

The Others' English: Othering Through Stereotyping in the Language Introduction Program in Sweden

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Abstract

This paper investigates discourse practices in English-language education within The Language Introduction Program (LIP) in Sweden. The data consist of field notes and transcripts of five meetings with the English Subject Group at LIP (ESGL), a teacher conference for LIP teachers, and a meeting for all teachers and faculty members at a school. The methodology of this study is based on linguistic ethnography, and postcolonial perspectives, in combination with critical discourse analysis, that are used to analyze othering in an educational context. The results show that the discourse practices of the ESGL involve perceptions of lack regarding LIP students' prior knowledge of English, and that these are strengthened and confirmed in meetings for LIP and the school. A strong focus on what LIP students lack academically, on both an individual and group level, was recurrent in discourse. Furthermore, the administration and implementation of the national tests in English at LIP positioned the tests as of less importance and relevance to LIP students. This practice downplays the professional assignment of English teachers at LIP and devalues the subject of English and the teachers' roles. The results show that English as a school subject at LIP is different in many ways compared to upper-secondary school.

Keywords: English as a school subject; newly arrived migrant students; othering; stereotyping; meetings

1. Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, proficiency in English has become important for several reasons. The use of English as an international lingua franca (Jenkins 2018) and medium of instruction in higher education (Kuteeva 2020) positions English as an important language to master. Furthermore, the importance of English in attaining a job and moving forward in life in different ways has been pointed out by the OECD (2015 2020) and the European Commission (2015). In the Swedish context,

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English is one of the compulsory school subjects and proficiency in English is not only regarded as meritorious but considered a necessity for education and the job market (Gheitasi, Lindgren, and Enever 2022). The Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE) describes English as a language that is used in domains such as ‘politics, education, and economics’ and that proficiency in English increases participation ‘in different social and cultural contexts, as well as in international studies and working life’ (SNAE 2022a: 43¹). Table 1 presents the organization of English as a school subject in relation to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels (Council of Europe 2020). Mandatory schooling, i.e., Levels 1–4, are equivalent to CEFR A1.2–B1.1; upper-secondary school levels are B1.2–B2.2. At LIP, Levels 1–4 are organized to mirror the CEFR levels.

Table 1: English-language education in Sweden²

CEFR level	A1.2	A2.1	A2.2	B1.1	B1.2	B2.1	B2.2
Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Compulsory school		Year 6		Year 9			
Upper-secondary school					5	6	7
National tests		x		x	x	x	x

English is therefore considered to be an important component of life in Swedish society. In an international context, Giampapa and Canagarajah (2017) write that English is often regarded as ‘the unquestioned and uncontested global language’ (2017: 1). This can result in linguistic dominance and English having a gatekeeping function in society. Pennycook (2022) argues that the dominant position of English can be traced to colonialism, and lack of proficiency in English can contribute to inequality. Meighan (2023) describes the connections between English and colonialism in an indigenous context (2023: 148–149) and argues that English transmits imperial mindsets and colonialism through the teaching and learning of languages (2023: 149). On that basis, he calls for a more

¹ See also SNAE (2022b).

² This table has been created by the author using material from SNAE (2022b: 6).

critical view on the dominant position of English in relation to local communities and people worldwide.

This article³ investigates English-language education at the Language Introduction Program (LIP) in Sweden. LIP is an individual transition program for newly arrived migrant students (NAMS) in Sweden aged 16–19 (SNAE 2013). The program has two main purposes: first, to increase the proficiency of students in Swedish as a second language (SSL), and second, to ensure a fast transition for NAMS to further studies or the job market (Swedish Education Act SFS: 2010:800, Chapter 17 §3). Although a large focus of the program is on SSL, additional subjects from mandatory schooling are also important components. Several scholars have contributed to knowledge about education at LIP (Aho Bomström 2023; Nilsson Folke 2017; Sharif 2017; Winlund, 2021). In a rural Swedish context, Nuottaniemi (2023) explored students' perspectives on education at LIP, and found that they expressed a feeling of being stuck between places and controlled using language proficiency (2023: 335). Here, LIP was felt to be an educational waiting room that affected the students' mobility.

Bergström, Jonsson, and Norlund Shaswar (2024) show that monolingual language ideologies linked to the national language of Swedish disfavor English as a school subject at LIP. In addition, Bergström (2024a) shows that organizational features and proficiency in English can function as a gatekeeper for future plans for LIP students. As part of a system of governmentality, lack of proficiency in English is a factor in LIP students being steered towards certain school programs in the name of usefulness for their new country. Cunningham (2023) shows the importance of a passing grade in English for LIP students; without this, they face a limited future in Sweden (2023: 176).

