, multimodal comments were excluded due to their potential ambiguity. Moreover, comments that were topically irrelevant, such as those discussing the news and not clearly linked to linguistic subjects, were excluded.

The data was analyzed using a qualitative approach, namely theory-driven content analysis. The analysis made use of Murumaa-Mengel and Muuli's (2021) five types of online shamings: pedagogic, denunciatory, recreational, participatory, and reflective shaming. This typology was developed, based on the analysis of Instagram's exposé pages on misogynistic content, where gendered online harassment is shared and shamed. As such, it offers a useful theoretical-empirical foundation for studying the mechanisms and goals of shaming in online spaces, as well as the different roles people take in community-based policing. The typology is adaptable to the context in which it is applied, depending on factors such as audience, participation, and level of engagement. (Murumaa-Mengel & Muuli, 2021, p. 119.) Although the typology was originally used to classify data collected from a different platform and context, this does not pose an obstacle to my analysis. The typology remains relevant regardless of the change in platform and context, as my data also involves monitoring, evaluating, and regulating the (public) behavior of others. As a note, not all language policing in the data is referred to as shaming because of its indeterminate social meaning. While an original shaming act, for example encountering a (perceived) language norm deviation and responding with laughter or mockery, is concerned with shame, subsequent actions, for example taking a screenshot/picture of it and posting it online, may not be. There can be various motivations for language policing, such as a desire to participate in a community or to show-off, making its precise meaning difficult to determine on its own. This is typical for the vast majority of online social norm enforcement acts (Klonick, 2016, pp. 1052–1053). Even though some instances of language policing in the data involve shaming, not all do.

The data was first categorized, based on the ways in which (perceived) norm-deviating language was discussed and what strategies were used in these discussions. These were then sorted into Murumaa-Mengel and Muuli's framework of shaming types, which was mainly used to structure the data. I approached the data by examining language policing as an action rather than intention. Specifically, the posts and comments were categorized, based on the specific actions or behaviors (e.g., making jokes, mocking norm deviators, or

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3. The assumption of posting to a specific, like-minded audience can create an illusion of privacy. In actuality, the content can be accessed by the general public. Due to the challenges of obtaining informed consent from thousands of members and the potential ambiguity over public and private content, this article adheres to the ethical guidelines for internet research as defined by the Association of Internet Researchers (franzke et al., 2020) and the ethical considerations highlighted in prior research on Facebook as a source for text data (Franz et al., 2019; Kosinski et al., 2015, p. 553). The data was collected in accordance with Facebook's terms of service; only publicly available data was collected; no public or private information, for example demographic profiles, of individual users was collected. To protect the privacy of individual users, the groups are not explicitly named; the data is anonymized; the analysis does not use usernames; some data examples have been edited to make them more untraceable; the data will be deleted upon publication of this article.

offering grammatical corrections). As the social meaning behind language policing can be indeterminate – the actions may align with the intentions behind them or not –, the analysis and conclusions drawn from the data are based on my subjective interpretation and close reading of the data. The analysis was supplemented with intentions discussed in previous studies on language policing and metalinguistic debates. However, the analysis revealed strategies that challenged and questioned standard language norms and established language use. A new type was created to supplement these strategies, owing to their valuable insight, as they did not fit into the existing shaming types.

4   Language policing in Finnish Facebook language groups

Out of the 150 language policing posts in the data, 138 focus on (perceived) norm deviations in Standard Finnish, for example grammatical errors or stylistic mistakes. Only 12 posts concern usages that could be considered non-standard language, usually with spoken Finnish, jargon, or English influence. The policed language in the posts came from various sources, with the main ones being news (83), ads (17), and signs (16).

The policed texts often lacked a clearly identifiable author, for example they were signs and advertisements. In cases where an author was involved, their identity was omitted, for example by cropping a screenshot of a news headline to exclude the journalist's name. However, when a perceived norm deviator was named, it was typically an organization or a newspaper. Only a few posts had a single person named, and even then, they were typically referred to by their job title rather than their name, for example *the journalist* or *the advertiser*. While this might be partly explainable by one group's ban on targeting individuals, analysis of the data shows a bias toward language encountered in public spaces and intended for a wide audience. If deliberate, the anonymization could suggest that language policing targeting (perceived) norm deviations is framed as a societal issue rather than a personal one. However, in-group policing was common in the comment sections, with commenters policing posters and other commenters.

