

The First Generation Pupils and the Question of Complexity in L2

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A fresh report published in June 2014 reveals that in comparison with other OECD countries, Finnish first and second generation immigrant pupils scored statistically significantly below average in PISA 2012. The test was meant to measure mathematical literacy of the 15-year-olds, but the culmination point for the immigrant pupils were not their mathematical but linguistic skills in the language of instruction. The language of PISA questions is characterized by complexity features, such as subordination, passive voice and infinitival structures.

Towards this background of PISA tests I want to set some classroom examples from first generation pupils' multilingual dialogues, to shed some light on their first steps towards linguistic complexity in L2. My examples come from the Long Second data – longitudinal video data about children's classroom interaction during the first year after immigration. These 46 lessons are videoed during one school year in Helsinki district, in a primary school, and the five focus informants are Estonian and Russian speaking children from 7 to 12 years. Our analysis is at the outset but some preliminary observations can be made.

My focus is on L2 (Finnish) development but the data examples are from multilingual classroom data, rich of children's heritage language dialogues, all transcribed and translated into English.