

Hynninen, N., I. Herneaho, E. Sippola, J. Isosävi & M. Yang (toim.) 2023. *Kieli ja osallisuus – Språk och delaktighet – Language and participation. AFinLAn vuosikirja 2023. Suomen soveltavan kielitieteen yhdistyksen julkaisuja n:o 80. Jyväskylä. s. i–xv.*

**Niina Hynninen, Irina Herneaho, Johanna Isosävi & Mei Yang**  
University of Helsinki

## Perspectives on Language and Participation

### Highlights

- The yearbook examines the role of language and language-related decisions in enabling and restricting participation in society.
- The theme of *Language and participation* can be addressed as a research topic and as researchers' engagement in solving social issues.
- A socially engaged applied linguistics recognises the critical role of language in shaping social structures.
- Who and in what ways we as knowledge producers involve in research has implications for participation.

## Abstract

Language plays a key role in enabling and restricting participation in society. Considering the increasing linguistic diversity in education, working life and society at large, it is important to understand what it requires from individuals to participate and for institutions to support participation. The yearbook articles explore the concept of participation in relation to language, social justice, and social inclusion, highlighting how language choices and the use of specific linguistic resources can either support or hinder participation. That learning to master a specific national language would be a prerequisite for participation in society is challenged, and what is emphasised instead is the need for inclusive practices and a broader understanding of linguistic competence that goes beyond monolingual ideologies. In all, the yearbook provides a window to the richness of socially engaged applied linguistics as practiced in Finland and beyond.

**Keywords:** participation, inclusion, social justice, applied linguistics

## Tiivistelmä

Kielellä on suuri merkitys yhteiskunnallisen osallisuuden ja yhteiskuntaan osallistumisen mahdollistajana ja rajoittajana. Kielellisen diversiteetin lisääntyessä koulutuksessa, työelämässä ja yhteiskunnassa ylipäätään on tärkeää ymmärtää, mitä osallistuminen vaatii yksilöiltä ja miten instituutiot voivat tukea osallisuutta. Vuosikirjan artikkelit tarkastelevat osallisuuden käsitettä suhteessa kieleen, sosiaaliseen oikeudenmukaisuuteen ja inklusioon ja pohtivat, miten kielelliset valinnat ja erilaisten kielellisten resurssien käyttö voivat joko tukea tai estää osallistumista. Vuosikirja haastaa ajatuksen siitä, että tietyn kansalliskielen oppiminen takaisi osallistumisen mahdollisuudet, ja korostaa sen sijaan inklusiivisten käytänteiden tarpeellisuutta ja yksikielisiä ideologioita laajempaa ymmärrystä kielellisestä kompetenssista. Kaiken kaikkiaan vuosikirja tarjoaa näkymän yhteiskunnallisesti vaikuttavan soveltavan kielitieteen kenttään Suomessa ja laajemminkin.

**Asiasanat:** osallisuus, inklusio, sosiaalinen oikeudenmukaisuus, soveltava kielitiede

## 1 Introduction

The theme of this yearbook, *Language and participation* (in Finnish *Kieli ja osallisuus*, in Swedish *Språk och delaktighet*), was designed to raise questions about the role of language and language-related decisions in enabling and restricting participation in society. With the increasing linguistic diversity in schools, higher education, working life and society at large, it has become ever more important to think through what it requires from individuals to participate and from institutions and communities to support participation. Bearing in mind that applied linguistics is a field of inquiry that is often described as investigating real-world problems that concern language (e.g., Cook 2003), the field is in a key position to consider such questions. At the same time, the notion of participation also raises the question to what extent and in what ways applied linguists should take a stand and engage in solving problems of participation

that they encounter in their research (cf. Grasz et al. 2020). The articles in the yearbook, which are based on the trilingual AFinLA Autumn Symposium 2022, address the theme of language and participation from both perspectives, as a research topic and as widening researcher participation. In the following, we will first explore the notion of participation and its connections to language and social justice, and then move on to discussing how the theme of the yearbook can also be interpreted as emphasising the social engagement of applied linguistics *per se*.