When the target of language policing is unidentified or unaware of being policed, questions arise as to whether language policing constitutes an exercise of power. Firstly, the target of policing may initially be anonymous or unaware, but with the cross-platform communication of the internet and social media, as well as the openness of the groups, they may not remain so. Secondly, even actions without a specific target or without the social power to influence behavior can still maintain existing power dynamics. When language policing acts conform to standard norms and reproduce standard language ideology, it can indicate a preference for maintaining linguistic standards and associated power structures (Sherman & Švelch, 2014, p. 332). Group members then reinforce and validate each other's beliefs.

The language policing posts addressed various norm deviations, and the posters expected language use to conform to the norms of Standard Finnish. Sometimes this was outwardly stated, but usually corrections were made based on the standard norms without explicit statements. The most frequently policed (perceived) norm deviations were related to orthography (41), word choice (32), sentence structure (20), compound words (22), English influences, for example expressions that were considered bad English-to-Finnish translations, mixed language use or Finglish, (9), conjugation (10), and translations (8). These were what was considered concerned common language problems.

The article uses the term *(perceived) norm deviation* because while the majority of policed language in the posts (90) does indeed violate the codified norms of Standard Finnish, it does not in just over a third (60). The latter concerned orthographic aspects that have many accepted forms, language use that could be interpreted in multiple ways, personal preferences of the author, and unusual language usage that, while not non-standard or norm-deviating, was perceived as unacceptable. Drawing from Hynninen and Solin's

(2017) typology of language norms, the majority of the policed language pertains to codified norms and the rest concerns what is accepted/expected in a particular setting. This shows that while the group members strive to maintain the standard, they also tend to lean toward hypercorrectness and their own interpretations of Standard Finnish. As a result, even imaginative wordplay is labeled as non-standard or norm-deviating.

The following sections provides data examples most typical of language policing in each category. Although this analysis does not cover all aspects of the data, it highlights specific features and practices of different types of language policing.

5   Language policing that reinforces standard language ideology

Most of the language policing observed in the data consistently reproduced Standard Finnish norms. It was often overtly disciplinary, as seen in denunciatory and pedagogic language policing. It also manifested in subtler forms, such as recreational and participatory language policing. All posts in the data reinforced standard language ideology, the most frequent being denunciatory with 56 posts (37%), recreational with 49 posts (33%), and participatory with 39 posts (26%). Only 6 posts (4%) were about pedagogic language policing. Most of the language policing comments were recreational with 618 comments (35%), denunciatory with 449 comments (25%), and pedagogic with 335 comments (19%). Participative language policing comments were comparatively rare, with 101 comments (6%). These language policing types utilized various techniques of discipline and biopower to maintain the status quo by reproducing Standard Finnish norms and upholding dominant language-ideological views.

5.1 Denunciatory language policing

Out of all the language policing types, denunciatory language policing can most clearly be described as *language shaming*, which is the act of demeaning and disparaging particular ways of using language (Piller, 2017); it is typically related to linguistic norm deviations and language errors, as seen in the language policing data. Although state-sanctioned shaming punishments have declined and weakened (Nussbaum, 2004, p. 2054), the emergence of digital environments and the proliferation of social media have revived shaming as a disciplinary tool, even in matters related to language.

Denunciatory posts and comments denounce (perceived) norm deviations and often demean and mock those responsible for them (examples 1 and 2). The tone of denunciatory language policing is hostile, and it is littered with verbal put-downs.

> (1) *Aivan sietämätöntä luettavaa!* 'Absolutely unbearable to read!'
> (2) *Tällainen teksti kertoo kirjoittajan olevan umpityhmä.* 'Text like this shows that the poster is a complete idiot.'

One feature of denunciatory language policing is *naming-and-shaming*: Those who violated or were perceived to violate Standard Finnish norms were explicitly named. Since the policing in the data avoids naming individuals, those named are mostly public institutions, such as news media and businesses. As a strategy, naming-and-shaming can serve as a punitive tool to expose perceived wrongdoings and to express disapproval, which the groups used often, for example by mocking a newspaper's journalists for their "lack of language skills" and questioning why they did not use "proper Finnish". However, while naming-and-shaming can lead to compliance by putting pressure on the norm deviator to comply, its effectiveness is unpredictable and depends on who is doing the shaming and what is being shamed (Tingley & Tomz, 2021). Because language policing in the groups is typically confined to those groups themselves, that is, the group members do not police language on the social media pages of the targets, naming-and-shaming in the groups primarily serves to inform other members who is (perceived to

be) out of compliance. As it is typical of online public language policing, the naming-and-shaming observed in the data rarely gives calls for action, for example to correct a norm deviation on a webpage.

