Conceptualizations of language expertise

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Asiantuntijuudesta on tullut yhä keskeisempi käsite muuttuvassa yhteiskunnassa. Kielenopiskelijat ja -tutkijat eivät ole käsittäneet asiantuntijuutta suoraan omaan alaansa liittyvänä ilmiönä, mistä syystä aihetta ei ilmeisesti ole koettu tarpeelliseksi tutkia.

Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena oli selvittää, kuinka Kookit-opiskelijat merkityksellistävät kieliasiantuntijuuden käsitettä. Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin marraskuussa 2003 kyselylomakkeella, ja kyselyyn vastasi yhteensä 15 opiskelijaa, jotka opiskelivat pääaineenaan suomea tai vierasta kieltä. Tutkimusaineisto analysoitiin laadullisen teema-analyysin avulla, jossa opiskelijoiden vastauksia verrattiin toisiinsa pyrkien näin löytämään mahdollisia yhteneväisyyksiä ja eroavaisuuksia.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että kieliasiantuntijuus on melko monimutkainen käsite, jonka voidaan katsoa sisältävän monenlaisia kompetensseja. Yllättävää kyllä, opiskelijat näkivät myös pedagogisen osaamisen yhtenä kieliasiantuntijuuden osatekijänä. Itse kieliasiantuntijuus käsitettiin yleensä ottaen monipuolisena kielen hallitsemisena. Opiskelijoiden mukaan kieliasiantuntijuutta on esimerkiksi opettajilla, kirjoittajilla, kääntäjillä, tulkeilla sekä muilla kielialan ammattilaisilla. Lisäksi asiantuntijuutta löytyy kielten opiskelijoilta. Tutkimustulosten mukaan kieliasiantuntijuuden voi saavuttaa tutustumalla kohdekielen kulttuuriin tai oleskelemalla kohdekielisessä maassa. Toisaalta kieliasiantuntijuuden saavuttaminen näyttäisi vaativan erityistä kiinnostusta ja asialle omistautumista.

Avainsanat: language expertise, expertise, proficiency, competence

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1 Introduction

In recent years, the concept of foreign language expertise has become more of present interest. Syllabus designers may use the notion of language expertise as a tool when planning and deciding on what kinds of language skills should be taught for example at the university level in order to advance professional development. People designing language tests may use the concept of language expertise as a reference or guideline to the skills that the advanced learner should master.

It is important to understand the idea of language expertise, its constituents and how language expertise is acquired. Unravelling the concept of language expertise may help us to understand how beginning learners can be presented with appropriate experience on their way to developing from novice to expert.

The purpose of the present study is to find out how university students majoring in languages conceptualize the idea of language expertise. The present study does not aim to compare novices with language experts; rather, its goal is to find out the students' beliefs and assumptions about what language expertise consists of. Thus, the research question of the study is: How do Kookit students¹ conceptualize the idea of language expertise? The question was raised, because it became obvious that there were not many studies addressing the issue. One possible reason for the lack of existing studies maybe be the fact that language students and researchers have not understood language expertise as a phenomenon relating closely to their field. Another reason might be that the whole notion of language expertise has been regarded so obvious and clear a concept that most researchers have neglected it on purpose. Therefore, the present study may help us understand the concept of language expertise and its constituents.

The present study was carried out with a questionnaire. The students' replies of the questions will be compared with each other in order to find out whether similar patterns in the students' conceptualizations of language expertise can be found. Finally, the results will be analyzed by using qualitative methods.

The structure of this Candidate's Thesis is outlined as follows. Chapter 2 provides the background for the present study by discussing the concepts of professional, expert, expertise and language expertise and its constituents in detail. Chap-

¹Students studying in the Study Programme of Technology in Language Learning and Teaching, organized at the University of Jyväskylä in 2003–2004.

ter 3 describes the research methods used in the present study. Finally, the findings are reported in chapter 4.

2 LANGUAGE EXPERTISE

Usually language expertise is seen as a fluent use of a language. In other words, a person who is expert in a certain language is very skilled at speaking and writing in that language, understands the language when it is being spoken, can read different texts written in the language and knows how to use different expressions of the language in different communicating situations. This is especially the case when foreign language expertise is concerned. However, this view is rather limited since language expertise is more than just being proficient in different areas of language use.

In the following chapter the concept of foreign language expertise will be discussed. First, the terms professional, expert and expertise will be defined. In addition, general characteristics of experts will be briefly examined. Next, the definition of language expertise is outlined. Finally, the recent studies on language expertise and the components of language expertise are discussed.

2.1 Professional, expert and expertise

The term professional is generally used to denote any person who shows great skill in the job that he or she does. Nevertheless, as Boshuizen et al. (2004: 4) point out, the term is also used when referring to only those people who have received formal education in the traditional university trained professions such as law, medicine, economics or teaching.

Similarly to professionals, experts can be defined in many ways. Traditionally, experts are viewed as people who have studied a particular subject and who know a great deal about it. Secondly, experts can be defined as people excelling in a particular subject area. Finally, experts can also be seen as persons formally selected and legitimised as professionals by society (Boshuizen et al., 2004: 56). Thus, expertise is a special skill or knowledge that is acquired by training, study or in years of practise, a skill which is acknowledged by a group of people.

Since the 1970's various scholars have studied expertise, their research ranging from expertise in chess, nursing and physics problem solving to professional acting. Some of the most influencial and often cited research done on expertise was made by Dreyfus and Dreyfus, Glaser and Chi and Bereiter and Scardamalia. Firstly, Dreyfus

and Dreyfus (1986) argued that the core of human expertise is in "knowing how", rather than "knowing that". Dreyfus and Dreyfus also proposed a five-stage model of skill acquisition from a novice to an expert. According to their model, a person generally develops his or her expertise by first turning from novice to advanced beginner, then to competent and later more proficient in the content area. The person reaches the final stage, expertise, which is marked by effortless performance guided by intuition. Secondly, Glaser and Chi (1988) adopted a different view on expertise, based on cognitive psychology. According to Glaser and Chi, experts do not rely on intuition but on the cognitive processes of mind, such as self-monitoring or self-regulation. Eraut (1994) also takes a similar stand point by claiming that conscious deliberation is one of the most critical features of expertise. Finally, Bereiter ja Scardamalia (1993) investigated the differences between experts and novices. They proposed that expertise should not be seen merely as a state but above all as a continuous process that generates competences.

