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Negotiating understandings of language learning with Elli and her parents in their home

Hilkka Koivistoinen, University of Oulu

The relationship between pupils' in-class and out-of-class language-related, often digital, practices is becoming a central concern in current language education when pedagogic designs are considered. The study looks at a 12-year-old Finnish pupil, her parents and the teacher exploring their understandings of language learning during a research interview in a home environment. An ecological approach and nexus analysis are introduced as the theoretical framework for this qualitative study. The study sheds light on how the pupil, her parents and the teacher were engaged in (re)negotiating their understandings of language learning. The analysis focuses on discourses emerging as important while the participants together examined various sites of language learning and use. The encounter with the family opened up a negotiation space to investigate the complexity of language learning, and the legitimacy of everyday language practices as a meaningful resource for formal instruction. The research interview provided a change-generating mediational means for the participants to explore change. The study raises new questions concerning parents' understandings of learning, the home space for language ecology, language education, curriculum reform and teacher education.

Keywords: language ecology, language learning, nexus analysis

1 Introduction

Currently, school-age children whose native language is not English appear to navigate smoothly in virtual environments immersed with the English language (e.g., Kalaja et al., 2011; Kuure, 2011; Lankshear & Knobel, 2012; Koivisto, 2013; Prensky, 2001). However, when observed in school situations, however, they rather adapt to the role and practices of the 'traditional' language learner in the classroom (e.g., Aro, 2009; Kalaja et al., 2011; Koivisto, 2013). In a 'traditional' stance in the teaching-learning situation, it is the teacher who sets the 'learnables' (Majlesi & Broth, 2012), which the pupils are expected to learn. This may be understandable with respect to the prevalent culture of language learning and teaching in Finland: The curriculum, textbooks, and teachers' design of language learning environments, pedagogy and tools used, as well as teaching and evaluation methods seem to focus on literacy practices as they do in the school

Corresponding author's email: hilukoivistoinen@gmail.com
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overall (Jenkins, 2010; Tarnanen et al., 2010; Leppänen et al., 2011; Dufva et al., 2011; Dufva, 2013). Out-of-school language learning practices which require social activity appear to be a devalued part of language learning (Nikula & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2008). Furthermore, as Aro (2012) concludes in her study on children's beliefs about English language learning, the pupils' answers often echo or even repeat the voices of authority (e.g., home and school). She suggests that there are powerful and authoritative viewpoints in learner beliefs appropriated early on that may influence what children perceive as important in learning and using English (ibid.).

For language teachers, it is important to develop an understanding of what their learners' everyday life beyond the classroom entails in terms of language and language learning and how this knowledge could be a resource in language teaching (e.g., Benson, 2011). Language learning is thus seen from a wider perspective. Instead of seeing the 'in-class' and 'out-of-class' sites as separate entities, language learning is understood as a part of life, i.e., everyday practices in real-world situations as maintained in ecological conceptions of learning (Kramsch, 2002; Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008; van Lier 2000, 2004).

In this study, the author of this article – in the dual role of an English teacher and researcher – arranged a visit to the home of one of her pupils, a twelve-year-old sixth-grader, Elli, a Finnish school-girl, meeting also her parents. The author had been Elli's English teacher ever since she had started studying the language in primary school in the second grade at the age of eight. The teacher's research interest arose from her initial observations of Elli's activity during an international, web-based language project she was participating in with her classmates. Elli had seemed to be reluctant to engage in the project. The classmates had been eager to participate, but it had taken several attempts from the teacher to persuade Elli to see what the project activities were about. To better understand her resistance, the teacher arranged a visit to her home to more closely explore the nature of Elli's language and language learning practices also in her free time and home environment, not only in the classroom[1].

The school project that Elli had taken part in had been designed to promote the school-pupils' agency in language learning (Ahern, 2011; van Lier, 2000, 2004). The pupils' own interests and viewpoints were taken into account and the participants were given freedom to take the joint project in the direction they wished, within certain limits. At the beginning of the project, for example, the pupils were encouraged to innovate themes and topics for the project by linking websites and uploading photos related to their own interests in the project environment. Thus, the course emerged as a joint effort made by the participants. Based on the researcher's observations of Elli's participation in the video recorded data from the language project, it appeared that for Elli this kind of approach involved issues and questions that the teacher needed to attend to. Elli seemed to be hesitant about her abilities to participate in online situations. For example, she wanted for more specific direction from the teacher about what and how to communicate and how to cope in an authentic situation in English (see Koivistoinen, 2008).