The biopower exercised in denunciatory language policing takes on a negative, oppressive form. (Perceived) norm deviations are judged according to the norms of Standard Finnish, and language use that does not conform to them is met with reprimandings of a punitive nature. Denunciatory language policing thus uses language shaming in line with disciplinary power, subjecting departures from accepted behavior to punishment (Foucault, 1995, p. 178). Denunciatory language policing follows the principles of normation: It expects behavior to conform to preset norms. Shaming punishments have expressive value, as they reflect society's condemnation for violating shared norms (Kahan, 1996, p. 635). Likewise, by exposing and expressing a disapproval of (perceived) abnormality – and possibly pressuring others to conform to established norms – group members produce societal order and maintain normative, linguistic structures. Informal shaming thus seems to fill a perceived gap in the enforcement of societal norms and is a way of participating in society (Skoric et al., 2010).

Additionally, denunciatory language policing has explicit notions of indexicality. Particularly, native speakers and language professionals who write in a way that differs from Standard Finnish, or are perceived to do so, are often linguistically profiled (Baugh, 2003). They receive negative judgments about their character and identity, for example being uneducated. Even affordance-based errors, that is, hitting the wrong key when typing, although not as strongly associated with negative indexicalities as rule-based deviations (Heuman, 2022a, p. 82), are interpreted in the data as a sign of a poor work ethic or laziness. Such complaints have a moralistic dimension, placing less emphasis on the (perceived) norm deviations and more on the indexicalities they are viewed to hold, while also maintaining the prestige of Standard Finnish.

5.2 Pedagogic language policing

Linguistic corrections are another common form of the overt use of disciplinary power in language policing. These educational and instructive approaches include metalinguistic comments with exposed corrections (Jefferson, 1987), in which perceived grammar errors are highlighted by stating the "correct" form. Pedagogic language policing uses various metalinguistic ways to correct forms. A correction is often made more implicitly by putting the correct form in quotation marks or after an asterisk. For example, one poster expressed annoyance at the name of a new gardening store called *Sinun Puutarha* 'your garden'. The store's name deviates from Standard Finnish because the noun *puutarha* 'garden' following the second-person pronoun *sinun* was not affixed with the possessive suffix *-si*. Omitting the suffix is common in colloquial Finnish. Thus, in (3), a commenter proposes a correction in quotes, stating that the name would be better if it included the possessive suffix, implicitly supporting the standard form.

> (3) *"Sinun puutarhasi" olisi kieltämättä parempi* '"Sinun puutarhasi" would definitely be better'

Sometimes corrections are accompanied by an explicit explanation of why a (perceived) norm deviation should be corrected. For example, in (4), a poster noticed that a newspaper headline had an incorrectly derived verb. The headline misspelled the third-person singular form of the verb *tahkota*[4] which carries the figurative meaning 'to do something for a long time'. The poster offers the correct form and an explanation for the correction.

> (4) *Aamun lehden otsikko sivulla 3: "Aituri tahkoo ennätyksiä". Niinhän tekee, hyvä homma! Jos kuitenkin tarkkoja ollaan, hän tahkoaa niitä. Verbin perusmuoto on tahkota.* 'The headline on page 3 of this morning's paper: "Hurdler sets (*tahkoo*) records". So they do, good job! But

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4. This verb's primary meaning is 'to grind, using a grindstone'.

if we want to be precise, they are setting (*tahkoaa*) records. The base form of the verb is tahkota.'

Disciplinary power is inherently corrective in that it functions to reduce the gap between what is considered normal and abnormal (Foucault, 1995, p. 179). Its goal is to correct (perceived) abnormality so that it conforms to established norms and standards. Thus, viewing an error correction as a neutral, informal reminder (Edge, 1989, p. 20) overlooks its reinforcing function. As Heuman (2020) notes, this practice leaves no room for negotiation: The provided form carries the standard's abstract authority. It dismisses any variation by asserting that there is only one correct language form. Pedagogic language policing utilizes biopower by correcting (perceived) abnormal language use according to the norms of Standard Finnish, thus serving to maintain normative structures and standard language ideology.