2.2 Characteristics of experts

Research in cognitive psychology has shown that experts' performances share common characteristics that can be generalized across different subject domains. First, experts excel mainly in their own subject domains. Secondly, experts are likely to perceive large meaningful patterns in their domain. In addition, experts are fast at performing the skills or solving problems and they have superior short-term and long-term memory. Moreover, experts recognize and represent a problem in their domain at a deeper level than novices. Also, experts spend more time in analyzing a problem qualitatively. Finally, experts have strong self-monitoring skills. (Glaser and Chi: 1988.)

2.3 Definitions of language expertise

In recent studies, some researchers have attempted to define the core of language expertise from different points of view. According to Nuopponen (2003: 20), a language expert is an umbrella category containing different professionals such as interpreters, language teachers, language consultants and researchers. Pesonen (2003: 25) regards language experts as persons possessing a more profound knowledge base on one or several languages. Due to their expertise, these persons can be consulted about issues relating to language and its use. However, Pesonen does not

specify the kinds of knowledge bases that are possessed by these language experts.

According to Johansson (2007), a language expertise consists of four different types of knowledge bases. These knowledge bases are language competence, language proficiencies, other skills relating to language and general skills of experts. In Johansson's definition, language competence consists of metalinguistic knowledge and knowing the properties of the language and its use in communicating situations in various socio-cultural contexts. Language proficiencies are further divided into basic language skills, academic and professional communicative language skills and metalanguage skills. Other skills that relate to the language include good command of language technology and ability to produce knowledge on the area of specialization. Finally, the general skills possessed by experts include knowledge management, good communication skills, ability to work in groups and skills relating to one's actions and cognitive processes.

2.4 Students' views on language expertise

There are only a few studies that have addressed students' conceptualizations of language expertise. Pesonen (2003: 27) did a small-scale study consisting of word association by asking students of economics attending her lecture to describe in few words the concept of 'language expert'. The results revealed that the students conceptualized language expertise through tasks that persons in certain occupations perform. The results showed that the students regarded language expert mainly as a person who not only gives guidelines and recommendations on language use but also knows the culture behind the language. (Pesonen 2003: 27.)

The concept of language expertise was also examined in the syllabus plan which was organized in the Humanities faculty at University of Jyväskylä before the Bologna process was implemented. The syllabus plan aimed at creating a framework for the co-operation of developing a curriculum in the Department of Languages. Students who took part in the syllabus plan listed the following abilities as belonging to language experts: spoken and written language proficiency, knowledge of texts and discourses, knowledge of target culture and linguistics, criticism, analytical skills, problem solving skills, communication skills, and ability and willingness to pursue continuous learning. (Nikula 2003: 289.)

Nevertheless, none of the recent research has addressed the issues of the quality of the students' language expertise or the process through which their language expertise is acquired. Other neglected aspects in language expertise studies are the factors that shape the development of language expertise and the ways language ex-

perts relate to their contexts of work. Finally, ways to teach the different components of language expertise could be also researched in more detail.

2.5 Components of language expertise

Language proficiency and language competence are areas relating closely to language expertise. Various scholars in different times have defined proficiency and competence, and they share some similar views. Next, the concepts of language proficiency and competence are discussed in detail.

2.5.1 Language proficiency and competence

The term competence was established by Chomsky in the late 1960s. In his linguistic theory Chomsky defined competence as the speaker's or listener's knowledge of the deeper structure of language. This linguistic knowledge enables us to speak and understand our first language properly without having to think about it. Furthermore, the linguistic knowledge permits us to utter and comprehend sentences we may never have heard before. Chomsky also made a distinction between competence and performance, referring to performance as the actual use of language in real situations. (Chomsky 1965: 4.)

The concept of competence has later been extended as 'communicative competence' in several quarters. In addition to Chomsky, many scholars such as Hymes, Canale and Swain, Bachman and the authors of the Common European Framework of Reference have contributed to defining communicative competence.

2.5.2 Models of communicative competence

The notion of communicative competence was first proposed by Hymes (1971). He described communicative competence as native speakers' ability to produce and to understand sentences which are appropriate to the context in which they occur. Hymes made a distinction between actual instances of language use and abstract models of the linguistic knowledge and capacities involved in language use, this way further developing Chomsky's ideas about competence and performance. (Hymes 1971, as cited by McNamara 1996: 54).

Hymes' definition of communicative competence was a starting point for later definitions by Canale and Swain. Canale and Swain (1980, as cited by Johnson 2001: 16) divided communicative competence into three sub-competences, namely gram-

matical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. Grammatical (or linguistic) competence covered areas of morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology, while sociolinguistic competence referred to the socio-cultural rules of use and rules of discourse. The third competence of the model, strategic competence, dealt with the ability to compensate for a lack of knowledge of grammar or vocabulary in a communication situation. Canale and Swain emphasized that each competence is equally essential for successful communication. Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence was designed mainly as a tool for curriculum development and language assessment in second language teaching. It was also refined in 1983 with the addition of discourse competence by Canale. (Harley et al. 1990: 9-10.)

Bachman (1990) further develops the notion of communicative competence. Bachman's model of communicative language ability (CLA) consists of the following five components: language competence, strategic competence, knowledge structures, psycho-physiological mechanisms and context of situation (Bachman 1990: 84-85). Language and strategic competences, which are further divided into several subcomponents, form the core of Bachman's model. According to Bachman (1990: 84), language competence is "a set of specific knowledge components that are utilized in communication via language", and strategic competence is "the mental capacity for implementing the components of language competence in contextualised communicative language use".

Even though Bachman's model of communicative competence is widely acknowledged and accepted as a suitable model for language proficiency, in the contemporary world the most used model of language proficiency is probably the one presented in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001), commonly referred to as CEFR. CEFR is a document which "provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe" (CEFR 2001: 1).