This article focuses on the positioning of English as a school subject by exploring the discourse practices (Fairclough 2010) enacted during meetings with the English subject group at LIP (ESGL) at Slope Hill (pseudonym). During ESGL meetings, LIP English teachers plan, evaluate, and develop English-language education. Research regarding English-language education at LIP is scarce, and this article aims to contribute by narrowing this gap.

³ This article is included as a manuscript in the dissertation 'English for Others: power and othering in the language introduction program in Sweden' (Bergström 2025). The article has since been edited.

The monolingual school and English as a school subject

International research regarding migrant education has been conducted by many scholars (e.g., Cummins 2017; Hamilton and Moore 2004; Pinson and Arnot 2020). As a result of migration, educational contexts have become increasingly diverse, and several languages are spoken by students in many classrooms. Quehl (2022) argues that schools often struggle to deal with these linguistically diverse classrooms but need to accept ‘the normalcy of multilingualism’ (2022: 87). When several languages are being spoken, a clash between the national language and the diverse multilingual reality of schools can result in a ‘multilingualism light’ (Quehl 2022: 89). An example of this is the use of students’ diverse linguistic resources in welcome signs, but the rest of the educational context being dominated by the national language (Quehl 2022: 84). Here, students’ multilingualism is only acknowledged in a symbolic way, while the dominant language is regarded as ‘the legitimate language’ (Bourdieu 1977: 648) of the school. In this process, schools remain predominantly monolingual spaces. Gogolin (2013) describes the ‘monolingual habitus’ as situated at the center of school organization and teachers’ professional assignment. This professional ‘habitus’ means that establishing monolingualism in the official national language is an imperative in a teacher’s professional ethos (Gogolin 2013: 42). According to Gogolin, the monolingual habitus has been incorporated into the education system by tradition. Education is a place where ideas of the monolingual national state is upheld. Teachers’ knowledge and attitudes to multilingualism in education have been investigated by Burner and Carlsen (2022), whose study shows that teachers possess knowledge about multilingualism and students’ diverse linguistic repertoires, yet often fail to use this in classroom practice. Students’ previous knowledge of English, for example, is often not used as a learning resource, which Burner and Carlsen describe as a ‘missed opportunity’ (2022: 43), as English is a tool that can be used to increase the chances for LIP students transferring to national programs. In a Swedish context, Hermansson et al. (2021) show that multilingual perspectives are often absent in in teacher education; as a result, teachers may risk not being prepared to teach in diverse contexts. Similarly, Dahl and Krulats (2016) and Surkalovic (2014) conclude that English teachers may lack knowledge and/or in-service training of teaching English in multilingual contexts. These issues may need more attention in teacher education, to prepare future teachers for teaching in

increasingly diverse classrooms. Also in Sweden, Tholin (2014) shows that Swedish is often used as a contrast and a tool when teaching English. This classroom practice favors native-Swedish speakers and causes inequality in education. More recent research (Bergström 2024b; Bergström, Jonsson, and Norlund Shaswar 2025; Zetterberg Pettersson 2023) show that this monolingual teaching practice may still be in use despite increased awareness of translanguaging pedagogies.

Othering in the Context of Education

Othering in the context of education has been investigated by Borrero et al. (2012), who found that young native Hawaiians have long been 'victims of longstanding stereotypes that label them as being lazy, poor, primitive, uneducated, unmotivated, and unresponsive to interventions and programs' (2017: 6). The authors state that othering in the context of education is often overlooked and even ignored (2012: 5). The study shows that students internalize negative stereotypes, and that they do not feel a drive to try since no one expects them to do well in school (Borrero et al. 2012: 19). Stereotyping thus contributes to maintaining the power of the majority population. The emotional burden of stereotyping can be witnessed in increased anger and confrontation on the part of native Hawaiians (2012: 20), and the use of racist stereotyping and lack of resources in education contribute to the othering of native Hawaiians. In another study, Nilsen, Fylkesnes, and Mausethaugen (2017) investigated teachers' perceptions of diversity and the positioning of the Other. The study shows that acts of othering can be regarded 'as manifestations of power relations in which some groups are defined as others, excluded from the large "we" in the larger society. They are not one of us' (2017: 41). In interviews, teachers described students and parents as being different from themselves and characterized by cultural diversity and difference, while the teachers positioned themselves as normative and ordinary (2017: 46). 'The contrast in cultural othering is between the stranger and the native' Nilsen, Fylkesnes, and Mausethaugen (2017: 46) state, and conclude that othering may be 'a manifestation of power relations in which The Other is disempowered through the process of being defined as the other' (2017: 47), rather than being included in the larger society. They also state that teachers' processes of meaning-making and othering can influence future teachers and students (2017: 47). In the light of this previous research, this article aims to investigate how English as a school subject is positioned

through discourses, and to explore how processes of othering are linked to LIP students.