Additionally, pedagogic language policing includes cases where the corrections were not based on Standard Finnish, but instead on the corrector's perception or outdated understanding of it. In the latter case, the individual may not be aware of a change in the language norm and evaluates it on the basis of their prior knowledge of grammar. The former is a matter of hypercorrection, which is the overapplication of a linguistic form in constructions where it does not regularly occur (Hubers et al., 2020). Hypercorrection is a sign of inadequate mastery of a prescriptive rule (Hubers et. al., 2020) and is an attempt to match a more prestigious form (Eckman et al., 2013). This reveals two factors. First, it highlights that disciplinary normation is fundamentally about the prescriptive character of the norm. Secondly, such corrections show that for some group members, Standard Finnish is less a language of usage and more an abstract ideal – which is not reflected in behavior. This follows Gal's (2006, p. 17) observation that standard language ideology can be seen as loyalty to the standard. The ability to produce the standard and proficiency in it is secondary compared to the belief in its correctness (Heuman, 2022a, p. 43).

As standard languages usually carry prestige, competence in them can be seen as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 243–248). For example, a mastery of Standard Finnish can be associated with belonging to the well-educated and intellectual (Pajunen, 2023). Švelch and Sherman (2018, p. 2394) suggest that individuals engaged in language policing use their "literacy privilege" and cultural-linguistic capital to maintain societal norms. Similarly, Reyes and Bonnin (2017) observe that linguistic authority in online discussions is constructed by emulating a standard and referencing authorized sources. Reverence for linguistic authorities is also present in the data. Pedagogic language policing occasionally references or cites the grammar materials maintained by the Institute for the Languages of Finland (Kotimaisten kielten keskus), the national institution specializing in the language planning of Standard Finnish, to support arguments and justify corrections. Thus, pedagogic language policing can be understood as an exercise of power that relies on the prestigious status of Standard Finnish and language authorities in Finland. It thus reinforces the status of the standard, the beliefs associated with its use and proficiency, and the dominant ideologies that underlie them.

5.3 Recreational language policing

Consistent with previous studies on language policing in online spaces (Heuman, 2020; Sherman & Švelch), humor is a crucial tool in the data. Despite the Facebook language discussion groups discouraging humorous posting, they have become platforms for entertainment. Sherman and Švelch (2014), who examined humor in "Grammar Nazi" Facebook groups, note that the most common humor techniques (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004) in such groups were absurdity, exaggeration, irony, and impersonation. Absurdity and irony, along with repetition, puns, and ridicule, are also present in the recreational

language policing data. Absurdity and puns are examples of incongruity theory, where humor arises from surprise and the unexpected – a deviation from the norm creates the comedic effect (Meyer, 2000, p. 313). For instance, examples (5) and (6) are comments from a post that included a screenshot of an online article with the phrase *vuoteen mennessä*. The wordplay here is centered around the homonyms of the inflected forms of *vuosi* 'year' and *vuode* 'bed' and the word *mennessä*, which is the inessive of the second active infinitive of the verb *mennä* 'go' and has also been grammaticalized as a temporal adverb. In its original context, *vuote-en mennessä* (year-ILL by) meant 'within a year' as the article discussed an injury that would take a year to heal. However, as a participle phrase, *vuotee-n men-ne-ssä* (bed-GEN go-INF-INE) can be understood as 'when the bed goes'. The misinterpretation of its meaning introduces absurdity (the injury will heal when the bed goes), and commenters play on this implausibility by approaching it with rationality, resulting in a comedic effect.

> (5) *Vuode lähti, ei tiiä kenen matkaan.* 'The bed left, dunno with who.'
> (6) *Potilas ei ole nukkunut vuoteen vuoteessaan.* 'The patient hasn't slept in their own bed for a year.'

Repetition, irony, and ridicule, on the other hand, can be explained by the superiority theory, where humor arises from a sense of schadenfreude, that is, superiority over others, or from a sense of being right in contrast to someone else being wrong (Meyer, 2000, pp. 314–315). Repetition is a common feature of recreational language policing. Group members would repeat norm deviations or create new deviations based on them. For example, a post containing a photograph of a sign with the word *Hedelmiä* 'fruits' mistakenly had a space in the middle of the word (*Hedel miä*). This prompted commenters to repeat the error (examples 7 and 8). Repetition isolates the deviation and draws attention to it (Heuman, 2020). It can also allow commenters to use the deviation without being shamed themselves (Sherman & Švelch, 2014).