In CEFR, a distinction is made between general competences and communicative competence. General competences do not relate to language particularly; they are skills, characteristics and the combination of knowledge which enable a language user to perform actions. General competencies are further divided into categories, namely declarative knowledge, skills and know-how, 'existential competence' and ability to learn; these categories are yet further divided into more detailed descriptions of knowledge, skills, attitudes, abilities and different awareness. In contrast to general competences, the communicative competence is language specific. It is divided into linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences, which in turn are

divided into smaller units, similarly to the general competences. In order to communicate successfully, both general competences and communicative competences have to be used. (CEFR 2001: 9–14, 10–130.)

To sum up, many different quarters have attempted to define language proficiency and communicative competence. The most recent, and also the most used one in schools across Europe, is the model presented in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The model of language proficiency presented in CEFR contains some components that are similar to the models represented by Bachman, and by Canale and Swain. It also seems to be the broadest and most extensive model of proficiency, since it contains competences that are not present in the other scholars' models.

2.5.3 Occupation-related competences

In addition to the communicative competence in language and general competences described above, we can also consider different occupation-related competences or knowledge as part of language expertise. Professions such as foreign language teacher, translator, researcher or technical writer require different competences, as well as the competences relating to language. Hence, we can speak about teacher competence, translator competence, academical competence and technical competence.

Occupation-related competences can also be divided into smaller units. For example, according to Grossman (1990, as cited by Tsui 2003: 108), teacher competence comprises four general areas of knowledge which are general pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of content (in foreign language teacher's case, knowledge of the language and things related to it). In other words, foreign language teacher competence entails not only competences relating to the language itself, but also competences relating to teacher's work and pedagogic, students, school and curriculum contexts. Similarly, translator competence can be divided into sub-competences. Orozco and Hurtado Albir (2002, as cited in Englund Dimitrova 2002: 13–14) propose a translation competence model consisting of as many as six sub-competences: communicative competence in source and target languages, extra-linguistic competence, transfer competence, instrumental competence, psycho-physiological competence and strategic competence. Finally, academic and technical competences include skills such as analytical skills, problem solving skills, communication skills, adaptability, responsibility, innovativeness, creativity, computer skills and ICT literacy.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

This chapter concentrates on defining the objectives, the context and the data of the present study. Finally, the research methods of the present study are described.

3.1 Objectives of the study

In general, the present study is a qualitative survey aimed to find out beliefs about the notion of expertise held by Finnish students. First of all, attention was paid to the students' views on what the constituents of language expertise are. In other words, the present study aimed at identifying the skills that language experts are believed to possess. Secondly, the present study aimed at finding out whether the students considered themselves language experts. Finally, the study aimed at investigating students' views on the way through which language expertise could be achieved.

The study was based on two hypotheses, the first one being that there would be differences in the students' conceptualizations of the idea of language expertise. The second hypothesis was that the students would believe that they possess some level of language expertise. Thus, a further objective of the present study was that these two assumptions would prove to be true. The aim of the present study was not to compare novices with experts, but to find out the students' beliefs and assumptions about what language expertise consists of.

3.2 Collection of data

This section discusses the details involving the collection of the data for the present study. In detail, the context of the study will be clarified, in addition to identifying the subjects of the study. Furthermore, the nature of the questionnaire and procedure of the data collection will be explained.

3.2.1 The context of the present study

The present study was carried out in November 2003 among students studying in a Study Programme of Technology in Language Learning and Teaching (KOOKIT), organized by The Centre for Applied Language Studies at the University

of Jyväskylä. The study programme was designed for future teachers of Finnish and foreign languages, Literature or Finnish Sign Language.

The Study Programme of Technology in Language Learning and Teaching was based on the old curriculum that was in use at the time at the University of Jyväskylä before the Bologna process was implemented in Finland. The Bologna process (or Bologna accords) was launched in 1999 with the signing of the Bologna declaration by Ministers of Education from 29 European countries. It was designed to create the European higher education area in order to make academic degree standards more comparable and compatible throughout Europe by 2010. (Ministry of Education 2008.)

The Study Programme of Technology in Language Learning and Teaching was held each year from 2001 until 2006, as part of the national Network in Language Technology. The programme covered 10-20 credits (20-40 study points), and it lasted for one academic year. The programme introduced theoretical background of using technology in language learning and teaching, as well as ways of designing electronic learning materials and assessing language proficiency. The objective of the programme was to provide the students with a new kind of expertise, along with strong pedagogical knowledge and skills in using technology in a meaningful way as a means of instruction of languages. (The Centre for Applied Language Studies at the University of Jyväskylä 2008.)

3.2.2 Subjects

The subjects of the present study were students studying in the Study Programme of Technology in Language Learning and Teaching as their minor subject. In total, there were 15 students, 2 male and 13 female. Five of the students were majoring in Finnish, three in Swedish, two in English, two in German, one in Romance Philology and one in Language Technology. The students were studying to become teachers in the subject area of specialization. One of the students had already finished a foreign language teacher degree with Swedish as his major.

On average, the students had completed 54 credits in their major subject. In addition, the students had completed an average of 25 credits in the Pedagogical Studies. The majority of the students had little (under 6 months) or no experience at all in teaching a foreign language at school. Only three of the students had more than one year of teaching experience.

3.2.3 Questionnaire

The data was gathered by using a questionnaire specially designed for the purpose of the present study. The first section dealt with background information relevant in identifying the respondents' level of expertise. The second section dealt with the general characteristics of expertise. The third section dealt with questions related to language learning and teaching technology, language proficiency and language expertise.

The first part of the questionnaire dealt with the respondents' background (see Appendix): their sex, age, basic qualifications, current position, the number of credits completed in the major subject and in Pedagogical Studies and the amount of teacher experience gained in months. The respondents were also asked to write their major and the type of degree in the space indicated in the questionnaire.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 21 statements (see Appendix). The statements were constructed by consulting several sources and they were based on general characteristics identified among the experts on various fields by different researchers. When designing the questionnaire, the statements were categorized into four categories, namely computer skills, language skills, pedagogical skills and general skills; however, in the questionnaire, they were not specially labelled into the categories. To each statement, the respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement on a 5-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. In case the respondent felt unable to reflect on the question, an option 'I don't know' could be selected instead.