This study draws on nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). The research began with the teacher's visit to the home of her pupil with the aim to learn more about the sites and practices of language learning taking place in Elli's free time and how her parents saw her language learning practices. After the visit, video recorded data from the research interview and Elli's tour 'showing and telling' the camera how foreign languages are present in her private space were examined

for foregrounded discourses; i.e., what had emerged as important while the participants had elaborated their standpoints during the research interview. The notions of 'the historical body' and 'interaction order' were used as lenses to understand the discourses in place, i.e., negotiation for meanings and foregrounded themes during the visit (Scollon, 2001; Scollon & Scollon, 2004). The encounter between the research participants thus triggered the emergence of new discourses, i.e., fostered the research participants' understandings of language learning in the light of ecological perspectives.

In the following, the framework for the study, the methodological choices and the analysis will be introduced. Finally, the findings and conclusions will be presented as well as implications for further research.

2 Everyday life learning opportunities

The socio-cultural and ecological perspectives of learning (Kramsch, 2002; van Lier, 2004) focus on the learner's emerging learner-identity production, and the learning environment as semiosis, i.e., a meaning making process (Kress, 2010), with various affordances for language learning (Norris, 2008, 2011). When anything 'new' appears in everyday life and work, it requires (re)negotiation of meanings and elaboration of understandings in many respects. Teaching and learning take place constantly in our interactions with others, i.e., through everyday life learning opportunities (cf. Wertsch, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978). Social action and various sites of engagement develop the ecology for learning (cf. Scollon, 2002; Scollon & Scollon, 2004; van Lier, 2004; Kramsch, 2000, 2009; Dufva, 2013).

As Benson (2008) points out, many researchers have investigated autonomy, i.e., the learners' control over learning in various situations concerning the organization of learning from institutional perspectives (e.g., Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008; Lamb & Reinders, 2008; Little, 2007; Murray, Gao & Lamb, 2011; Paiva & Braga, 2008; Palfreyman, 2011; Benson & Nunan, 2005; see also Huang, 2013). He suggests, however, that research attention should be paid also to non-institutional settings in the context of an individual's life. He proposes an 'insider perspective'; a close examination of what learners and teachers have to say about the educational processes they are engaged in (Benson, 2008, p. 30). Palfreyman (2011, p. 24) points out that parents have a crucial role in setting the tone inside the learning community of the family. The affordances of the family environment, and the learning community it entails, may either facilitate or inhibit social expectations and the roles assigned for the language learner (Palfreyman, 2011). For example, attention has been paid to beliefs concerning second language learning. It seems that children's viewpoints that have been appropriated early may influence what they perceive as important in using and learning English (e.g., Aro, 2009, 2010, 2012; Kalaja et al., 2011; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2012). This has consequences for how they view learning opportunities within and outside the classroom (ibid.). This study wishes to come closer to such perspectives by entering the learner's private domain at home including family members. It explores one pupil case, Elli, in her home environment and her parents' role in providing support for her language learning.

When an innovative perspective for language learning is being appropriated, there are a number of aspects that intertwine in the process of change. Instead of explaining change as in terms of straightforward cause-and effect relationships or

comparisons, complex systems theory, for example, considers important the interconnectedness and dynamism of elements and agents as a web-like model (Larsen-Freeman, 2013; see also Honan, 2004). Kajamaa, Kerosuo and Engeström (2010) characterize change as complex, multidimensional and comprehensive, as well as being intertwined with its history and environment. Moreover, the contexts in which change occurs are often themselves changing (ibid.). Change is locally produced, consisting of small steps and alterations (Orlikowski, 1996, cited by Kajamaa et al., 2010). This paper uses nexus analysis as a research strategy, examining how change is triggered and emerges during the (re)negotiation of multiple sites of language learning (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). Nexus analysis accounts for social actors' experiences and accustomed practices, societal aspects, the mediational means and the environment.

3 Navigating change through nexus analysis

The starting point for this study was an international web-supported English language learning project that university language students designed and put into practice with 120 participants who came from three Finnish and two Spanish primary schools. The teacher's group of fifth-graders took part in the project as well. During this project the researcher, as the teacher of the group, observed how her participating fifth-graders seemed to be acting in ways that deserved further examination. The first pupil was characterized as 'successful', judged on the basis of his active participation and interactional skills during the project (Koivistoinen, 2015). The second was 'suspicious and reserved'[2] towards unfamiliar situations the project activities might be about (Koivistoinen, Kuure & Tapio, in progress). The third was, Elli, the subject under scrutiny in this study. The web-supported project had brought to the foreground her reluctant and hesitant participation in project activities and collaboration online in a foreign language. Based on the observations of Elli's practices in these environments, the teacher made the decision to ask her and her parents for the opportunity to visit their home for data collection to gain a wider perspective on Elli's foreign-language-related practices in her free time.