> (7) *Mi tä?* 'Wh at?'
> (8) *Tä mä on huip pu* 'Th is is gre at'

Criticizing someone's language use may be considered socially unacceptable, but may be more acceptable if done in a humorous manner. Thus, in an online setting, humor can mitigate the impoliteness of "nitpicking" someone else's language. However, minimizing recreational language policing as mere entertainment can be problematic. Humor-based shaming, seemingly done for the sake of it, can allow individuals to avoid thinking about the consequences or ethical implications of their actions (see Murumaa-Mengel & Lott, 2023, p. 951). It trivializes the act of making fun of someone's language use and ignores potential negative consequences. Thus, it is imperative to understand that recreational language policing functions as a social corrective. Humor has a disciplinary function when it ridicules and mocks those who violate social rules, thereby safeguarding established norms (Billig, 2005, pp. 202, 207). Even humor techniques that may be interpreted more ambiguously can reinforce social norms.

Recreational language policing assumes that others in the community share a common view of what is legitimate and acceptable language. Indirectly, it reinforces standard language and its ideology because its targets, the causes of laughter, mockery, and ridicule, are (perceived) norm deviations. Recreational language policing, as an exercise of biopower, uses humor as a disciplinary mechanism.

5.4 Participative language policing

All of the examined Facebook language discussion groups are active online communities with vast content production and vibrant discussion. The community-building aspect and interpersonal relationships are especially evident in participative language policing.

It is characterized by social participation, which usually takes the form of opinion-seeking: Posters usually introduce a linguistic problem and ask for input from other group members (examples 9 and 10).

> (9) *onko tämä kieliopillisesti oikein (tai sääntö muuttunut)?* 'is this grammatically correct (or has the rule changed)?'
> (10) *Onko tämä jotain vakiintunutta kielenkäyttöä?* 'Is this some kind of established language use?'

The group members often share their personal encounters with similar language questions and problems in the comments. The tone of participative language policing is predominantly positive. For example, commenters praise posters for sharing their humorous finds and thank other commenters for explaining grammatical problems. Although this type of participation is peripheral, it is still motivated behavior, driven by a desire to listen in or to fulfill a need (see Adjin-Tettey & Garman, 2023). For example, group members may want to stay updated on current language-related discourse or observe policing activities that they would prefer not to participate in or be associated with.

Online shaming groups serve as trusted communities that function as testing grounds for norms (Murumaa-Mengel & Lott, 2023), and participative language policing within the Facebook language discussion groups highlights this aspect. Members value the opinions of their peers and rely on the collective knowledge of the groups when uncertain about standard norms or acceptable language use. Participative language policing is thus used to assess one's own linguistic knowledge, thereby reducing the risk of unintentionally violating language norms or making erroneous corrections. It is also crucial for identity formation when examined as a self-regulatory process (see Hofer et al., 2011). Group members self-surveil their own competence of Standard Finnish norms. This may be motivated by a desire to increase their cultural literacy or to safeguard their reputation and avoid being perceived as belonging to an out-group. This self-monitoring and self-regulatory behavior is a clear example of the internalization of biopower's techniques.

6   Language policing that challenges standard language ideology

Understanding language policing as a practice of power does not mean that it automatically preserves existing power relationship. While much of the online public language policing practiced in the Facebook language discussion groups explicitly or unwittingly promotes already established and usually codified language norms and generates normative ideals about preferred language use, in some cases, group members also challenge standard language ideology and its master narrative of correctness and prestige (Metz, 2018). Language policing of this nature questions the core assumptions of standard language ideology, either by critically examining them, as in reflective language policing, or by offering them alternatives, as in normalizing language policing. This is achieved through outward assertions and more subtle negotiations. Notably, these types of policing were only present in the comments: 129 comments (7%) were categorized as reflective and 135 (8%) as normalizing language policing. Both types resist normation and repressive uses of biopower but also make use of its productive techniques, namely normalization.

6.1 Reflective language policing

In Murumaa-Mengel and Muuli's (2021) shaming types, reflective shaming focuses on mirroring and amplifying the social actions it comments on. Although its approach is somewhat pedagogic, instead of aiming to actively correct or educate, it focuses on and reflects hidden perspectives, problems, and behaviors. Reflective shaming, for example,

explores different ways of reading a text and challenges the assumptions of others. In the data, reflective language policing occurs in situations where group members' understandings of Standard Finnish clash and when the perceived monolithic nature of the standard is questioned.