The third part of the questionnaire consisted of a total of nine open-ended questions (see Appendix). The questions were divided into specific categories. The first two questions dealt with language learning and teaching technology, the next three questions with language proficiency and the final four questions with language expertise. The respondents were asked to answer the questions by reflecting from a personal perspective on the issues dealing with the above mentioned categories. This was done in order to shed light on areas of expertise and to explore the respondents' competencies in greater depth.

Special emphasis was placed on the design of the questionnaire in order to make it as easy as possible to fill in. The pages were numbered, and the first two sections were represented on their own pages. The third section was spanned over three pages. The questions in the third section were divided so that only three questions were placed on each page, in order to have enough space for the respondents to write down their answers. Each section also included a short instruction on how to

proceed with the answering.

3.2.4 Procedure

The data for the present study was collected in November 2003 at The Centre for Applied Language Studies. First, the students were given some general information in Finnish about the purpose of the study, on who was carrying out the study and why, and on how to fill in the questionnaire. After the short introduction, the questionnaires were handed out to the students.

The students were given approximately 45 minutes to answer the questions. In all, a total of 15 students, of which 2 were male and 13 female, completed the questionnaire. None of the students were excluded from the study.

3.2.5 Data analysis

In analysing the data, thematic analysis and comparisons were used. The questionnaires were read through and then analyzed qualitatively in the following manner. Firstly, the students' views were grouped when similarities were found. When appropriate, some comparisons were made between the students majoring in different subjects. The students' views were also compared against the theoretical background of models of communicative competences and latest research on language expertise. The results of the study will be analyzed in the next chapter.

4 STUDENTS' CONCEPTIONS OF LANGUAGE EXPERTISE

The main purpose of the present study was to find out how students conceptualize the notion of language expertise. In this chapter the results of the present study are reported. First, the students' level of expertise is briefly discussed in section 4.1. Second, section 4.2 concentrates on the students' views on what kinds of skills the language experts should possess. Third, in section 4.3 the students' views on language expertise in general are discussed.

4.1 Students' level of expertise

In this chapter, the findings relating to students' own level of expertise are discussed. In the present study, the students were asked to assess their skills and knowledge based on 21 statements. The statements were formed based on the general characteristics of experts which can be generalized across various fields. To each statement, the students' were asked to indicate their degree of agreement on the scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Table 4.1 illustrates the students level of expertise in responses with most support in percentages.

Table 4.1: Students' level of expertise.

Statement	Response with most support (%)
1. I have good computer skills.	somewhat agree (40 %)
2. I have good knowledge on the culture	
and language that I study as my major.	strongly agree (33 %)
3. I easily understand the bases of the subject	
that I study.	partly agree/disagree (53 %)
4. I get enthusiastic about new things easily.	somewhat agree (53 %)
5. I am innovative.	partly agree/disagree (53 %)
6. I have strong pedagogical knowledge.	somewhat disagree (40 %)
7. I often act as a language consult for	
other people.	somewhat agree (27 %)

8. My social skills need improving.	somewhat agree (40 %)
9. I easily found solutions to the problems	
I encounter.	somewhat agree (47 %)
10. Experience is a prove of mastering	
something or possessing a skill.	partly agree/disagree (47 %)
11. I often analyze my actions critically.	strongly agree (53 %)
12. I am in control of uncertain and	
unpredictable situations.	partly agree/disagree (40 %)
13. I often make initiatives.	partly agree/disagree (40 %)
14. It is not easy for me to assess	
my strengths and weaknesses.	somewhat disagree (40 %)
15. I look for new challenges in	
order to develop myself and my knowledge.	somewhat agree (40 %)
16. I tend to see things from	
a larger perpective instead of details.	somewhat agree (47 %)
17. Adapting to changes is easy for me.	partly agree/disagree (47 %)
18. My pedagogical skills need improving.	strongly agree (73 %)
19. I aim at understanding the structures	
and assumptions behind phenomena.	strongly agree (47 %)
20. I have a language proficiency in more	
than two foreign languages.	strongly disagree (53 %)
21. I know how to use technology when	
teaching.	partly agree/disagree (33 %)

The first, the third and the 21st statements dealt with the area of computer skills. Around 40 % of the students were of the opinion that they have at least moderate computer skills. In addition, 30 % of the students reported that they easily understand the bases of the subject that they are studying. Finally, the students seemed to believe that they do not have enough knowledge on how to take computers in advantage in teaching. Only three students strongly agreed to know how to use technology when teaching while 33 % of the students partly agreed or disagreed.

The second, 7th and 20th statements dealt with the area of language skills. Of the students, 33 % strongly agreed on having good knowledge on the culture and language that they studied as a major. However, it seems that most of the students (53 %) have language proficiency only in their major language, because only three students agreed on having language proficiency in more than two languages. Finally, only 27 % of the students stated that they act as a language consult to some

extend.

The 6th, 13th and 18th statements dealt with pedagogical skills. The reason for choosing the pedagogical skills as one aspect of expertise was that all the students were studying to become language teachers. Despite of this, 40 % of the students did not believe to possess strong pedagogical knowledge, and none of the students agreed on having strong pedagogical knowledge. Of the students, 40 % reported to often make initiatives. Finally, a clear majority of the students (73 %) believed that their pedagogical skills needed improving. The rest, 27 %, also somewhat agreed to the need of improvement on pedagogical skills.

Most of the statements (4–5, 8–12, 14–17 and 19) dealt with general skills or characteristics of experts. On the whole, a little over a half of the students seemed to get enthusiastic about new things easily. Only two of the students agreed on being innovative, the majority (53 %) could not assess their innovativeness to one way or another. Of the students, 40 % somewhat agreed on the need of improvement in their social skills.

Over a half of the students strongly agreed on analysing their actions critically. Most of the students (40 %) did not have any difficulties in assessing their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, some 40 % of the students reported to look for new challenges in order to develop their expertise. Most of the students (47 %) also somewhat agreed on finding solutions to problems rather easily. Finally, 47 % of the students reported to some extend seeing things from a larger perspective instead of concetrating on details.