The core concept at the heart of this yearbook, participation, is complex and can be understood in a number of different ways. There is no clear answer as to how the relationship between language and participation should be approached (Määttä this volume). However, the notion is closely linked to social justice and the means through which social justice can be achieved, that is, the actions that are needed in particular settings to ensure equitable access and fair and equal treatment of all (cf. Ortega 2021). In a social justice perspective, removing barriers for participation is not enough, but what is needed is ensuring social inclusion that enables individuals to participate. In this view, social inclusion is understood broadly as not only promoting entry to social networks and institutions but also a sense of belonging that fosters individuals' engagement and participation (cf. Piller & Takahashi 2011). What is important to note here is the reciprocity required for social inclusion: at the heart of inclusion is mutual respect, which means that inclusion, and indeed participation, requires that also members of the "mainstream" take steps to change their behaviour (Yates 2011; see also Phillimore et al. 2018). At the same time, the question of "inclusion into what?" is often left obscure, which raises the implicit assumption that "inclusion is into some mythical mainstream" (Piller & Takahashi 2011: 373). However, viewing inclusion and participation as reciprocal means that inclusion becomes a question of potentially stretching the boundaries of the mainstream and carving out new spaces for participation.

The choices and uses of languages play an important role in the participation of some and exclusion of others. A key challenge is that while "[v]ery few contemporary societies can be considered homogenous" (King 2018: 2), and linguistic diversity driven by mobility and migration has become the norm, many European countries still have a monolingual self-understanding (Duarte et al. 2023). This leads to a situation where the multilingual reality collides with the monolingual mindset. In the context of schooling, the increasing linguistic diversity means that the student population cannot be expected to share a first language (L1), which in many European countries might have been the case in the past, but which now raises the question: how can we ensure participation of all students? For instance, in Finland, the population has been steadily diversifying since the 1990s (Statistics Finland 2023), and in the capital city of Helsinki, roughly a fourth of all school children today speak an L1 other than Finnish, Swedish or Sámi (Helsingin kaupunki 2021), which are the main languages of instruction in Finnish schools. Similarly, an

individual's possibilities to participate in higher education, working life and society at large depend on the individual's access to and ability to use specific linguistic resources – and the institution's ability to welcome the individual. Even highly multilingual individuals can be excluded on the basis of having the “wrong” kinds of linguistic resources (Blommaert 2010).

Often, learning to master a specific national language – typically the majority language – is offered as a solution for participation in society (Piller & Takahashi 2011), and such discourses are still prominent, for instance, in the context of migration (Lehto this volume). However, these discourses include the problematic assumption that language is an entity that can be mastered before engaging in social interaction, whereas research shows that “improving [...] language proficiency is not necessarily something that can be achieved prior to and in the absence of social inclusion” (Piller 2014: 194). The idea also masks the fact that we are not “ready” users of our L1s either when entering our educational trajectories; rather, we are taught and learn how to do things with our L1s throughout these trajectories, and indeed, beyond them. Luckily, the importance of social engagement to language learning has long been recognised in research (Hiver et al. 2021). In addition, current socio-material approaches to language education (see Ennsner-Kananen & Saarinen 2023; cf. Pennycook 2018) and theorisations of language competence as “the ability to cope with situated usages” (Dufva et al. 2011: 117; cf. Canagarajah 2018) seem to emphasise language learning as a form of participation. In these approaches, language learning is seen as the development of the “know-how of languaging” (Dufva 2023: 82) that “emerges in various processes of participation where learners appropriate the[ir] resources in a situated fashion” (Dufva et al. 2011: 120; see also Dufva 2020). These resources that build up an individual's repertoire are multilingual and multisemiotic in nature.

Viewing language learning “as a case of multilingualism”, as depicted in the title of Dufva et al.'s (2011) paper, and communication as involving diverse semiotic resources, resonates well with translanguaging (García & Li Wei 2018) and translanguaging practice (Canagarajah 2013) approaches adopted in research on multilingualism. These approaches see language use similarly as the dynamic use of semiotic resources, which blurs the boundaries of named languages and rather embraces a multilingual individual's whole repertoire. While translanguaging is often depicted as empowering in its potential to increase participation (see e.g., Li Wei 2018), it is important to note that this potential is not fully realised if conceptualisations of language in society are monolingually biased. In fact, monolingual ideologies may be so strong that they are reconstructed even in the talk of, for instance, migrants whose paths to participation in society are often challenging (see Lehto this volume). This said, solutions are being developed for implementing pedagogical translanguaging that can enhance participation in educational contexts (e.g., Cenoz & Santos 2020; Lehtonen 2021).