The informality of the coming visit on an ordinary weekday evening and the issues concerning anonymity and safety were thoroughly discussed and confirmed with the participants. To ensure a natural atmosphere for the interview in their home, the family decided that the parents and Elli would be present during the teacher's visit with a video camera. The ethical issues concerning storing and handling the video recorded data were agreed upon with the family. In this way, the teacher was able to step into Elli's home without putting pressure on the family, and able to take an interest in any issues that the family members would bring up in the occasion.

The study draws on a nexus analysis as a research strategy (Scollon, 2001; Scollon & Scollon, 2004). It proceeds through the cycles of engaging, navigating and changing (ibid.) in trial to find 'the rich points' (Agar, 1995), to get into the others' cultural and social world. The central aim of a nexus analysis is to understand 'what is going on' in the nexus of practice under study (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). Engaging refers to the entry phase of the researcher making preliminary inquiries and delineating his/her focus (Scollon & Scollon, 2004; see also Hult, 2015, pp. 220–221). Then the researcher navigates the nexus collecting and analysing data and in contributing to the nexus of practice s/he is also

involved in its change (ibid.). Nexus analysis is based on a mediated view of social action, which is approached as an intersection of interaction order, historical body and discourses in place (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, 2004). Interaction order refers to the relationships between the participants – in this study the child, her parents and the teacher. The historical body refers to the participants' experiences, beliefs and understandings that come to play in the situation. Discourses in place entail the semiotic cycles evoked at the moment under scrutiny (ibid., see also Blommaert & Huang, 2009).

In this nexus analytic research process, the first step of 'engaging' was taken when the teacher decided to go to the pupil's home and established the relationship with Elli's parents on the phone introducing her research interest. The teacher elaborated broad interview themes to cover her research interest concerning the English-language-related practices in the family's everyday life. Video recording helped in making observations beside the field notes. Fruitful ground for the interview was prepared by having coffee around a table and talking freely before the video camera was switched on. The mother tongue of the participants, Finnish, was used during the visit. The body of data thus includes a research interview, which was conducted as a casual discussion between the teacher, Elli and her parents (video-recording of 40 min 18 sec), and also a 'guided tour' by Elli shooting the video herself, introducing her own space in the home. Currently, there is a growing literature on ethnographic and linguistic landscape studies that use walking tours and videography to enhance interaction and awareness-raising for place-making (cf. e.g., Pink, 2007; Lee & Ingold, 2006; Szabó, 2015). During this short tour (1 min 15 sec), Elli illustrated her foreign-language-related practices in her own environment talking to the portable camera while recording.

4 Exploring the complexity of change

In the following, the analysis and the main findings of the study will be introduced. During the visit to Elli's home, the participants (Elli, her parents and the teacher) discussed their experiences, understandings and beliefs concerning language learning and use with Elli's language learning as a starting point. This encounter thus opened the nexus of practice and allowed discourses to meet and new ones to emerge (see Scollon & Scollon, 2004). The study examines how the participants weighed their understandings concerning languages and language learning in the course of the discussion. Change is seen as (re)negotiation evoked during the research interview. The circulating discourses are examined in more detail, i.e. how family members' social action and the various affordances of the home environment develop the ecology for language learning in Elli's home.

4.1 The parents discussing language learning

The research discussion was established by the teacher asking open questions which invited the participants to ponder their various foreign-language-related practices in their everyday situations at work and in their leisure time. The discussion stemmed from the question 'How do you parents relate to foreign languages?' (Fi., 'miten te vanhemmat suhtaudutte vieraisiin kieliin') engaging

them to recall their language learner histories as well as their foreign-language-related experiences in their professional life and in raising Elli.

The parents brought forth views concerning the value of foreign languages in their child's future whatever her career would be. When circulating ideas around 'having an exchange student at home sometime [...] to learn to speak English yourself' (Fi., 'joskus vois ajatella näitä vaihto-oppilaita […] jos opitaan sitte itekkii puhumaan') they portrayed languages as a natural part of life. As for their historical bodies as language learners and users, their backgrounds in foreign languages appeared to be different. While the mother had studied a range of foreign languages in her youth at school, the father had only studied some months of English. On the one hand, the parents' use of English was related to family contacts, e.g., meeting with family members from abroad during holidays. On the other hand, English was present in their upbringing of Elli in school-related activities, such as helping with vocabulary training for exams. The parents seemed to do this through practices they knew from their own language learning past. Excerpt 1 illustrates how the parents pondered their own school days, weighing language teaching in the past and today (see example 1).