To sum up, first it seems that the students' level of computer skills is rather good. Secondly, the students possess language profiency mostly in their major language. Thirdly, the students believed that their pedagogical skills needed improving. Finally, many of the general characteristics of experts, for example good metacognitive or problem-solving skills, were fullfilled among the students.

4.2 Opinions on skills possessed by language experts

This chapter reports the findings which relate to the students' views on what the constituents of language expertise are. In the following examples the reference to the student's responses are made with a special notation, such as [M, Finnish]. The first item is either a letter M or F, the former referring to male student and the latter to a female student. The second item refers to the student's major subject. In addition, the English translation of the student's view is presented after the response in Finnish.

In the present study, the students were asked what kinds of skills and knowledge the language expert should have. Six aspects of different skills were identified: language competence, language proficiency, pedagogical skills, ability to apply the knowledge, social skills and capacity to further develop one's expertise (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Skills that language experts should possess.

Skill	Number of views
Language competence	11
Language proficiency	10
Pedagogical skills	4
Ability to apply knowledge	3
Social skills	2
Capacity to develop expertise	2
Total	32

4.2.1 Language competence and language proficiency

The students seemed to believe that the most desired skills for a language expert are language competence and language proficiency. In language competence, the students identified sociolinguistic competence, grammatical competence and intercultural competence, as in the following example:

(1) Kielen määritelmän monitahoisuuden vuoksi kieliasiantuntijan tulee mielestäni hallita kielen historiaa, kielen eri rekisterit, kieliopillisesti hyväksytyt rakenteet, kyseisen kielialueen kulttuuriakin monipuolisesti. [M, Swedish]

[Because of the complexity of the definition of language, the language expert should in my opinion know the history of the language, different registers, grammatically accepted constructions, the culture of the target language area.]

The sub-competences commonly found in the students' beliefs partly match the competences presented by Canale and Swain (1980, as presented by Johnson 2001: 16). However, none of the students regarded discourse competence and strategic competence as part of the language competence.

As to the language proficiency, nearly all of the students were of the opinion that the language expert should possess profound language skills in the target language, as in the following examples: (2) Kieliasiantuntijalla on vankka kielitaito tietystä kielestä, sen rakenteesta ja käytöstä. [F, German]

[Language expert has s solid language proficiency on a certain language, its structures and usage.]

(3) Kieliasiantuntijalla on teoreettista tietopohjaa kielestä, sen historiasta, toiminnasta ja käytöstä. [F, English]

[A language expert has theoretical knowledge on the language, its history, functions and its use.]

4.2.2 Pedagogical skills

In addition to language competence and language proficiency, the students stated pedagogical skills as one of the skills being necessary for the language expert. This is illustrated in the following examples:

(4) Kielitaitoa, teoreettista taustatietoa kielen rakenteesta, kielenoppimisesta, pedagogista kokemusta ja tietoa, kyky soveltaa taitojaan, esim. kieltenopetuksessa. [F, Finnish]

[Language proficiency, theoretical background knowledge on the structure of the language and on language learning, pedagogical experience and knowledge, ability to apply one's knowledge e.g. in language teaching.]

(5) Hänellä pitäisi olla tietoja kielen omaksumisesta, oppimisesta ja opettamisesta, pedagogisia tietoja ja taitoja. Siis sekä tutkittua tietoa että myös kokemusta. [F, Finnish]

[He should have knowledge on acquiring the language, on language learning and teaching, pedagogical skills and knowledge. That is, both knowledge gained via research and experience.]

Based on the examples above, the students seem to regard pedagogical skills as one of the constituents of language expertise in general. The reason for this view may be that most of the students were studying to become a language teacher, and either had already taken or were going to take part in teacher training. As Pesonen (2003:27) points out, the term language expert is sometimes partly associated also with a language teacher. However, it can be questioned whether other types of language experts such as translators need pedagogical competence.

Interestingly, these two examples are views held by students majoring in Finnish. It remains unclear whether the students of Finnish believe that only foreign language teachers possess enough competences to be called language experts.

4.2.3 Other skills

The students identified the ability to apply knowledge and the capacity to develop one's expertise as other skills that language experts should possess. This is illustrated in the following responses:

(6) Kieliasiantuntijan tulee osata soveltaa tietämystään, jotta hän voisi kehittää eteenpäin jo olemassa olevaa tietouttaan. [F, Finnish]

[The language expert has to be able to apply his knowledge in order to be capable to develop his knowledge bases.]

(7) Kieliasiantuntijalla on kyky tunnistaa ongelmia ja ratkaista niitä tietopohjaa soveltaen. [F, English]

[Language expert has the ability to recognize and solve problems by applying the knowledge.]

The first of these views above (6) is supported by Johansson (2007), because she claims that ability to produce knowledge on the area of specialization is one of the skills belonging to language experts. The other view (7) reflects one of the general characteristics of experts' performance identified by cognitive phychology. As claimed by Glaser and Chi (1988), experts recognize and represent problems in their domain at a more profound level compared to novices. The experts also solve problems faster than novices.

Two students believed that social skills are important for a language expert. This is illustrated in the following example:

(8) Hänellä tulee olla ainakin kohtuullisen hyvät sosiaaliset taidot voidakseen olla vuorovaikutuksessa eri kulttuureista tulevien ihmisten kanssa. [F, English]

[He should have at least moderate social skills, in order to be in social interaction with people from different countries.]

This view is shared by Johansson (2007), for she regards good communication skills and ability to work in groups as general skills of experts. Indeed, these kinds of skills are quite essential for example for language teachers and interprets.

Finally, two students made interesting remarks relating to the categorization of language experts. This is illustrated with the following examples:

(9) Riippuu asiantuntijasta. Tutkija pärjää hyvin teoreettisillakin tiedoilla. Opetustyötä tekevän täytyy myös olla sosiaalinen. [F, Finnish]

[It depends on the language expert. Mere theoretical knowledge is enough for a researcher. A teacher has to also have social skills.]

(10) Tiedot ja taidot riippuvat täysin siitä, mitä asiantuntijalta vaaditaan. [M, Swedish]

[The knowledge and skills depends on what is required from a language expert.]