1. Are LIP students othered as English learners, and if so, how is this linked to the discourse practices at LIP?
2. How is English as a school subject positioned through discourses within the organization at LIP?

Against this background, I now turn to the theoretical perspectives of this article.

Theoretical Perspectives

The process of othering has been investigated by several scholars (Ahmed 2012; Bollig 2025; Spivak 2010). In this article, othering is used as an overarching theoretical framework, with an emphasis on the postcolonial terminology of stereotyping used by Bhabha (2004), Morrison (1992), Morrison (2017), and Said (2003). In this section I first present perspectives on othering through stereotyping. The effects of othering on both the Self and the Other are also discussed.

The creation of the Other and the Self

Said (2003) describes the construction of the Other as a way of constructing a Self. The construction of the West and Europe as concepts demands the construction of a non-European identity; the collective identity of 'us', as Europeans, is dependent on a non-European Other, and is grounded in ideas of Western superiority (2003: 7). European identity is therefore closely connected to the creation of the Orient as a place of significant difference from Europe. The creation of the Orient and the Other is linked to a system of power, wherein differences between the Self and the Other are enhanced. However, Morrison (2017) argues that, regardless of their differences, the Self and the Other are connected to each other, and that othering affects not only the Other but the Self. Morrison describes a desire to confirm oneself as normal, and in doing so we contrast ourselves with the Other. In this process, the dehumanization of the Other becomes a necessity, on the basis that '[t]he danger of sympathizing with the stranger is the possibility of becoming the stranger' (2017: 29). Perceptions of lack and imposed difference are created through

continued stereotyping, and this narrow identity prevents the Other from being regarded as a full person (2017: 153). Morrison (2017) writes that:

There are only versions of ourselves, many of which we have not embraced, most of which we wish to protect ourselves from. The stranger is not foreign, she is random; not alien but remembered; and it is the randomness of the encounter with our already known – although unacknowledged – selves that summons a ripple of alarm. (2017: 38)

The act of othering is in a way a rejection of ourselves, and Morrison (2017) argues that this practice erodes the inner morality of the Self. Morrison (1992) claims that it is not enough to focus only on describing the effects of de-humanization, othering, and justification of dominance on the Other, and that we must also analyze what these do to the Self (1992: 11). In the analysis presented in this article, the terminology of stereotyping is used. Therefore, a brief overview of this terminology is presented in the following section.

Stereotyping

Bhabha (2004) describes stereotyping (2004: 94–120) as part of colonial oppression. Stereotyping can be defined as the repeated simplified and prejudice description of The Other by the dominant Self. Bhabha describes the stereotype as ‘the primary point of subjectification in colonial discourse, for both colonizer and colonized’ in terms of differences in ‘race, colour and culture’ (2004: 107). The stereotype is used to express distance between the Self and the Other; the Other is often presented as a narrow persona that lacks true complexity, while the Self is portrayed as superior, and as having agency and complexity (2004: 105). Through continued stereotyping, a distinct difference becomes visible between the Self and the Other; Bhabha argues that this difference is significant in the process of othering through stereotyping. In this article othering and stereotyping offers a theoretical lens to analyze and discuss discourse practices within LIP.

Methodology

The methodology of this study is based on linguistic ethnography (LE) (Copland and Creese 2015; Lillis 2008). The data in this article is part of a larger research project using ethnographic observations and semi-

structured interviews at two schools (Slope Hill and Meadow Hill⁴) over the course of one school year. The study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the creation of the data in multiple ways. For example, the ESGL meetings that are analyzed in this article are normally held in-person, but due to the pandemic regulations some of the meetings were held online.

Ethics

For the larger research project, written consent was obtained from 85 participants: 71 students, 6 English teachers, 7 faculty members⁵, and 1 student teacher. The research was designed to correspond with All European Academics' European Code of Conduct (2017), and The Swedish Research Council's code of ethics (2017: 4), focusing on *Accountability*, *Honesty*, *Reliability*, and *Respect*. The research project was approved by The Swedish Board of Research Ethics⁶.