(1) Mother pondering language learning now and in the past

01 Mother: miten se muuten nykyaikana painottuu,
where is the focus these days, by the way
02 ku ennen vanhaan ainaki meillä tähdennettiin sitä,
'cos in the old days at least for us they emphasized
03 että kielioppi on A ja O,
that it's grammar that is essential,
04 puhekieltä, ja
spoken language, and
05 puhuttu ei sillon mittään
there was no talking at all in those times

The opening by the mother offered the teacher an opportunity to bring up her conceptions of language learning in contrast to the language classes in the mother's past. The example illustrates how the parents' expectations concerning language learning and teaching seemed to align with the view emphasising grammar when developing language proficiency (see lines 02–03). However, the parents' working-life experience involved another kind of understanding of language use as well. The parents discussed the needs of their present day working life requiring oral fluency, 'spoken language' (Fi., 'puhekieltä'), explaining their everyday working life situations, and as if looking back to their school time in the past (line 04) while leaning on their present experiences. According to them, language teaching was not organized to meet these requirements as 'there was no talking at all in those times' (Fi., 'puhuttu ei sillon mittään', line 05). In this way, reflecting on old and new practices ('where is the focus these days, by the way' Fi., 'miten se muuten nykyaikana painottuu' line 01) and in comparing school and working life the parents and the teacher were together negotiating emphases in learning languages. Navigating the old and new directed the parents' attention later to continue the topic with Elli and the teacher negotiating the meaning of various language related practices for learning further (see also sections 4.2 and 4.3).

4.2 Negotiating understandings of language learning

During the visit, the teacher invited Elli to elaborate her personal history as a language user by asking her where and how she had encountered and coped with situations which required English language skills. Elli seemed to portray herself as having been puzzled in authentic communication situations for diverse reasons (see excerpts 2 and 3).

(2) Elli balancing between the old and the new

01 Elli: no en minä oikeen tiijä […]
well, I don't know really […]
02 se oli välillä ihan mukavaa, varmaan se kun
it was quite fun at times, perhaps when
03 keskusteltiin niitten ulkomaalaisten kanssa
we were chatting with those foreigners
04 mut välillä se oli sitte tylsää […] no ne klubijutut
but at times it was boring again […] well the club stuff
05 ja sitte ku piti jotaki yrittää kirjottaa sinne
and when you had to try and write something there
06 ei tienny, mitä pitäs kirjottaa sinne
you didn't know what you should write there

Example 2 traces back to the virtual school project and Elli's controversial experiences that had been 'quite fun at times' (Fi., 'välillä ihan mukavaa', line 02), but 'at times [..] boring again' (Fi., 'välillä se oli sitte tylsää', line 04). Although Elli had enjoyed the activities to some extent 'chatting with those foreigners' (Fi., 'keskusteltiin niitten ulkomaalaisten kanssa', lines 02–03), she had wished for more explicit guidance in what to do, e.g., when trying to 'write something there' (Fi., 'ja sitte ku piti yrittää kirjottaa jotakii sinne', lines 05–06), relying more on the non-agentive pupil position than her own agency as a language learner and user.

Example 3 displays how Elli described her English language use in out-of-school situations.

(3) Authentic opportunities for Elli to use English

01 Elli: kyllä minä viime kesänä puhhuin me oltiin mummolassa
yes, I spoke [English] last summer, we were at Grannie's
02 oli kait ne jonku kaks viikkoo en minä tiijä
I suppose they stayed for about two weeks, I don't know
03 kait minä jotakin yritin söpertää, ei siitä välttämättä
I was just trying to babble something, you didn't necessarily
04 tajunnu aina ku se puhu niin noppeesti […]
always understand 'cos he spoke so fast
05 no, siinä oli mun serkku niin se osas englantia niin siltä […]
well, my cousin was there who knew English so
06 ymm, noo, kait se ihan välttävä oli
uhum, well, I suppose it was quite okay

At times, Elli seemed to portray her identity as an insecure, non-agentive language user describing herself as 'trying to babble something' (Fi. 'kait minä jotaki yritin sopertaa', line 03). At times, however, she described herself as more

successful in her interactions in her free time. For example, she admitted that communicating with her English-speaking relative during the holiday had been tolerable ('uhm, well, I suppose it was quite okay,' Fi., 'ymm, noo, kait se ihan välttävä oli,' line 06).