It seems that these students had apparently categorized persons working with languages into different expert categories which require different kind of language expertise. As noted in chapter 2, the occupational-related competences can also be considered as part of language expertise, since being a teacher, a translator, an interpret or a language consult require different kinds of skills and knowledge, in addition to the language proficiency.

4.3 Insights into language expertise

This section presents data which represents students' views on language expertise. First, the question of who possesses language expertise is addressed. Next, the views on the core of language expertise are analyzed. Finally, the ways of gaining language expertise are identified.

4.3.1 Opinions on who possesses language expertise

In the present study, the students were asked who, in their opinion, possesses language expertise. As expected, the students identified language expertise as a property of students' of languages and persons working closely with languages, as in the following examples:

(11) Kieliasiantuntijuutta on esim. opettajilla, kirjoittajilla, kääntäjillä, tulkeilla sekä muilla kielialan ammattilaisilla. Lisäksi asiantuntijuutta löytyy kielien opiskelijoilta sekä arkielämässä es. monikielisessä ympäristössä toimimaan joutuvilta. [F, English]

[Language expertise is possessed by for example teachers, writers, traducers, interprets and other professionals working in the field of language. In addition, students of languages and people who have to act in multi-language environments have language expertise.]

(12) Opettajat tulevat esinnä mieleen, sitten kielenkääntäjät ja tulkit. [F, Swedish]

[Teachers come first into my mind, then traducers and interprets.]

(13) Kieliasiantuntijuutta on ainakin kielentutkimukseen perehtyneellä tai kieltä opettavalla ihmisellä. [F, Finnish]

[Language expertise is possessed by at least those people who have gotten familiar with language research and people who teach a foreign language.]

These views are in line with some of the views represented by some scholars. As Nuopponen (2003: 20) states, language expert as an umbrella category contains different professionals ranging from language teachers to language consultants and researchers. However, as Nikula (2003: 289) points out, the term language expert cannot be tied closely to one particular profession due to the fact that students who are studying languages at the university level will eventually work in various positions after graduating.

Despite the expected views held by some students, quite a few students seemed to associate language expertise only with professors or other personnel working in the University of Jyväskylä, as in the following examples:

(14) Täytyy myöntää, että en tiedä. Suomen kielen professori Matti Leiwo on osoittanut varsin laajaa tietämystä kieleen liittyen. [F, Finnish]

[I have to admit that I don't know. Matti Leiwo, the professor of Finnish, has proven to have quite extensive knowledge relating to language.]

(15) Jean-Michel Kalmbach (ranskan laitos) [F, French]

[Jean-Michel Kalmbach (Department of French)]

(16) Siis henkilöllä? Maija Kalinilla [F, Language Technology]

[A person? Maija Kalin has.]

This would suggest that the students believe that language expertise is something that only professors or other people working in the university possess. This view may be based on the conceptualization of an expert as a person who has studied a particular subject matter and who knows a lot about the subject, and such a conceptualization can indeed be associated with university professors.

The following views held by two students are opposites. One student believes that language expertise is available for everyone, as in:

(17) Jokaisella, enemmän tai vähemmän. [M, Swedish]

[Everyone has, more or less.]

The other student gives conditions which have to be fulfilled for a person to be able to possess language expertise:

(18) Erityisesti tutkijoilla, heilläkin ehkä vain kapeaan alaan liittyen. Opettajilla, jos he ovat valmiita kehittämään itseään. Sellaisilla ihmisillä, joilla on kokemuksia kahdesta tai useammasta kielestä ja kulttuurista, on esim. asunut joitakin vuosia ulkomailla. [F, English]

[Especially researchers have (language expertise), although their expertise relates only to a narrow domain. Teachers have (language expertise), if they are ready to develop their knowledge. Those people have (language expertise), who have experiences on two or more languages and cultures, e. g. if the person has lived some years abroad.]

Interestingly, none of the students explicitly stated that the KOOKIT students themselves would possess language expertise, even though the students had been studying foreign language or Finnish as a major for an average of 54 credits, which means that the students had been studying at the university for at least two years. The reason for this might be that the students are unaware that they will be graduating as language experts. Another explanation might be that language expertise is related to persons with work experience of many years in languages, such as professors mentioned above. Although the students may realize that they themselves possess more knowledge on language than an average person who has not studied the language and its related areas, the students do not yet regard themselves as language experts, compared to some other, more experienced people near them, or people with several years of experience on working with languages as in the following example:

(19) Kokeneilla, useita vuosia kieliasiantuntijan tehtävissä toimineilla esim. opettajilla, tutkijoilla; niillä, joilla on vahva teoreettinen tieto hallussa, niillä joilla on myös kokemusta ja näkemystä.

[F, Finnish]

[People with experience and who have worked several years as language experts in the field of teaching or in research; those who have strong theoretical knowledge, experience and views on language.]

4.3.2 Views about the core of language expertise

In the present study, the students were asked how they conceptualize the idea of language expertise. Quite a few of the students related language expertise to the general idea of expertise, as in the following example:

(20) Kieliasiantuntijuus on jonkun tai joidenkin kielen osa-alueiden hallitsemista. Ja mielestäni asiantuntijuuteen liittyy vankka kokemuksellinen tai tietoisesti hankittu tieto- ja taitoperusta. [F, Finnish]

[Language expertise means mastering the different areas of a language or various languages. In my opinion, experience or consciously gained skills and knowledge relate to expertise.]

This view seems to support the model of expertise as a conscious and deliberate cognitive process proposed by Glaser and Chi (1988). Similarly, one student shared the view of expertise as a continuous process by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993), as in:

(21) Asiantuntijuus on jatkuvasti kehittyvää ja kieliasiantuntijan täytyy olla hyvin selvillä tiettyyn kieleen liittyvistä tutkimusaloista ja kehityssuunnista. [F, English]

[Expertise is something that evolves constantly and language expert has to be well aware of the research and developments related to a specific language.]

On the whole, according to the students, the core of the language expertise seems to be simply in mastering the different areas of language, as in:

(22) Kieliasiantuntijuus on kielen monipuolista hallitsemista. Se on kieliopin hallintaa, kulttuuristen käytänteiden tuntemusta ja itse kohdekielen kulttuurista tuntemusta. [F, Finnish]

[Language expertise is mastery of language. It includes knowing the grammar and cultural conventions, as well as knowing the culture of the target language.]