An implicit form of reflective language policing can be observed when attempts at policing are mirrored by negative other-positioning. As Heuman (2022b) has observed, positioning is a prominent strategy of trivialization in metalinguistic discourses. In the data, this is particularly evident in situations where the policed norm deviations are minor typos. Example 11 is a comment on a post about a missing hyphen, and 12 is a comment on a post about a perceived mix-up between Finnish third-person singular pronouns *hän* 'she/he' (sometimes also corresponding to the unspecified/gender-neutral 'they') and *se* 'it' (the colloquial pronoun used for *hän*). The linguistic counterargument here is that while the policed language does have norm deviations, they are ultimately inconsequential. Moreover, commenters undermined the posters by characterizing them as unreasonable and overzealous. Such negative characterizations can be indirectly linked to the defended object and trivialize it (Heuman, 2022b, p. 56). Subsequently, negative characterizations of language policing and those who engage in it may influence perceptions of Standard Finnish, leading to its devaluation. Although the commenters reify standard language ideology to some extent (norm deviations are bothersome), the negotiation of the severity and necessity of language policing implicitly loosens the norm: There are times when the norms of Standard Finnish should be overlooked. This is a critique of the disciplinary techniques of biopower – an attempt to renegotiate what kind of language is punishable.

> (11) *Häiritseväthän nuo [kirjoitusvirheet], mutta jotakin rajaa pitäisi olla.* 'They [grammar mistakes] are really annoying, but there should be some limit [to language policing].'
> (12) *No onpa sulla matala ärsyyntymiskynnys kun noin pienestä nokkiisi otat* 'It doesn't take much to trigger ya since you're offended by something so small'

Reflective language policing also brings new perspectives to understanding the social meaning of norm deviations. Instead of indexing them as linguistic incompetence, norm deviations are understood to stem from non-linguistic, affordance-based factors. These are tied to the constraints of the writing process, the indexicalities of which differ from those of rule-based deviations (van der Zanden et al., 2019). For instance, norm deviations were perceived more tolerably when they are thought to result from being in a hurry (13) or the limitations of digital devices (14). These affordances act as mitigators of responsibility (Heuman, 2022a, p. 83).

> (13) *Kiireessä sattuu kaikenlaisia kirjoitusvirheitä.* 'All sorts of typos happen when you're in a hurry.'
> (14) *Itselläni tulee paljonkin virheitä kun naputtelen paljon pikkuruudulle!* 'I make a lot of mistakes myself when I do a lot of tapping on a small screen!'

Reflective language policing openly challenges the uniformity of Standard Finnish by acknowledging language as a changing system. For example, the acknowledgement in (15), that previous canonical forms of Standard Finnish would be considered non-standard in the 2020s highlights, that a standard language is a product of its time and context and that it is natural for it to change. This stance is rarely taken in current Finnish metalinguistic discourses, which mostly see change in language, especially in the standard, as decay (Maamies, 2009).

> (15) *Entä sitten Mikael Agricola?[5] – – jos nykyään hänen tekstiään ruvetaan korjaamaan nykyiseksi yleiskieleksi, niin eipä punakynä pitkäksi aikaa riittäisi.* 'What about Mikael

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5. A Finnish bishop from the 1500s, popularly known as the "Father of literary Finnish" for being one of the first to write in and translate to Finnish.

Agricola? – – if they had to correct his work to make it like today's standard Finnish, they would run out of red ink.'

Biopower is inherently tied to resistance, as resistance cannot exist outside of structures of power or normalizing society (Foucault, 1978, pp. 95–96). Thus, there are always aspects of resistance that transcend systems of domination, and resistance is not always in opposition to power, but it is influenced and shaped by the very power structures it opposes (Oksala, 2014, p. 433). The examples of reflective language policing described earlier work to indirectly undermine the normation of biopower, for example by speaking out against the overzealousness of language shaming. These acts may not overtly oppose the status quo, but they do confront it. Reflective language policing challenges assumptions about what is both normal and abnormal language use. This is the first step in normalization and the production of alternative language norms. Moreover, critique of existing linguistic hierarchies aligns with critical language ideology (Metz, 2018, p. 463).