The teaching of English at Slope Hill

Although LIP is organized within upper-secondary education in Sweden, the course content is the same as that of the mandatory school in Sweden. LIP education can be organized in several different ways, and the school organizer decides which way is used (see also Cunningham 2023 for an overview of additional ways English-language education can be organized at LIP). The organization at Slope Hill centers on groups of subjects, while at Meadow Hill all LIP teachers belong to a program team, regardless of subject. Since there was only one LIP English teacher at Meadow Hill at the time of this study, there were no subject group meetings to attend there. Therefore, this article focuses solely on the ESGL meetings at Slope Hill. English-language education at Slope Hill is organized to mirror the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels (Council of Europe, 2020)⁷. The students take national tests in the same way as students in compulsory schooling⁸. The national tests in

⁴ All names of places and participants are pseudonyms.

⁵ Faculty members refer to additional staff at the school such as special-needs educators, student counsellors, principals, mother-tongue study guides and mentors.

⁶ Application number: 2021-02629.

⁷ SNAE 2022c.

⁸ Years 6 and 9.

English are given in Years 6 and 9⁹ in Swedish compulsory schooling, which at LIP is equivalent to Levels 2 and 4. The tests are an important aspect of ensuring equality in education, and that the education given in a particular school is aligned with levels in Sweden generally.

The ESGL at Slope Hill was presented with several organizational challenges during the study. First, most ESGL teachers belonged to other subject groups in the national programs, where they also taught. Second, the ESGL did not have a lead teacher, and therefore lacked representation within the school organization. Third, the ESGL teachers were spread out across different offices at Slope Hill and therefore had difficulties meeting naturally during the working day. Fourth, there was no time set aside to collaborate regarding national tests or the marking of these. Fifth, there were no regular meetings with management regarding student progress or subject development work.

Participants

The ESGL consisted of four LIP English teachers, whose pseudonyms are Celia, Peter, Sara, and Roland. Their teaching experience varied from being a newly qualified teacher to having taught for approximately ten years. During most meetings the special-needs educator (SPE), Alma, was also present. During one meeting the principal, Vera, attended.

Selection of data set

Table 2 presents the data set for this article, which consisted of a total of seven meetings (five ESGL meetings, one LIP teacher conference, and one staff meeting for all personnel at Slope Hill). Each meeting lasted approximately 60 minutes and was documented using field notes¹⁰. Three meetings were not recorded due to requests by management, and were thus documented only by field notes, which were read and verified by a school representative that was present at the meetings. The recordings of the audio-recorded meetings were transcribed. The data set was selected because the meetings involved the discourse practices of both the ESGL and the rest of the school, facilitating analysis of how speakers drew on existing ideologies and discourses from the social practices of the school organization.

⁹ In Sweden students in Year 6 are 12-13 years old. In Year 9 the students are 15-16 years old.

¹⁰ Total amount of fieldnotes: approximately 5800 words.

Table 2: The Data Set

Field notes number	Recording	Transcription	Field note	Present at meetings
15	x	x	x	ESGL
23			x	All teachers at the LIP program
40			x	All personnel of Slope Hill
46			x	ESGL + principal
49	x	x	x	ESGL + SPE
54	x	x	x	ESGL - SPE
66	x	x	x	ESGL-SPE

Translation and Transcription

The transcriptions were produced to represent the content using textual conventions such as commas. The analysis was conducted in Swedish and thereafter translated to English. All quotes have been translated into English after the original analysis. The aim was to translate the material as closely as possible from the original Swedish. When transcribing the audio-recorded meetings, the following conventions were used:

- Italics have been used for languages other than Swedish
- Square brackets ([]) for editorial explanations
- Square-bracketed ellipses ([...]) for words or phrases that were omitted from the transcription

Data analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), based on Fairclough's (2010, 2015) model, was utilized to achieve a focus on the connections between discourse practices and social practices (Fairclough 2010: 133). In CDA, the focus is on how speakers draw on already-existing discourses, which are embedded in the social practices (2010: 130). Fairclough argues that studying language from a critical point of view can contribute to 'the emancipation of those who are dominated and oppressed in our society' (2015: 229). The challenging and analyzing of discourses is closely linked to critical language awareness, 'and may ultimately transform the dominant orders of discourse, as a part of the struggle of oppressed social groupings against the dominant bloc' (2015: 234). Understanding the use

of discourse practices and social practices in the oppression of various groups is therefore central in CDA, and key to this article.