In the course of the discussion, Elli's parents pondered their language-related experiences and memories. They also contemplated current language practices reflecting on the needs for developing language teaching. Their language learning view appeared to derive from their historical bodies (see e.g., example 1) arising from the language teaching traditions of the past, viewing learning primarily as a cognitive, individual phenomenon. The parenting perspective arose to the foreground in the discussion as the mother and father discussed the ways they supported Elli in her language learning (see example 4).

(4) Rewarding Elli

01 Father: eikö kuitenkii piä paikkasa se, että tänä vuonna oot eniten
isn't it true that this year you have put the most
02 panostanu siihen englantiin, enemmän mitä muina vuosina
effort into English, more than previous years
03 Mother: eikö se näy ainahi numeroista, eiks se näy
doesn't it show in grades at least, doesn't it show
04 että oisko se vähä kannustanu ku lukkee vähä enemmän
so wouldn't it have encouraged you a bit when you read some more
05 ku kokkeista saa paremman
when you get a better test grade
06 Elli: no, ehkä se sitten
well, maybe it is so
07 Mother: no niin
there you see
08 Elli: ei pelkät arvosanat
no, just the grades
09 Mother: onkos vähä maksettu
haven't we paid you a bit
10 Elli: nii, jos saa kympin nii saa viisi euroo, siitäki myös
yes, if you get a 10 you get five euros, for that, too
11 Father: vähä lahjottuki
some bribery
12 Mother: väärin tietenkin
wrong of course

Example 4 shows how the parents collaboratively gave positive feedback on Elli's success referring to their attempts to motivate the child to achieve good grades through rewards. During the discussion, they challenged Elli to accept this practice as having been beneficial for her language learning as depicted in lines 01–05, which Elli tried to resist first ('not just the grades', Fi., 'ei pelkät arvosanat', line 08). The parents portray their role in Elli's learning as giving credit for success (Mother: 'haven't we paid you a bit', Fi., 'onkos vähä maksettu', line 09, and Father: 'some kind of bribery' (Fi., 'vähä lahjottuki'). However, the mother's follow-up to the father's comment suggests how the value of such practices might be negotiable as illustrated on line 12 ('wrong of course', Fi., 'väärin tietenkin'). The mother's comment invited the teacher to take a stance on the appropriateness of what the father had called 'bribery', showing how the teacher was potentially perceived as representing school authority (cf. excerpt 4, line 12). The parents

seemed to assume a school perspective as well when requiring acceptance from the teacher for their 'bribery' from the school authority side. The examples illustrate how Elli and her parents were negotiating their fluctuating understandings of Elli's upbringing as a language learner in the site of the home.

4.3 Elli exploring her language learning

During the visit, the teacher invited Elli to describe foreign language related practices, and the objects and tools prevalent in her free time. Elli was encouraged to realize the multiple affordances for language learning available in her everyday environment, and the teacher asked her the question, 'how is the English language present in your everyday environment' (Fi., 'mitä eri tavoin esillä olevaa englantia löydät ympäriltäsi'). The teacher's aim was to understand her pupil's language related practices and to help her to see their value in learning. She supported Elli in a concrete manner, for example using the video camera's zoom option to help Elli focus her attention on foreign languages, especially English, abundant in her everyday environment as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Elli tracing English on her hoodie.

The teacher asked Elli to tell her about 'any traces of languages around' (Fi., 'onko mittään kieliä näkyvillä') and after browsing around at the coffee table for a while, Elli responded 'no, nothing at all, really' (Fi., 'ei, eipä oikeestaan mittään') turning her head from side to side. The teacher tried to simplify and lighten her request using a humorous opening 'hands up, you are under arrest' (Fi., 'kädet ylös, olette pidätetty,' frame 1 in Figure 1) and Elli raised her hands. Zooming in on Elli's hooded jacket the teacher engaged her as if to look through the camera lens and direct her attention to the text on her hoodie ('guess where I'm zooming' Fi., 'arvaapa minne zoomaan'). Elli looked down at the English text (Figure 1, frame 2), touched it with her left hand and said laughing, 'aha I see' (Fi., 'ahaa, no joo' Figure 1, frame 3).

Example 5 shows how the teacher tried to get Elli to ponder the meaning of her personal language-related practices and sites for language learning. The excerpt also illustrates how all the participants in the interview situation were involved in negotiating the issues in question.