6.2 Normalizing language policing

Resistance to disciplinary power and biopower, to repressive power that suppresses and controls, and to productive power with the capacity to shape desired norms and behaviors, happens through alternative, creative forms of counter-conduct. These include overt or covert refusal to participate in norm-affirming self-regulation practices, negotiating punishments, rearticulating the discourse that defines what is normal/abnormal, and cultivating different values and practices. (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014, pp. 122–123.) While reflective language policing undermined the disciplinary technique of normation by questioning the linguistic status quo and standard language ideology through a more lenient attitude towards (perceived) norm deviations, it struggles to take a fully critical stance.

However, analysis Analysis of the data revealed language policing that approached (perceived) norm deviations from an admiring and deviation-accepting perspective, which I categorized as normalizing language policing. This type of language policing celebrated norm non-conformity instead of repressing or changing it according to the norm. Instead, normalizing language policing aims to expand the spectrum of language use that is considered acceptable. This type of policing defended language use ranging from non-Standard Finnish to forms that stray slightly from the normal curve. For example, examples (16) and (17) show commenters defending the sentence *tuuli puuskuttaa 20 metriä sekunnissa* 'wind blows 20 meters per second'. It came from a headline that was mocked for using the verb *puuskuttaa* 'pant, puff, huff'. The original poster interpreted the verb as 'panting' only and viewed the way it anthropomorphized the wind to be incorrect. Some commenters, however, defend the use of the verb as innovative wordplay. Thus, while the sentence itself form-wise conforms to Standard Finnish norms, it features an unconventional word choice that sparked discussion about its appropriateness.

(16) *Hauska, ihan oiva ja ymmärrettävä ilmaus.* 'Funny, it's quite a clever and understandable expression.'
(17) *Minusta on tavoiteltu hauskaa sanaleikkiä – – ja ihan onnistuttukin.* 'I think they were going for a fun play on words – –, and they succeeded.'

The counterargument here goes against the prevailing view that Standard Finnish is stylistically formal and informative because it is a shared language for communication (Hiidenmaa, 2005). Normalizing language policing seeks to disrupt this view by not only attributing positive qualities to (perceived) norm deviations but also by emphasizing that the text remains comprehensible despite stylistic choices. A common argument in normalizing language policing is that as long as the text is comprehensible, (perceived) norm deviations are inconsequential.

Normalizing language policing also defends (perceived) norm deviations by arguing that these forms are actually common linguistic features that are not codified, but instead widely accepted or established. Example (18) is a response to a post expressing concern about the non-standard use of certain verb rections (government), particularly those with the verb *pystyä* 'be able to'. Verb rections are word clusters in which a verb requires another word to follow it in a certain form. In Standard Finnish, *pystyä* in a verb construction is followed by the third infinitive form of another verb, for example *pystyy tekemään* 'able to do'. In colloquial Finnish, however, it is commonly followed by the first infinitive form instead, for example *pystyy tehdä*. In example (18), the shorter form is described as having become established in colloquial Finnish, implying that it has gained norm-like status. This aligns with destandardization, where linguistic features from non-standard and colloquial varieties "move up" to function in the domain of standard language (Coupland & Kristiansen, 2011, p. 13).

(18) *Avauksessasi olevat muodot ovat tainneet vakiintua puhekieleen. Eipä siinä mitään, eivät haittaa ymmärtämistä.* 'The forms in your original post have probably become established in the vernacular. Well, no matter, there's nothing you can't understand.'

Normalization, a technique of biopower, is used to challenge both codified and established norms by removing taboos regarding language use. Commenters openly question the prescribed conventions, codified or perceived, of Standard Finnish and present an alternative narrative that validates language use that deviates from the standard. By reinterpreting (perceived) norm deviations as acceptable uses of Finnish, the norms are positioned as constraints on good and creative language use. Thus, the (perceived) deviations are presented as normalized and legitimized. As normalization accommodates (perceived) norm deviations and recognizes the complexity of social norms, a greater variety of language variance is included within the spectrum of norms and/or language use. Thus, normalizing language policing avoids reinforcing standard language ideology and instead aligns with more critical language-ideological views (Metz, 2018, p. 463).

7   Conclusions

This article has demonstrated how online public language policing, as an exercise of biopower, is actualized in the mundane online activities of language users. It provides a means for language users to participate in maintaining and reproducing societal order by regulating language use. The framework of biopower offers insight into how norms in a standard language culture are maintained and how alternative normalities are suggested. While the members of the examined Facebook language discussion groups use different techniques to negotiate Standard Finnish norms and what is considered acceptable and normal language, all techniques bring order into language use.