## 2 (Applied) linguistics of participation as reflected in the yearbook articles

So far, we have approached the theme of the yearbook as a research topic, but language and participation can also be explored from the perspective of researcher engagement in social issues. Interestingly, Li Wei (2018: 15), based on personal communication with Rampton, proposes that translanguaging “takes us beyond the linguistics of systems and speakers to a linguistics of participation”. This suggestion raises questions not only about what the shift in thinking about language as (trans)languaging means for what we study and why but also what it means in terms of who participates in the research process. In their introduction to the *AFinLA Yearbook 2022*, Seppälä et al. (2022: xv) raise the important point of considering whose views are represented and whose voices heard in research. By conceptualising applied linguistics from the perspective of language and participation, as a form of “linguistics of participation”, we can perhaps become more aware of our own role in knowledge production and how it matters for participation who we involve in research and in what ways.

The three position papers included in the yearbook are good examples of such researcher engagement: Hultgren et al. (this volume) shed new light on the familiar topic of English medium instruction in higher education by giving voice to participants who are normally left out of studies focusing on the topic. Their position paper engages in transdisciplinary participation, enhancing collaboration between different research fields as well as researchers and research participants. Määttä (this volume) and Milani et al. (this volume) study migration contexts where it is important to reflect on one’s researcher position and how participant voices are represented. Määttä’s (this volume) study shows how we cannot take (linguistic) participation for granted: research can make visible the limits of participation in situations where it seems at the outset that participation is achieved (e.g., an interpreter is provided) but where this is not really the case (e.g., interpreting does not solve issues of understanding). Määttä (this volume) also reflects on his own experiences of working as a freelance interpreter in asylum interviews and other administrative contexts, and thus provides an experiential take on immigration and participation. Milani et al. (this volume), then again, go as far as to argue that applied linguistics can be harnessed to advocate social justice.

In a similar vein, the research articles in the yearbook approach participation from different societal perspectives, calling for a socially engaged applied linguistics that recognises the critical role of language in shaping social structures and inequalities, while also striving towards more inclusive practices. A number of the papers approach participation from the perspective of institutional structures, whereas others focus on the viewpoint of the individual. The articles focusing on institutional contexts, whether in education or the media, provide insights into the ways in which institutional actors and policies may inadvertently create barriers to participation,

thus illustrating that participation is not only a matter of individuals' motivation or linguistic competence. By critically examining the practices of public communication, studies by Virtanen and Kulkki-Nieminen (this volume) as well as Paulasto et al. (this volume) show that targeting a specific group, such as foreign-language speakers or people with intellectual disabilities, does not in itself guarantee that communication is successful or inclusive. The discrepancy between ideals and (linguistic) practices is highlighted in the article by Mustonen et al. (this volume), where interviews with experts working in school administration indicate that official policies designed to enhance the learning of students with an immigrant background do not always translate seamlessly into effective practical measures (cf. Milani et al. this volume). This is a question of equality, as Ahlholm et al. (this volume) point out in their discussion of integration practices for newly arrived pupils: although in some schools, support for newly arrived pupils is an integral part of the school culture, there are differences between municipalities, which means that not all pupils receive the same level of support for their learning.

While it is evident that social structures shape opportunities for participation in society, understanding the relationship between language and participation also requires research at the level of individual experiences. In the yearbook, analyses of interview and survey data bring to light discourses, voices and perspectives that are often marginalised in the public discourse. The debate on immigration is a case in point. Articles by Lehto (this volume) and Leskinen (this volume) avoid the pitfalls of a polarised debate by interviewing people of foreign background living in Finland, highlighting the opportunities and barriers to participation as experienced by migrants themselves. In capturing the experiential dimension of participation among individuals with an immigrant background, the web survey data collected and analysed by Honko and Tervola (this volume) proves equally valuable.

Despite their wide range of perspectives, only a fraction of which have been outlined above, the contributions in the yearbook share the desire to engage in applied linguistics in a way that makes a difference. One way to achieve this is by providing concrete proposals for action. The mixed-methods study by Nissilä et al. (this volume), for example, concludes by suggesting that the expertise of Finnish as a second language (L2) teachers should be utilised when developing matriculation examination tests to ensure fair assessment of L2 students. Using research-based development, Korpela and Lehtimaja (this volume) have engaged in close collaboration with their participants and aim to create practical solutions. Whatever the particular tools and contexts, the authors of the yearbook demonstrate by their example that applied linguistics has much to offer in identifying, understanding and solving "real-life problems".

### 3 Introducing the contributions in the yearbook

The multidimensional nature of participation is reflected in the diversity of angles taken and tools used throughout the yearbook: as indicated above, the authors in the volume engage with different types of data and methods while addressing domains including (im)migration, education, working life and the media. The focus of the contributions is on Finland, with two of the position papers broadening the lens to other European countries: Milani et al. (this volume) to Sweden and Hultgren et al. (this volume) to the Netherlands, Italy, and Turkey. While the papers are geographically limited, together they allow for an in-depth exploration of issues of participation in one corner of the world. The articles approach participation both from the perspective of institutions and the individual and suggest different ways of engaging in applied linguistics that makes a difference.