(23) Monipuolista osaamista kielen, kulttuurin, opettamisen ja myös mahdollisen erityistaidon suhteen. [F, Language technology]

[It is related to knowledge on the different areas of language, culture, teaching and possible on some special skills.]

However, one student pointed out that the mere language proficiency is not enough, as in:

(24) Kieliasiantuntijuus kattaa pienen osan kielentutkimuksesta. Tavallinen äidinkielen puhuja tai vieraan kielen sujuva puhuja ei ole kielen asiantuntija. Asiantuntijuus edellyttää tutkimista ja perehtymistä johonkin kielen ilmiöön tai alueeseen. [F, Finnish]

[Language expertise covers a small part of language research. Native person or a person fluent in a foregin language is not a language expert. Expertise requires research and familiarizing oneself in a certain area or phenomenon of a language.]

This view would suggest that language expertise is attached to research. In other words, being a fluent language user is not enough for being a language expert, one needs to be also interested in researching the area of language. Therefore, a language expert has to be well aware of the research and developments related to a specific language. This is also illustrated in one of the views presented above (21). These views also support Johansson's (2007) idea about ability to produce knowledge on the area of specialization. After all, the aim of the research is to produce new insights into the specific area, for example, on foreign language learning or the process of traducing technical texts.

4.3.3 Insights into the ways of gaining language expertise

The final question that the students were asked dealt with the possible ways to gain language expertise. The students had many ideas on how language expertise could be achieved. For example:

(25) Oppimalla (lukemalla, tekemällä, kokeilemalla), harjoittelemalla (soveltamalla, työstämällä tietojaan), kokemuksen myötä (havainnoimalla, johtopäätöksiä tekemällä), keskustelemalla, tekemällä yhteistyötä, oppimalla muilta. [F, Finnish]

[By learning (reading, doing, trying out), through training (applying and working on one's knowledge), by gaining more experience (through observation, making conclusions), by having discussions, collaborating and learning from other people.]

This view supports the idea presented by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993), for they suggest that expertise is a continuos processs, through which permanent competences can be achieved. Thus, language expertise could be achieved by constantly working with the language. Indeed, the most common view held by students was that the person has to some way or another be involved with the language, as the following examples suggest:

(26) Kieliasiantuntijuuden voi saavuttaa olemalla kielen ja sitä ympäröivien ihmisten kanssa tekemisissä, perehtymällä syvemmin itse kielen ominaisuuksiin. [M, Swedish]

[One can achieve language expertise by dealing with the language and the people around it, by getting to know the properties of the language in a more profound way.]

(27) Perehtymällä kieleen, jota opiskelee (kielioppiin jne.). Tutustumalla kulttuuriin ja itse oleskelemalla kohdekielisessä maassa. Toimiessaan kohdekieltä puhuvien ihmisten kanssa. [F, Finnish]

[By getting familiar with the language (its grammar etc.). By getting to know the culture and by staying in the country where the target language is spoken. By working with people who speak the target language.]

(28) Olemalla mahdollisimman paljon tekemisissä kielen kanssa (kuuntelemalla, puhumalla, lukemalla, kirjoittamalla kieltä) ja perehtymällä siihen myös analyyttisemmin (eli miksi ja milloin kieltä käytetään niin kuin käytetään). [F, German]

[By being as much as possible in contact with the language (by listening, talking, reading, writing) and getting familiar with the language in a more analytical way (that is, why and when language is used).]

(29) Opiskelemalla, seuraamalla aktiivisesti medioita kieltä käyttävässä maassa, etsimällä tietoa itse, tutustumalla maahan ja ihmisiin. [F, Language Technology]

[By studying, following actively the media of the target language, by searching for information and getting familiar with the country and its people.]

It seems that the students treated acquiring language expertise as the same as studying a foreign language. In other words, language expertise seems to be, in their opinion, available for anyone who is willing to invest time and effort into learning the target language and getting to know its culture, people and habits. One possible reason for this view might be that the students themselves have studied foreign languages for several years and know what it takes to be fluent in a foreign language. However, as pointed out in previous section, having close to native-like language proficiency is not the same as being language expert. Nevertheless, studying a foreign language helps to develop the communicative language competence, which as the extension of language proficiency is one aspect of language expertise.

Even though language expertise could be available for anyone to acquire, one of the students believed that language expertise as such might be something impossible to achieve:

(30) Kieliasiantuntijuuden saavuttaminen lopullisesti on kai mahdotonta. Aina voit kehittää itseäsi kohti lopullista, parempaa asiantuntijuutta, mutta ihannetilaa ei taida olla, ainakaan saavutettavissa. Lähemmäksi sitä pääsee kouluttamalla itseään, hakemalla lisää tietoa ja hankkimalla asiantuntijuuteen liittyviä taitoja. (Täytyy kehittää itseään) [F, Finnish]

[It might be impossible to achieve language expertise. You can always develop your skills towards the final, better expertise, but an ideal state does not exist. At least it is not possible to reach it. One can get closest to it by educating oneself, by getting more information, in addition to knowledge and skills relating to language expertise.]

The possible reason for this view might be that nowadays, the university students are brainwashed to believe in lifelong learning. In other words, one is never ready in the sense that one can learn new things during any point of the course of life. This type of lifelong or continuous learning is highly supported also in the language teacher training.

Finally, a few of the students seemed to believe that achieving language expertise would require some special kinds of abilities, as in:

(31) Asiantuntijuuden saavuttaminen vaatii pitkäjänteisyyttä, erityistä kiinnostusta, kunnianhimoa ja ehkä myös lahjakkuutta. [F, Finnish]

[To achieve language expertise, one needs consistency, special interest, ambition and maybe talent.]

(32) Mielestäni kieliasiantuntijuuden saavuttaminen vaatii asialle omistautumista ja sen tutkimista. Pelkkä kielitaito ei riitä asiantuntijuuteen. [F, English]

[In my opinion, achieving language expertise demands dedication and research. The mere language proficiency is not enough.]