A notable finding was that language policing was mainly motivated by standard language ideology. This was to be expected, as dominant language ideologies shape language use by establishing boundaries on what is appropriate language and limiting the range of accepted language use (Constantin-Dureci, 2022). This was the case with denunciatory, pedagogic, recreational, and participative language policing types: They corrected norm deviations according to the standard variety, did not value non-conformity, and offered validation for staying loyal to the standard. These policing types used normation to reinforce already established language norms, both codified norms and norms concerning what is accepted and expected language use. Conversely, reflective and normalizing language policing utilized normalization by offering alternative normalities by removing biases against (perceived) norm deviations and presenting them as acceptable and legitimate. They held views that did not conform to standard language ideology.

The analysis of language policing by non-traditional actors in non-traditional domains offers valuable insight into the deep-seated nature of Standard Finnish, its norms and power dynamics. When power relationships, which are usually fluid and reversible, become institutionalized and codified, they are harder to challenge or change (Oksala, 2014, p. 434). The status of Standard Finnish has been stabilized through codification as well as political and educational institutions, and it extends from offline to online contexts. This article has shown how perceptions and beliefs about Standard Finnish can take precedence over proficiency in it. When it comes to standard languages, attitudes often hold greater influence than behavior (Cooper, 1990, p. 134). By prescribing to the beliefs about Standard Finnish as the solely acceptable and correct language form, denunciatory, pedagogic, recreational, and participative language policing contribute to maintaining dominant language ideologies. Consequently, any counter-conduct becomes difficult, because it must not only challenge the status of the standard, but also the systems and structures that uphold it. However, just as power always produces resistance, language policing can also be harnessed to critique and undermine Standard Finnish and the beliefs and perceptions about it.

Notably, online public language policing data focused heavily on language in the public sphere. The emphasis is clear, because the public is understood as an influential arena where ideological messages are displayed and put into practice, becoming a de facto policy. The appearance of language – what language is displayed – is an indicator of the legitimacy, status, and priority of that language (form). (Shohamy, 2006, pp. 110–111.) Most of the policed language in the Facebook language discussion groups was Standard Finnish, underscoring the members' keen awareness of its role in the public space and their expectations of its use. Additionally, the policing rarely focused on a single norm deviator, but rather on the deviations. As such, the language policing examined in this article has less to do with civic digilantism (digital vigilantism, see Galleguillos, 2021) that targets individuals who are perceived to have violated social norms and more with community empowerment (see Skoric et al., 2010), which involves citizens monitoring and influencing each other's behavior. This article offers insight into how online public language policing, as a form of micro-level language policy work, maintains formal language policies and reflects societal attitudes toward language.

The framework of biopower highlights the role of surveillance, of self and others, in the regulation of language norms. In the current day and age, when online practices are habitual and effortless, and surveillance and policing of non-normative behavior are recurring social responses, examining language practices and policies in online spaces becomes poignant. Although online behavior may not directly translate to offline behavior, it can have an impact (e.g., Althoff et al., 2017; Bond et al., 2012). For example, while the examined Facebook language discussion groups do not mention the objective of increasing knowledge, their activities have the potential to achieve this through informal interactions and conversations (e.g., Malik & Hader, 2020). The examined Facebook groups serve not only as recreational spaces but also as social spaces for sharing information and opinions, and as communities where interpersonal relationships may influence how members engage with circulated content (Tagg & Seargeant, 2021). The daily influx of pictures and screenshots depicting (perceived) norm deviations posted in the groups demonstrates that the group members already pay attention to abnormal language use. Thus, their awareness of constant comparison, observation, and evaluation of language, along with online metalinguistic discussions, may influence their language attitudes or use. Seemingly mundane, fleeting online interactions have the potential to shape attitudes and behaviors and bring about societal changes (Murumaa-Mengel & Lott, 2023).

These online spaces where language users engage in metalinguistic discussion and language regulation are quite unexplored in Finnish sociolinguistics. This article has offered a brief glimpse into Finnish online public language policing on one specific

platform and in three specific groups. A larger, cross-platform analysis of language policing could show how platform design and the communicative space of different social media sites affect the content and nature of discourse. Key questions for future research may ask how language users consume and share language policing content, to what extent these activities are normalized on other platforms, whether they reproduce social inequalities and power dynamics outside the dichotomy between standard and non-standard language, and how/if online metalinguistic discussions influence offline language use.

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