The yearbook starts with nine peer-reviewed research articles, which together create a nuanced picture of the role of language in participation across different domains in Finnish society. While some of the articles focus more on the individual and others on the institutional side of participation, the articles are ordered as if following an individual's trajectory of participation in society, from a school pupil to a student in higher education, a professional in working life and a consumer of media. Following this line of thinking, the first articles of the yearbook are situated in the field of education, ranging from the context of primary and lower secondary education to higher education.

**Maria Ahlholm, Ella Väätäinen** and **Sirkku Latomaa's** paper, "Vastasaapuneet ja osallisuuden rakentuminen yhteisissä ja erillisissä luokkahuoneissa" (in English<sup>1</sup>, "Newly arrived pupils and the construction of participation in joint and separate classrooms"), explores the ways in which newly arrived pupils are supported in their linguistic socialisation and participation in the school community. The study combines survey data from preparatory education teachers and a systematic analysis of research conducted in two of the authors' research projects on ethnographic data from preparatory classes in Finnish schools. The study draws attention to the importance of peer models at early stages of language socialisation as opposed to the increasing need for teachers' linguistic support at later stages of literacy development.

The article, "Pakolaistaustaisten oppilaiden tuki koulutoimen hallinnollisissa diskursseissa" (in English, "School administration discourses concerning support for students with a refugee background"), by **Sanna Mustonen, Mervi Kaukko, Jenni Alisaari, Maria Petäjämäki, Leena Maria Heikkola, Raisa Harju-Autti,** and **Nick Haswell,** focuses on discourses concerning the teaching of refugee stu-

---

1 While the AFinLA Autumn Symposium 2022 was trilingual and we have retained all three languages in the name of the yearbook, the articles in the yearbook have been written either in Finnish or English and the titles have accordingly been translated into English or Finnish.

dents in Finnish schools as evident in the speech of Finnish school administrators. The Finnish national core curriculum for basic education expects schools to conduct inclusive pedagogy that supports every student's learning and participation in the school community. The authors identified different discourses concerning support for learning, psychosocial support and reception of students with a refugee background. The findings suggest that there is a certain tension between what is outlined in the national core curriculum and school practices. Shedding light on these tensions is important because schools are in a key position to support these students' inclusion and participation in society in a socially sustainable way.

Moving on to the context of secondary education, in their article, "Suomi toisena kielenä -oppija ainereaalien kirjoittajana ylioppilaskokeessa" (in English, "Finnish as a second language learner as a writer of natural science subjects in the Finnish matriculation examination"), **Leena Nissilä, Nina Reiman, Heidi Vaarala** and **Dmitri Leontjev** explore the relationship between language and content in disciplinary literacy by investigating the performance of L2 Finnish examinees in L2 Finnish and in biology and physics in the Finnish Matriculation Examination (ME). The study draws on data from ME performances in 2006 and 2021 and combines quantitative and qualitative methods. The analysis shows that the examinees' performance in writing and reading in L2 Finnish predicted their performance in biology and physics. The study emphasises the need to develop language-aware pedagogy and evaluation to increase L2 students' equal possibilities for participation and success in the ME and in higher education.

In their article, "Opiskelen joka päivä vaikka on raskasta. Monikielisten korkeakouluopiskelijoiden kuvauksia suomenkielisissä tutkinto-ohjelmissa opiskelusta" (in English, "I study every day even if it is hard. Multilingual higher education students' descriptions of studying in Finnish-medium degree programmes"), **Mari Honko** and **Maija Tervola** examine the perceptions of higher education students who have a multilingual background but who study in Finnish-medium degree programmes, concentrating on the students' self-reported Finnish-language skills and their experiences of coping with their studies. The article reports findings of the first phase of a longitudinal study, with focus on the student responses to open-ended questions in an online survey. Despite generally reporting experiences of coping in their studies, particularly students at the language proficiency level of B1–B2 in the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) scale reported feeling overwhelmed with their studies. The study suggests that in order to increase multilingual students' sense of participation in Finnish-medium degree programmes, institutions of higher education need to become better at taking into consideration the increasing diversity of their student population, and instead of a one-size-fits-all solution, develop teaching and support services that facilitate multilingual students' learning and use of Finnish in their studies.