At the initial stage of the analysis, the transcriptions and field notes from the meetings were repeatedly read. The transcriptions were then analyzed to identify overarching content. Thereafter, codes were generated based on the content of the transcripts. After the coding, the transcripts were analyzed to investigate the discourse practices and social practices at LIP. During this analytical process, several dominant discourses were identified and analyzed. Finally, postcolonial perspectives by Bhabha (2004), Morrison (1992), Morrison (2017), and Said (2003) focusing on othering and stereotyping were included in the analysis.

English for Others

In this section, two of the meetings are presented using short, ethnographic vignettes. The vignettes are based on field notes and were selected to illustrate the context of the ESGL meetings. The first vignette is from a meeting where recording was permitted. The context is portrayed using both vignette and the transcribed extract. The second vignette is from a meeting where recording was not permitted, and in this case the vignette provides more information relating to the context of the meeting. All extracts are quotations from transcription, and the field notes are notes taken by the author during the meetings.

The Other at LIP

In this section, two extracts together with field notes are presented. Following this, an analysis of the extracts and fieldnotes is given. The first vignette is from the only in-person meeting that was conducted during the study. All other meetings were online due to pandemic restrictions.

We have gathered for the first meeting during my field study. The teachers Sara and Roland and I are waiting in a meeting room. A teacher in training is also present. We are making small talk and drinking coffee while waiting for the last remaining teacher, Peter, to arrive. The meeting is being held in the middle of the day, and Peter is late from his class. When he arrives, the meeting begins. Celia, another English teacher at LIP, is absent from the meeting. The initial part of the meeting is about what is currently going on in the

different LIP English-language classrooms. Sara, one of the younger teachers, expresses her frustration about levels and assessment. (Field note 15)

Extract 1 (Field note 15)

Sara: Yes! What I feel is that I want to give them the basics, what they really need. Then I notice that they can't do this. Then we can take it next time.

Peter: Nice! First of all, good job I would like to say. The LIP business is a bit of a shock, I think most people can agree with that. And then to come in at the beginning and try to do a kind of analysis yourself and then try to develop lessons and elements.

Sara: Yes, actually. Difficult.

Peter: It can be tricky for them. It feels like you managed it and that it feels good. I think you should give yourself a pat on the back for that. Good work! It wasn't long ago since I was first inside a LIP 2.

Sara: But thank you! But I come from Eng 7 and to jump down.

In Extract 1, Peter describes LIP English as 'a shock', which is something that teachers eventually become accustomed to. This positions LIP as different from other teaching contexts that the teachers are used to, such as English 7 (national programs: CEFR level B2.2). The relatively low expectations for LIP can be seen when Peter describes the act of simply being present in the classroom as an achievement. When Peter praises Sara for handling the situation well, this strengthens the idea of English at LIP being different. When Sara responds by describing having to 'jump down' from English 7 to English at LIP, this strengthens the discourse of the otherness. This can also be observed in the discourse practice in Extract 2.

Extract 2 (Field note 15)

Peter: From what I know from my experiences, it is so it is a big cultural change from the school that they have attended.

Roland and Sara: hmmm [hum in agreement]

Peter: And in that there can be quite a big cultural clash. When they go from a certain educational culture that is more or less dictatorial or we can say more authoritarian to coming here where it is very like we still try to be a little that they still have a right to decide, so to speak. It is an interplay. Many [LIP students] don't have that feeling at the tip of their fingers and think that they can as students dictate what they should know and do and I know that is typical for a LIP student, as you say they come with 'Look I have that here, look I have done this, I will have grades'.