(5) Languages in Elli's free time

01 Teacher: katot sä TV:tä
do you watch TV
02 Elli: katon
yes I do
03 Teacher: tuleeks siellä, katot sä vain suomenkielisiä ohjelmia
is there, do you only watch Finnish-language programmes
04 Elli: no kyllä mä katon ulkomaankielisiä
well, I do watch foreign-language ones
05 Father and mother: (laughter)
06 Elli: mitä te nauratte
what are you laughing at
07 Father: ei, ihan hyvä juttu
no, that's great [..]
08 Teacher: onks sulla oma televisio huoneessa
do you have a TV set of your own in your room
09 Elli: no, tuolla ylhäällä
well, there upstairs [..]
10 Teacher: kuunteletko sä paljo musiikkia
do you listen to music a lot
11 Elli: njaa, aika paljo, radiota
well, quite a lot, to the radio
12 Father: mitä sä tarkotat, miten sä Elli, englanninkielisiä sanoja, kuunteletko [..]
what do you mean, how do you Elli, English words, do you listen
13 Elli: no, jos minä katon sitä telkkaria, niin kyllä minä sillon kuuntelen
well, if I watch TV, I do listen then
14 Father: ymm, ja sinä pääset ymmärrykseen siitä
uhum, and you get the understanding of that
15 Elli: ymm, paitsi en minä tietenkään kaikkee
uhum, but of course not of everything
16 Father: ei kaikkee, jooh, helepommista
not everything, yeah, the easiest parts
17 Mother: ehkä niissä lauluissa tulle se kieli
maybe it is the songs where you get the language
18 Father: entä lauluissa, ymmärrätkö, ymmärrätkö sinä niistä
and the songs, do you, do you understand them
19 Elli: ymmärrän, aika pitkälti
yes I do, quite a bit

The excerpt illustrates how Elli's narration engaged the parents in meaning negotiation concerning her free time activities. As the example shows, Elli started describing her free time practices with some confidence as she answered the questions during the discussion. For example, she replied to her father about understanding the message in English songs (line 19) by saying, 'yes I do, quite a bit' (Fi., ymmärrän, aika pitkälti). The teacher supported her narrative asking questions such as 'do you listen to music a lot' (Fi. kuunteletko sä paljo musiikkia, line 10), trying to 'dig out' more detailed information on her language environment. Elli's accounts caught the parents' attention inviting them to negotiate the meaning of her free time practices, e.g., 'listening to music' or 'watching and listening to TV programmes' for her language learning.

Looking at how Elli reported her practices, she did not seem to minimize her expressions in any particular way as for the value of her ways of learning. She also defended her viewpoints (line 06) by asking, 'what are you laughing at' (Fi.,

'mitä te nauratte') when the parents laughed at the mention of watching foreign programs. Laughter may be interpreted in many ways, but on the basis of the data it seemed here to be related to the parents' uncertainty about the expectations of the school (see Soilevuo Grønnerød, 2004), e.g., whether watching early evening soap operas is acceptable or what is considered beneficial for language learning. The dialogue also shows how the teacher acted as a facilitator for Elli to list her language practices in such detail. In fact, the teacher's questions, 'do you only watch Finnish-language programmes' (line 03) or, 'do you listen to music a lot' (Fi., 'kuunteletko sä paljo musiikkia' line 10) could be seen as positioning the media and related language practices as legitimate, encouraging the parents to turn their attention to Elli's free time practices and engage in joint discussion taking a positive stance. The mother then joined in pondering ways for learning languages, as in, 'well, maybe it is the songs where you get the language' (Fi. 'ehkä niissä lauluissa tullee se kieli' line 17), which the father continued elaborating through a question to Elli, 'what do you mean, how do you Elli, English words, do you listen' (Fi. 'mitä sä tarkotat, miten sä Elli, englanninkielisiä sanoja, kuunteletko' line 12). In this way, the parents were directing attention to the teacher's motivation to pay a visit to their home, i.e. to understand what was going on in Elli's home around learning languages (see lines 14-19).

During the visit, the teacher asked Elli to 'go, show and tell the camera about foreign languages you have in your own room, any possibilities to use or options to spot foreign languages there' (Fi., 'menehän ja kerro ja näytä kameralle, mitä ja miten vieraita kieliä huoneessasi on, mitä mahdollisuuksia käyttää tai spottailla vieraita kieliä'), and record her account on video. On her tour with the video camera, away from her parents, presenting her own territory, Elli reported with some confidence, 'here for you, some English' (Fi., 'siinäpä teille englantia). Nevertheless, Elli's wordings on the video suggest, that despite the presence of others she was summarizing her perceptions to the imagined audience of the research interview, her parents and the teacher. Figure 2 illustrates some targets that Elli's tour depicted with the video camera.