The educational and professional trajectories of skilled migrants are the focus in **Kirsi Leskinen's** article "Monikieliseksi osaajaksi: korkeakoulutaustaisten maahanmuuttaneiden koulutus- ja työelämäpolkuja ja kokemuksia kielestä" (in English, "On becoming a multilingual expert: skilled migrants' educational and professional trajectories and lived experiences of language"). Drawing on longitudinal data on three migrant's trajectories, the article investigates these migrants' lived experiences of language and how their experiences are tied with possibilities for participation in Finnish society. Particular attention is paid to nexuses where lived experiences of language seem to have influenced the migrants' trajectories. The findings suggest that while learning Finnish is often depicted as crucial to participate in Finnish society, 'learning the language' does not automatically guarantee participation. One solution to enhance participation, as proposed by Leskinen, would be to create ways for individuals to make use of and develop their linguistic resources in more flexible and versatile ways in (higher) education, which would further pave the way for their (multilingual) participation in working life.

Working life is also addressed in the article "Kielenkäyttäjäprofiilit monikielisen työyhteisön tukena – tutkimuksellinen kehittämistyö kielentutkijan työkaluna" (in English, "Language user profiles for multilingual work communities – research-based development as a tool for linguists"), in which **Eveliina Korpela** and **Inkeri Lehtimaja** illustrate how by utilising methods of research-based development, applied linguists can take an active role in putting their research findings into practice in collaboration with their research participants. Based on research on interaction practices and employee perceptions of multilingualism in multilingual work communities in Finland, the authors have developed a tool called "language user profiles" (*kielenkäyttäjäprofiilit*) that is designed to help multilingual work communities to become more aware of the kinds of language learners and members of the multilingual work community they might have. The study suggests that creating a functioning multilingual work community is a question of strengthening employee participation through developing the community's language and interaction practices.

Broadening the angle from working life to the experience of participation more generally, the article, "Kieli ja osallisuuden eri ulottuvuudet Suomessa asuvien ulkomaalaistaustaisten diskursseissa" (in English, "Language and the various dimensions of inclusion in the discourses of migrants living in Finland"), by **Liisa-Maria Lehto**, examines how the relationship between language and participation is portrayed in the discourses of individuals with immigrant backgrounds living in Finland. Based on analysis of pair discussions conducted with 22 Finnish residents from 15 different countries of origin, Lehto identifies three dimensions of inclusion, which she calls concrete, abstract and solidary inclusion. Discourses on concrete inclusion depict the Finnish language as a practical tool that is a prerequisite for succeeding in the labour market, whereas in abstract inclusion language is understood as a key factor in crossing societal boundaries. Discourses on solidary inclusion view learning

and using Finnish as an act of solidarity and a crucial element in establishing and maintaining social relationships. Lehto concludes that these discursively constructed perspectives on inclusion reflect certain recurring ideologies about language, place, and the concept of being a “good migrant”.

The last two research articles in the yearbook deal with public communication designed to enhance the participation of its target audience in society. In their article, “Saavutettavuudesta kriittiseen autonomiaan – vieraskieliset kuntavaaliviestinnän kohderyhmänä” (in English, “From accessibility to critical autonomy – foreign language speakers as the target group of municipal election communication”), **Heli Paulasto, Anni Rannikko** and **Tiina Sotkasiira** examine multilingual communication aimed at informing foreign language speaking Finnish inhabitants on municipal elections. Based on interviews with civil servants as well as actors from political parties and local organisations, Paulasto, Rannikko and Sotkasiira state that, alongside English, there is a need for multilingual and Easy Language communication during and between elections, with content designed to meet the needs of the target audience. According to the authors, fostering a climate that encourages public participation is also essential in order to address barriers that prevent people with foreign background from fully engaging in democratic processes. The study also points out that resources are needed to make participation a reality. At present, the responsibility for multilingual communication linked to municipal decision-making falls heavily on the shoulders of individual organizations. Removing the barriers to democratic participation requires effort and financial contributions from public administrations and political parties, as Paulasto, Rannikko and Sotkasiira state.