In Extract 2, Peter positions LIP students as different, linking culture and upbringing to progress in education. Statements such as 'I know that is typical for a LIP student' strengthen perceptions of LIP students as different, as well as stereotyped ideas of who LIP students are. During another meeting (Field note 66), additional examples of the positioning of LIP students as different were observed when the national tests in English at LIP were discussed. In a diverse educational context such as LIP, the national tests are an important assessment tool. However, it is important to point out that, where these tests are used to assess students, they must be used in line with specific rules and regulations. At the meeting, this was pointed out by the special-needs educator, Alma. However, there seemed to be confusion among the LIP English teachers regarding how to use the tests, whether to use the tests, and which students would be allowed to take the tests. During the meeting, the teachers realized that the tests had been missing for several months without them knowing. A great deal of time was dedicated to trying to solve this problem, and during this conversation the organizational structures of the ESL became visible. There were no organizational structures in place to support teachers in the administration and evaluation of the tests. No time was set aside for planning, marking, or joint assessment of the tests, unlike for Swedish as a second language teachers (SSL teachers). In addition, the discourse practice regarding the national English tests for LIP students positioned the tests as not being relevant to and too difficult for LIP students: 'it will be good no matter how we do it. These are not real tests' (Roland, Field note 66). In this educational context, the tests exemplified the difference of LIP and became what Bhabha (2004) describes as 'a substitute and a shadow' (2004: 117) for the national tests the national programs.

Stereotyping Through Perceptions of Lack

In this section, I focus on how the idea of lack on the part of LIP students is connected to discourse practices at LIP. Vignette 2 (below) is from an ESGL meeting (Field note 46) where recording was not possible and therefore extracts from a transcription are missing. The vignette is used to illustrate the context of the meeting. In this meeting one of the principals, Vera, was present. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this meeting was held online. Vera informed me that I could not record this session because she wanted everyone to be able to speak freely; I did not ask what this meant to Vera, but during the meeting Vera spoke more than the teachers.

During this online meeting the teachers express their increased frustration regarding their professional assignment and the organizational conditions they work in. Roland tries to talk about levels and assessment, but Vera does not seem to listen, stating that the levels are only ‘made up levels’, and describes English as a very complex subject at LIP. She wants the teachers to try to look at their professional assignment with ‘LIP-free vision’ and meet regularly with the special-needs educator (also present at this meeting). The teachers express a need for assistants to administrate these meetings, but Vera asks the teachers to take on more responsibility and ‘take the baton’. (Field note 46)

During the meeting, a lack of reciprocal dialog between Vera and the LIP English teachers can be observed. The needs of teachers are positioned as a problem to be solved using a ‘LIP-free vision’, thereby positioning LIP as a problem. Vera also downplays the importance of English-language education at LIP, stating that it is something that is made up and complex. Instead of discussing the professional needs of LIP English teachers, Vera stresses that the teachers need to be more responsible for changing their situation.

The idea of LIP English being almost artificial and detached from national programs was observed during another ESGL meeting (Field note 46). During the meeting, the CEFR levels for English-language education were being discussed, and the special-needs educator, Alma, asked me to show a chart illustrating how the CEFR levels are incorporated into

English-language education in Sweden (SNAE 2022b). When the chart was made visible, the teachers rejected the idea of the CEFR levels being relevant to LIP. Discussions regarding the relevance of the CEFR levels at LIP are recurring during the ESL meetings. During another meeting (Field note 49), Roland states: 'So, if we look at my star students at Level 4, that is, those that the other students [at LIP] would say are A students, they will get a D. So it's not the same span' (Field note 49). Roland thus positions the LIP students as different, and as lacking in relation to the CEFR levels and their correlation to the organization of English-language education in Sweden.

Discourses of othering LIP students and the subject of English can be observed related to the national tests. Yet, there is also resistance to this stereotyped perspective on LIP students and their English-language education. 'The [national test] is nothing that is reported further, the result, but we absolutely benefit from it for the equivalence. I think it is good that it is implemented' (Alma, Field note 54). The special-needs educator provided some resistance in this statement, yet the dominant discourse practice at LIP downplays the importance of the tests to LIP students.

Discourse practices at LIP

In this section, the discourse practices of the ESL are analyzed using the perspective of othering (Bhabha 2004; Morrison 1992; Morrison 2017; Said 2003). In addition, the social practices of the school are connected to the discourse practices observed during the ESL meetings.

In Extracts 1 and 2, presented above, the discourse practices discussed position LIP students as different compared to students in the national programs. In Extract 1, LIP is described as profoundly different, and 'a shock'. In Extract 2, Peter links students' otherness to their cultural belonging, positioning them as different. Said (2003) discusses 'a collective notion identifying "us" Europeans as against "those" non-Europeans' (2003: 7). This is connected to the idea that 'European identity is superior in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures' (Said 2003: 7). In Extracts 1 and 2, LIP students are described as different due to their culture, upbringing, and previous educational background, all of which are very apparent in a Swedish school. The 'interplay' that Peter refers to in relation to students' grades comes across strangely in a Swedish educational context, where teachers and students do not negotiate grades, so it is not relevant whether or not LIP students have the 'feeling