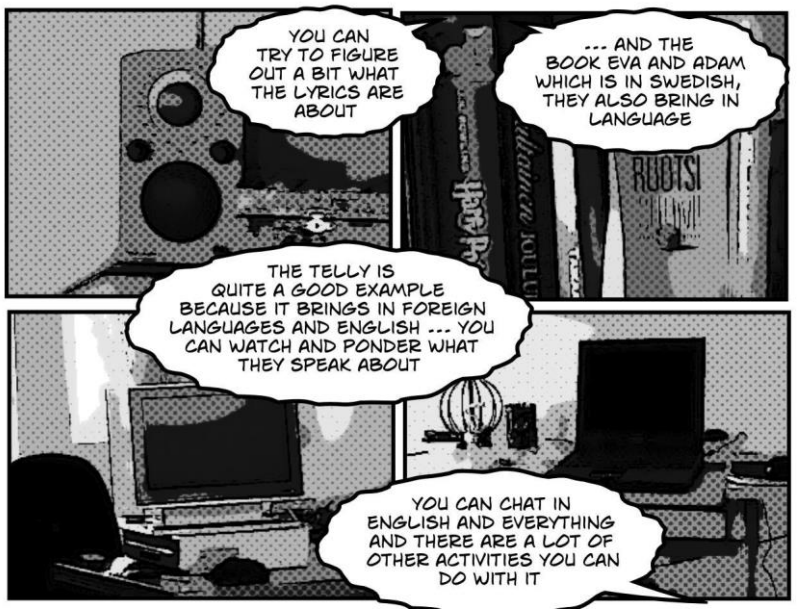

Figure 2. Elli's tour with the video camera.

Elli explained to the camera how she saw the importance of the mediational means for her language learning. In the course of her 'show and tell tour' with the video camera, Elli opened up a view into the mediational means (Figure 2, frames 1–3) in her room and explained in her video recording how the various tools and objects in her room bring in foreign languages. Elli started by filming the radio, explaining how the pop music it brings in had inspired her to figure out what the lyrics were about (Figure 2, see the speech bubble in frame 2). Saying, 'you can learn a bit that way too' (Fi., 'noistakii voi vähä oppia') she was zooming in on the next objects on the bookshelf (Figure 2, see the speech bubble in frame 2). Elli told the camera that the Swedish-Finnish-Swedish paperback dictionary and the Swedish 'teenager' novel from her relatives embodied one more language in her room. Elli presented the Internet-connected computer 'telly' (Figure 2, the speech bubble in the middle of the frames) as 'a good source for English' (Fi., 'aika hyvin sitä englantia') also affording other languages. It enabled simultaneous, multimodal practices as Elli explained on the video recording about 'watching' (Fi., 'kattelen'), 'listening' (Fi., 'kuuntelen') and 'pondering what they speak about' (Fi., 'arvailen mistä ne puhhuu'). Elli does not seem to separate listening and watching – as is often done in school activities. Elli recalled 'chatting and stuff like that' (Fi., 'chättäiltiin ja kaikkee semmosta') during the virtual language project she had participated in, then zooming in on the laptop on the desk (Figure 2, the speech bubble in frame 4) and reporting that there were 'a lot of activities to be done in English' with the laptop (Fi., 'siinä on aika paljo sitä mitä voi tehä enkuks') like 'chatting and the clubs during the virtual language project' (Fi., 'niinku ne chättäilyt ja kerhojutut siinä kieliprojektissa'). After Elli had finished her tour upstairs, the same theme about the multimodal means that the parents had brought into their home was continued in the discussion at the table as Elli returned to the 'interview' room. Elli's accounts about what she had been shooting in the video during her tour drew her parents' attention for a while inviting them to ponder aloud whether language learning happened by 'spotting' the language in English TV series or by 'passively' listening to music. They also asked Elli to confirm if she really understood what was said in the songs (see e.g., example 5, line 18).

All in all, Elli's tour with the camera round her private space seemed to involve meaningful place-making for her language learning practices (see Pink, 2007; Lee & Ingold, 2006; Szabó, 2015). She brought to the fore a choice of means (e.g., the media and the Internet), tools (e.g., a computer and a dictionary) and English language related practices (e.g., activities on the computer, watching TV series) in her everyday environment. By introducing her spaces for learning languages, also other than English, during her 'tour', Elli opened a view to her personal meaning making process of learning languages and engaged the other participants in renegotiating their understandings of her process.