Communication during times of crisis poses significant challenges for ensuring equal participation of citizens, as exemplified by the Covid-19 pandemic. The article, “Selkokielellä kriisiä rakentamassa: koronadiskurssit selkomeidiassa ja tukijärjestöjen viestinnässä” (in English “Constructing a crisis in Easy Language: Covid-19 discourses in Easy Language journalism and public communication”), by **Mikko T. Virtanen** and **Auli Kulkki-Nieminen**, investigates how the corona epidemic was portrayed in Easy Finnish materials produced by the media and third-sector organizations in 2020 and 2021. Based on the analysis, the dominant discourses tend to focus on individuals who have the means to cope with the situation and are willing to follow the instructions given by the authorities. Counter-discourses expressing distrust in public authorities and highlighting experiences of unfair treatment of minority members can be found in materials written by Easy Finnish users themselves. It is noteworthy, however, that these writings have been selected and edited by institutional Easy Finnish practitioners, who act as gatekeepers in Finnish Easy Language journalism and public communication. The article concludes that, if conducted successfully, Easy Language communication has the potential to strengthen the participation and agency of Easy Language users as well as enhance their well-being.

In addition to the research articles presented above, the yearbook includes three position papers linked to the keynote presentations at the AFinLA Autumn Symposium 2022. In their position paper, “Participation on whose terms? Applied linguistics, politics and social justice” (in Finnish, “Osallisuutta kenen näkökulmasta? Soveltava kielitiede, politiikka ja sosiaalinen oikeudenmukaisuus”), **Tommaso M. Milani, Simon Bauer, Kerstin von Brömssen** and **Andrea Spehar** view language and participation through the lens of social justice and applied linguistics as a field that can inform how social justice is, or is not, achieved in society. The paper operationalises American political philosopher Nancy Fraser’s theoretical ideas about justice, access and participation and uses this theoretical framework to explain the dilemmas of well-intentioned initiatives in the context of Swedish migration politics. Drawing on different types of data related to civic orientation for newly arrived adult migrants in Sweden, the paper reveals “a fundamental discrepancy between the intentions about participatory parity expressed in policy documents, on the one hand, and the actual practices in some civic orientation courses, on the other” (p. 294). Reminding us that “applied linguistics with its focus on real-life problems related to language can contribute to a more just world” (p. 297), the authors advocate for a socially and politically engaged applied linguistics. The paper thus addresses the language and participation theme of the yearbook both as a research topic, considering the conditions and opportunities for migrants’ participation in society, and as a call for applied linguists to participate in advocating social justice.

**Simo Määttä’s** position paper entitled “Diskursiivinen ja ideologinen osallisuus – esimerkkinä tulkatut asioimistilanteet ja verkon keskustelupalstat” (in English, “Discursive and ideological participation – examples from interpreter-mediated encounters and internet discussion boards”) approaches the theme of the yearbook from the perspective of discourse and ideology. Määttä uses examples from migration-related interpreter-mediated encounters and internet discussion boards, to illustrate how participation, understood as the opportunity to partake in discussion and ongoing action, is intertwined with discourses and ideologies. He explains how internet discussion boards about migration often limit migrants’ participation at the outset: only like-minded people are welcome to contribute (and in Määttä’s examples, join the disparagement), whereas interpreter-mediated encounters are particularly challenging from the perspective of migrants’ participation: interpreting is thought to guarantee their linguistic participation, but in practice, their participation may be hindered by authority discourse (*viranomaisdiskurssi*) and predominant language ideologies that see interpreting as a straightforward and simple process. Määttä’s paper is a good illustration of how hard it is to evaluate (linguistic) participation, because it is so closely intertwined with the discourses and ideologies prevalent in specific situations. The paper further suggests that studying language and participation requires a broader view of language as a social practice.

The position paper by **Anna Kristina Hultgren, Marion Nao, Peter Wingrove, Dogan Yuksel** and **Beatrice Zuaro** on “New insights into the trend towards English as a medium of instruction in European higher education through transdisciplinary participation” (in Finnish, “Poikkitieteellinen yhteistyö ja sen tuomat uudet näkökohdat korkeakouluopetuksen englanninkielistymiseen Euroopassa”) seeks to raise awareness of how higher education governance reforms have contributed to the rise of English medium instruction (EMI) in European higher education. The authors argue that to better understand the drivers of EMI, applied linguistics needs to move beyond student and teacher perspectives and pay more attention to academic governance. As a solution, the authors propose engagement in “transdisciplinary participation”, that is, collaborating with, in this case, political scientists and research participants involved in academic decision making. The paper thus addresses the language and participation theme of the yearbook by highlighting the importance of engaging in participation with different stakeholders in the process of doing research. With three illustrative cases on higher education reforms in the Netherlands, Italy, and Turkey, the paper suggests that at least on the basis of two of the cases, a tentative relationship can be found between governance reforms and EMI. The findings thus provide new insights into why English has gained prominence in European higher education. In all, the paper shows that transdisciplinary participation has great potential in contributing to a more in-depth understanding of applied linguistics issues.