at the tip of their fingers' when it is appropriate or not to negotiate with their teacher. The 'cultural clash' at LIP is said to be caused by the differences between LIP students who are from a culture different from the culture at LIP, and in other words, Sweden. In Extract 2, Peter defines LIP students as a collective 'they' when talking about a 'big cultural change from the school that they have attended', and contrasts LIP students to the students of national programs when he talks about the former 'coming *here*', and refers to them as '*they*' (my emphasis). Morrison (1992) argues that the invented identity of the Other is linked to ideas of natural exclusion of the Other by Europeans (1992: 7). In this discourse practice, the underlying prejudice and stereotyped description of LIP students surface.

Discourses regarding LIP students' school progress are interwoven with comments about their personal morals, instead of their academic achievements. During a meeting with all the LIP teachers (Field note 23), the progress of LIP students in different subjects was discussed. Here, even though the special-needs educator reminded teachers to only discuss academic progress, the teachers continuously focused on students' personal morals. In terms of discourse practices, LIP students were described as 'a very strange group of students' (Field note 23) and 'catastrophically bad' (Field note 23). The social practices at LIP and across the entire group of LIP teachers did not challenge discourses that positioned LIP students as different and lacking skills; instead, it confirmed and reinforced the description of LIP students as problematic. This discourse practice travelled downwards in the organization to the ESGL meetings and permeated the social practice of English as a school subject at LIP. During a faculty meeting (Field note 40) with all personnel at Slope Hill, LIP was neither mentioned as a part of the school organization nor addressed in any way during the meeting. This strengthened the invisibility of LIP and its teachers, positioning LIP as an outsider at the school. The social practice of the larger groups both at LIP and the school (Field notes 23 and 40), together with management's (Vera's) statements (Field note 46), positioned LIP and its students as a complex problem. Cunningham (2023) describes how the professional role of LIP English teachers—teaching English, rather than Swedish—collides with the idea of LIP students learning Swedish throughout the program, and that English as a school subject at LIP is 'outside and parallel' (2023: 175). Vera's positioning of English at LIP as different

from other LIP subjects is in line with this. In its otherness, English at LIP is even more marginalized, and this results in the double marginalization of English as a school subject at LIP.

There was also a heavy focus on what students lacked, academically, as people, and as a group, at meetings. The discourse practice of using stereotyped descriptions of LIP students, such as 'typical for an LIP student', homogenized them and connected them to different types of problem within the organization. This is in line with Bhabha's (2004) argument that '[l]ike the mirror phase "the fullness" of the stereotype [...] is always threatened by "lack"' (2004: 110). Bhabha notes that the interpretation of what is characteristic of the Other is always undertaken from the perspective of the Self. In this way, the Other inhabits many roles in the organization and is 'deemed to be both the cause and effect of the system, imprisoned in the circle of interpretation' (2004: 119). LIP students lacking skills are seen as the cause of the subject of English in LIP not being successful and why teachers face challenges in their teaching, rather than these being organizational challenges that could be solved by management.

Discussion

The results presented above show that English as a school subject at LIP is positioned as a subject of difference and complexity. When Vera describes English-language education as made up and complex, she positions English in the margins of LIP (Field note 46). This is in line with Cunningham's (2023) description of English in LIP as a subject that is 'outside and parallel' to the other subjects at LIP (2023: 175). My results are in line with Cunningham's and show that the positioning of English affects not only the status of English as a school subject at LIP, but also the teaching practices, student progression, and subject development of the ESL. Furthermore, teachers' professional assignment at LIP is often positioned such that it conflicts with the needs of the organization. When teachers speak of their needs, this is met by management with the idea of being less LIP (Field note 46). Incorporated into these discourses are discourses of lack on the part of LIP students, who are often portrayed as lacking knowledge; this is seen as the main problem in LIP, and the reason that English as a school subject at LIP is not successful. This discourse practice, in combination with descriptions of LIP English as complex and difficult, creates a stereotyped version of what English-language education

is. Dahl and Krulatz (2016) argue that English teachers need more in-service training to to teach in multilingual contexts (cf. Surkalovic 2014). I argue that this is particularly true in the LIP context where superdiversity (Vertovec 2007) is the norm rather than the exception. The multilingual reality of society and classrooms (Quehl 2022) challenges the traditional way of teaching English. Therefore, it is not enough merely for future teachers alone to acquire knowledge regarding teaching in multilingual contexts; active teachers also need in-service training.