5 Discussion and conclusion

This study was conducted by means of a nexus analysis which as a methodological tool made visible the complexity of change. The notions of an ecological approach to language learning were utilized in the theoretical framework. The focus was on discourses emerging as important during the teacher's visit to the home of her pupil, the 12-year-old Elli, and her parents. During the visit, the affordances of everyday life for English language learning were discussed. Elli, her parents and

the teacher/researcher engaged in (re)negotiating together their understandings of language learning.

The analysis depicts how the parents' expectations concerning language learning and teaching seemed to draw from their historical bodies and to align with the traditional view of 'knowing grammar and vocabulary' as the focal points for developing language proficiency in their upbringing of Elli. However, the parents' working-life experience involved another kind of understanding of language use as well. According to the parents, during their school years, language teaching had not been organized to meet these requirements. Stemming from their experiences, the parents, and also Elli, seemed to be interested in explaining their understandings and to negotiate the meaning of everyday life related practices as a resource for language learning.

The analysis highlighted how the teacher as a researcher invited Elli to notice and examine her language practices in her free time and to help her to see their value in learning languages also at school. The teacher discussed the presence of the media in Elli's life, and as 'a professional from school' showed support to the parents' understandings of language learning. Using the video camera as a tool for 'opening her eyes', the teacher seemed to support her awareness about what she found meaningful for her language learning. This kind of support from the language teacher to Elli could be seen as giving Elli a 'voice', legitimating the informal sites of her language learning (cf. Aro, 2009, 2012). As the examples show, the 'show and tell' tour (Figure 2) and the 'teacher zooming in on Elli's hoodie' episode (Figure 1) seemed to be a fruitful fieldwork method and an educational tool at the same time. The video recording of the moment when Elli and the teacher were discussing the 'English language surrounding us' (e.g., Fig 1; 'arvaapa minne zoomaan') shows how technology mediated interaction can be made use of in educational encounters.

The research interview appeared to provide the participants with potential to explore change. It seemed to offer an opportunity for the participants to elaborate various conceptions of language learning, and to negotiate language learning issues deriving from various standpoints and positions. The encounter as it emerged between Elli, her parents and the teacher for (re)negotiating language learning, thus opened up a kind of negotiation space to investigate the complexity of language learning, and the legitimacy of everyday language practices as a meaningful resource in formal language instruction as well.

The study revealed an abundance of aspects, multidimensional in time and space, about the participants' language-related experiences and practices, mediational means and environment that were perceived as important for language learning. The data revealed conflicting discourses *in situ* concerning language learning (cf. Scollon & Scollon, 2004). The emerging discourses in the space of the home represented either potential growth for empowerment and learner-identity production, or the opposite submission to accustomed practices and thinking. The results point out the need for further research on the multiple sites of language learning and the emergence of the learner's as well as the parents' historical bodies. Language learning is not only accomplished by an individual learner but shaped by a wider network participating in the learner's life. The teacher/researcher's intervention invited Elli and the parents to explore their beliefs, conventions and experiences of language learning. The participatory negotiation of meaning generated potential for changing understandings of legitimate practices and sites for learning. The view opened through the interview deserves further research. The nexus analytic research (cf. Scollon & Scollon, 2004)

conducted in this study seemed to entail a methodological tool which could be used investigate the 'insider perspective' (cf. Benson, 2008; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2012) of the language ecology in the case of Elli (van Lier, 2004; Kramsch, 2000, 2009; Dufva, 2013). The study depicts the multiplicity of various themes and topics emerging in the discussion with the family. As an implication, the study suggests that parents should be involved more in the discussion about the nature of language learning from the ecological perspective. The study also suggests that inviting parents to explore their historical bodies as language users and learners may engage them more intensely in contributing to the language learning and the language education of their children, which apparently relates to the Finnish curriculum reform in schools highlighting the significance of home-school collaboration and developing practices for supporting pupil's learner identity development. The study also raises further questions concerning strategic outlining in language education, as well as in language teacher education. More research is needed to investigate the complexity of language learning, the role of everyday language practices, sites and networks as a legitimate part of language learning and as a resource for formal instruction.

Endnote

[1] See Koivistoinen (2015) and (2012) for analyses of two other visits by the teacher to the homes of Elli's classmates.

[2] These characterizations are not meant to be stable labels for individuals but heuristic terms referring to how the pupils were typically coping with the activities in question.

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