## 4 Conclusion

Together the position papers and the research articles provide a wide range of fresh perspectives on the yearbook’s theme of language and participation. While the focus of the volume has been on Finland, with two of the position papers broadening the lens beyond the country’s borders, the research articles are a testament to the wide engagement of applied linguists working in Finland. The idea of ordering the research articles in the yearbook according to an individual’s trajectory of participation was to illustrate how central the notion of participation is throughout an individual’s life span and how different solutions may be needed to promote inclusive (linguistic) practices in different points in the trajectory. In general, the articles suggest that participation and its relation to language is a complex issue for which there are no straightforward solutions. However, participation requires reciprocity: an individual cannot participate if they are not given a voice (cf. Kauffhold 2023). For instance, in the context of immigration to Finland, learning to master the majority national language (i.e., Finnish) does not guarantee participation in Finnish society; what is required is that the rest of the society accept that the language is spoken in many different ways, and that we consider how to utilise our differently multilingual resources in an inclusive way.

Based on the articles, it seems that actions are needed at different levels of society. Participation is to a great extent about resources: to what extent governments, municipalities, institutions, communities invest (or are able to invest) money, time, and expertise in improving the conditions for participation. Sometimes efforts are needed at the national level (Paulasto et al. this volume), whereas sometimes individual citizens and everyday interaction can play a key role in increasing experiences of belonging (Lehto this volume). The articles also suggest that participation can be promoted by creating an atmosphere in which people with different backgrounds and linguistic resources feel safe and welcome to contribute (e.g., Virtanen & Kulikki-Nieminen this volume).

In all, the articles illustrate how applied linguistics research can increase our understanding of potential discrepancies between ideals and actual (linguistic) practices in our communities and institutions and how such discrepancies may influence social justice. Sometimes institutional policies and programme statements are written to support social justice, but the ways in which these are implemented may fail for one reason or another. And if there are differences in the implementation, for instance, between municipalities, there is a potential equality problem (Ahlholm et al. this volume). Good intentions do not guarantee a successful and fair outcome, as pointed out by Milani et al. (this volume).

The choices we, as applied linguists, make in terms of what, who and how we study, and what linguistic resources we draw on, also create conditions for participation. It is therefore crucial that we remain critical of our own practices, too. While we may have to accept that participation cannot always be all-inclusive, we need to be able to justify the grounds for limiting participation. The focus of the yearbook has been on *language* and participation, as language is at the heart of applied linguistics research. Yet, it seems that many of the questions related to language and participation require broadening the perspective on language to wider semiotic practices (see e.g., Canagarajah 2018; Dufva 2023): communication typically involves various multilingual, multimodal and multimedial resources. We expect this broader semiotic perspective to be a future challenge for investigating issues of language and participation especially now that artificial intelligence technologies (e.g., augmented reality and text generation software) are gaining ground and raising new questions of the participatory potential of such technologies, and the benefits and risks related to their adoption in human communication. What becomes clear from the contributions in this volume is that increasing everyone's (every human's) chances for participation in the multilingual and multisemiotic reality of today's societies requires adjusting our understanding of language, as well as joint effort in ensuring socially inclusive practices in education, working life, and society at large – including research.