Further, the results show that the discourse practices enacted at the ESGL meetings stereotype LIP students. Stereotyping is a part of the process of singling a group out and connected to the process of othering (Bhabha 2004). The analysis of the discourse practices at LIP shows that the English teachers not only draw on already-existing discourses regarding LIP as a program but strengthen and confirm them during ESGL meetings. The invisibility and absence of LIP as a program in the larger school context (Field note 40) positions LIP as an outsider and at the margins of the school organization, and contributes to othering LIP students. In this process, a stereotyped LIP student is portrayed: a student that will not succeed in learning English, regardless of resources or equal access to education. Through this discourse practice of stereotyping, poor teaching and a neglect of the professional assignment are justified. This justification is an act of othering (Morrison 1992; Morrison 2017). Using stereotypes to position LIP students risks creating a justification of poor teaching practices in the English-language classroom. An example of this practice at LIP is the misuse of national tests, which affects not only LIP students but LIP teachers. When teachers are led to neglecting their professional ethics and commitment to providing equal education, this devalues their professional assignment. Discourse practices that downplay the importance of national tests (Field note 66) also downplay the value of English-language education at LIP and its teachers.

Conclusion

Schools in Sweden are obligated to provide equitable education for *all* students (Swedish Education Act SFS:2010:800, Chapter 1, §§8–9). This includes LIP students. Proficiency in English is an important skill in Swedish society (Gheitasi, Lindgren, and Enever 2022) and neglecting this reality may lead to LIP students facing limitations in their futures (Cunningham 2023). Proficiency in English is therefore an important part

of equitable education. It is also important to be aware of some of the inequalities that exist in learning English in Sweden today. Tholin (2014) and Zetterberg Petterson (2023) show that students that have Swedish as their native language are privileged when learning English, because of the normative use of Swedish in the English-language classroom. Given these results, I see a need for an increased awareness among teachers and management regarding the process of othering in an educational context. The results also reveal a need for teachers and management to learn about the *effects* of stereotyping and othering, and how to protect minority and migrant students and to ensure their access to equal education (Borrero et al. 2012; Nilsen, Fylkesnes, and Mausethaugen 2017). This article shows that LIP students are positioned in discourse as different and lacking skills, and English-language education at LIP is positioned as complex, artificial, and problematic. However, there are ways of resisting stereotyped perceptions of LIP students and LIP English-language education. By acknowledging that English-language education at LIP may be different but not of less value, teachers and management can create a new space of diversity and resistance. This new English can become what Bhabha (2004) describes as a transformative breathing space (2004: 54–56), a space where LIP English can stand on its own, without being compared to the normative English at upper-secondary school national programs. For this to become a reality, LIP English teachers need in-service training, so that the othering of LIP students is re-thought. As Fairclough (2015) writes, studying language from a critical point of view may contribute to ‘the emancipation of those who are dominated and oppressed in our society’ (2015: 229). It is therefore vital for further research on English-language education at LIP to develop teaching practices and to ensure an equal education for LIP students (Swedish Education Act SFS: 2010:800 Chapter 1, §9).

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Appendix 1 definition of codes

Stage 1: Initial codes

Education, English at LIP as a problem, English at LIP as a resource, Language ideologies, Stereotyping, Othering, Lived reality, Third space, and Collaboration.

Stage 2: Identified discourses

Othering: descriptions regarding something as a program as different or contrasted to the mainstream school students.

The professional assignment of teachers: descriptions and statements regarding the professional assignment of teacher, support, legislation, adjustments in teaching, etc. Also, when teachers describe their everyday work.

Equal education: statements and descriptions about equal education, the right to equal education, students need to support, etc.

Student outflow from LIP: descriptions and statements regarding the outflow/lack of student outflow from LIP and how to increase this outflow.

Organization: descriptions about organization, the challenges and possibilities in organization, how to organize/not organize education, schedules, office placements, meeting structures and responsibilities, etc.

Avoiding responsibility: statement that indicate that teachers and professionals withdraw their responsibility or label it someone else's problem/responsibility.

Perceptions of lack: when students perceived lack of knowledge in English is described by teachers and professionals, the use of perspectives of lack to justify actions/ organizational choices, etc.

Stage 3: Othering and stereotyping

Connecting the discourse practice and production to post-colonial perspectives (such as positing of the LIP program, the students, English at LIP as different, or contrasted to the mainstream school students).