## Literature

- Blommaert, J. 2010. *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Canagarajah, S. 2013. *Translingual practice: global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. London: Routledge.
- Canagarajah, S. 2018. Materializing 'competence': perspectives from international STEM scholars. *Modern Language Journal*, 102 (2), 268–291. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12464>
- Cenoz, J. & A. Santos, 2020. Implementing pedagogical translanguaging in trilingual schools. *System*, 92, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102273>
- Cook, G. 2003. *Applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Duarte, J., E. García-Jimenez, S. McMonagle, A. Hansen, B. Gross, N. Szelei & A. S. Pinho 2023. Research priorities in the field of multilingualism and language education: a cross-national examination. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 44 (1), 50–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1792475>
- Dufva, H. 2020. Mitä ihmiset osaavat, kun he osaavat kieltä? Henkilökohtainen repertoaari ja sen multimodaalisuus. In S. Grasz, T. Keisanen, F. Oloff, M. Rauniomaa, I. Rautiainen & M. Siromaa (eds) *Menetelmällisiä käännteitä soveltavassa kielentutkimuksessa – Methodological turns in applied language studies*. AFinLA Yearbook 2020, Jyväskylä: Finnish Association of Applied Linguistics AFinLA, 17–32. <https://doi.org/10.30661/afinlavk.89461>
- Dufva, H. 2023. The personal repertoire and its materiality: resources, means and modalities of languaging. In J. Ennser-Kananen & T. Saarinen (eds) *New materialist explorations into language education*. Cham: Springer, 75–91. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13847-8\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13847-8_5)
- Dufva, H., M. Suni, M. Aro & O.-P. Salo 2011. Languages as objects of learning: language learning as a case of multilingualism. *Apples – Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 5 (1), 109–124. <https://apples.journal.fi/article/view/97818>
- Ennser-Kananen, J. & T. Saarinen (eds) 2023. *New materialist explorations into language education*. Cham: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13847-8>
- García, O. & Li Wei 2018. Translanguaging. In C. A. Chapelle (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal1488>
- Grasz, S., T. Keisanen, F. Oloff, M. Rauniomaa, I. Rautiainen & M. Siromaa 2020. Methodological turns in applied language studies. In S. Grasz, T. Keisanen, F. Oloff, M. Rauniomaa, I. Rautiainen & M. Siromaa (eds) *Menetelmällisiä käännteitä soveltavassa kielentutkimuksessa – Methodological Turns in Applied Language Studies*. AFinLA Yearbook 2020. Jyväskylä: Finnish Association of Applied Linguistics AFinLA, i–xvi. <https://doi.org/10.30661/afinlavk.98568>
- Helsingin kaupunki 2021. Joka neljäs peruskouluikäinen on vieraskielinen – Ulkomaalaistaustaiset Helsingissä. 26 Jan. 2021. <https://ulkomaalaistaustaiset helsingissa.fi/fi/opetusjakoulutus> [accessed 21 Sept 2023]
- Hiver, P., A. H. Al-Hoorie, J. P. Vitta & J. Wu 2021. Engagement in language learning: A systematic review of 20 years of research methods and definitions. *Language Teaching Research*, 0 (0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688211001289>
- Kaufhold, K. 2023. Transnational postgraduate students' experience of voice and participation. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 14 (1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2019-0143>
- King, L. 2018. *The impact of multilingualism on global education and language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge Assessment English.

- Lehtonen, H. 2021. Kielitaitojen kirjo käyttöön, limittäiskieleilyä luokkaan [Diversity of linguistic expertises and translanguaging in the classroom]. In M. Ahlholm, I. Piippo & P. Portaankorva-Koivisto (eds) *Koulun monet kielet. Plurilingualism in the school*. AFinLA-e: soveltavan kielitieteen tutkimuksia 13, Jyväskylä: Finnish Association of Applied Linguistics AFinLA, 70–90. <https://doi.org/10.30660/afinla.100292>
- Li Wei 2018. Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied Linguistics*, 39 (1), 9–30. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx039>
- Ortega, Y. 2021. Transformative pedagogies for English teaching: teachers and students building social justice together. *Applied Linguistics*, 42 (6), 1144–1153. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amab033>
- Pennycook, A. 2018. *Posthumanist applied linguistics*. London: Routledge.
- Phillimore, J., R. Humphris & K. Khan 2018. Reciprocity for new migrant integration: resource conservation, investment and exchange. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44 (2), 215–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341709>
- Piller, I. 2014. Editorial: linguistic diversity and social inclusion in Australia. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 37 (3), 190–197. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ara1.37.3.001edi>
- Piller, I. & K. Takahashi 2011. Linguistic diversity and social inclusion. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 14 (4), 371–381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2011.573062>
- Seppälä, T., S. Lesonen, P. Iikkanen & S. D'hondt 2022. Language, change and society: perspectives from Finland. In T. Seppälä, S. Lesonen, P. Iikkanen & S. D'hondt (eds) *Kieli, muutos ja yhteiskunta – Language, Change and Society*. AFinLA Yearbook 2022, Jyväskylä: Finnish Association of Applied Linguistics AFinLA, i–xix. <https://doi.org/10.30661/afinlavk.122188>
- Statistics Finland 2023. Foreign-language speakers. [https://www.stat.fi/tup/maahanmuutto/maahanmuuttajat-vaestossa/vieraskieliset\\_en.html](https://www.stat.fi/tup/maahanmuutto/maahanmuuttajat-vaestossa/vieraskieliset_en.html) [accessed 14 Sept 2023]
- Yates, L. 2011. Interaction, language learning and social inclusion in early settlement. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 14 (4), 457–471. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2011.573068>