Again, similarly to the previous section, the image of an expert professor or researcher might be behind these two views. These views might also relate to the students' personal experience on conducting research on areas of language, since both views share the idea of dedication. Clearly, researchers at the university have to dedicate themselves to a certain area of their particular interest.

5 CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the present study was to find out how Kookit students conceptualize the notion of language expertise. The focus was on the students' views on the constitutes of language expertise, skills that the language expert should have and the possible ways through which language expertise could be achieved. The analysis of the data was based on models of communicative competences and on the conceptualizations of expertise in general.

The analysis of the data provided some interesting insights on what the constituents of language expertise could be. For example, in addition to language competence and language proficiency, some of the students stated pedagogical skills as part of the skills necessary for the language expert. Also, while some students viewed language expertise as a property of students' of languages and different persons working closely with languages, some students believed language expertise to be accessible only for people with enough interest and dedication in the specific domains of the target language.

It was rather hard to compare the results of the present study with others, since there were not many previous studies on language expertise available, although different occupational-related competences such as teacher or translator competences have been studied in great detail. Nevertheless, the results of the present study seem to support the ideas of expertise as cognitive and continuous processes. In addition, some of the components, skills and knowledge described in the models of communicative competences were distinguished in language expertise.

The present study gave many ideas for further research on the topic. Firstly, the quality of the students' language expertise could be researched in more detail, since the present study did not concentrate on the students' own language expertise in detail. Furthermore, it would be interesting to compare the expertise of different language experts. For example, it would be useful to find out how English language teachers' and translators' language expertise differ, or whether it takes longer to become a language expert in either field. In addition, the factors that shape the development of language expertise and the way language expertise is achieved in practise could provide some fruitful insights into the whole concept. Finally, different ways to teach the different components of language expertise could be also researched in more detail, in order to gather information for the syllabus designers.

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APPENDIX Questionnaire

Kieliasiantuntijuus –kysely

Kyselyn suorittaja: Teija Alasalmi (Proseminaaritutkimus)

Yhteystiedot: teikku@cc.jyu.fi

Tämän kyselyn tarkoituksena on kartoittaa kielen oppimisen ja opettamisen teknologian kurssilaisten käsityksiä kieliasiantuntijuudesta. Kaikki lomakkeet käsitellään luottamuksellisesti, ja antamasi tiedot jäävät vain tutkimuksen tekijän käyttöön. Valitse sopiva vaihtoehto ympyröimällä vastauksesi ja/tai täyttämällä avoin kohta kirjallisesti.

1. Sukupuoli	1. nainen
	2. mies
2. Syntymävuotesi	
3. Pohjakoulutuksesi	1. peruskoulu
	2. lukio
4. Jatkokoulutuksesi	1. opiskelen parhaillaan, suoritettava tutkinto:
	2. opistotason tutkinto
	3. korkeakoulututkinto
5. Nykyinen asemasi	1. opiskelija, pääaine:
	2. tuntiopettaja
	3. aineenopettaja, opetettavat aineet:
	4. lehtori
	5. muu, mikä
6. Kasvatustieteessä suoritettujen	
opintojen opintoviikkomäärä:	
7. Pääaineessa suoritettujen	
opintojen opintoviikkomäärä:	
8. Opetuskokemus	1. ei opetuskokemusta
•	2. alle 1 kuukausi
	3. 1 – 6 kuukautta
	4. yli 6 kuukautta – 1 vuosi
	5. yli 1 vuosi – alle 2 vuotta
	6. yli 2 vuotta – alle 3 vuotta
	7. yli 3 vuotta

Vastaa seuraaviin väittämiin ympyröimällä sopivan vaihtoehdon numero:

1 = täysin samaa mieltä 4 = jokseenkin eri mieltä 2 = jokseenkin samaa mieltä 5 = täysin eri mieltä 3 = osittain samaa mieltä, osittain eri mieltä 6 = ei osaa sanoa

1. Minulla on hyvät yleiset tietotekniset taidot.	
(esim. tekstinkäsittely, sähköposti, www selailu, taulukkolaskenta)	123456
2. Minulla on riittävä tietous opiskelemastani kielestä ja siihen	
liittyvästä kulttuurista.	123456
3. Hahmotan helposti kokonaisuuksia uudessa opiskeltavassa	
asiassa.	123456
4. Innostun uusista asioista helposti.	123456
5. Olen innovatiivinen.	123456
6. Minulla on vankka pedagoginen tietopohja.	123456
7. Toimin usein muiden ihmisten kielikonsulttina heidän kohdatessaan	
ongelmia vieraan kielen parissa.	123456
8. Vuorovaikutustaidoissani on kehittämisen varaa.	123456
9. Löydän helposti ratkaisut tielleni tulleisiin ongelmiin.	123456
10. Kokemus on merkki jonkun asian tai taidon	
erinomaisesta osaamisesta.	123456
11. Analysoin tekemisiäni usein kriittisesti.	123456
12. Hallitsen epävarmoja ja ennustamattomia tilanteita.	123456
13. Teen usein aloitteita.	123456
14. Minun ei ole helppo arvioida heikkouksia ja vahvuuksiani.	123456
15. Etsin uusia haasteita kehittääkseni itseäni ja osaamistani.	123456
16. Katson asioita laajasta näkökulmasta yksityiskohtien sijaan.	123456
17. Minun on helppo sopeutua muutoksiin.	123456
18. Minulla on omassa opettajuudessani vielä paljon kehitettävää.	123456
19. Pyrin ymmärtämään ilmiöiden taustalla olevat seikat,	
oletukset ja rakenteet.	123456
20. Minulla on tavallista perusteellisemmat tiedot useammasta kuin	
kahdesta vieraasta kielestä.	123456
21. Osaan käyttää tietotekniikkaa hyödyksi opetuksessa.	123456

Vastaa seuraaviin kysymyksiin kokonaisilla lauseilla. Voit halutessasi jatkaa paperin kääntöpuolelle. 22. Minkälaisia uusia tietoja ja taitoja olet jo tässä vaiheessa kurssi	a oppinut?
23. Millä kurssin aihealueilla tunnet tarvitsevasi eniten lisäkouluti kehittääksesi osaamistasi liittyen kielen oppimisen ja opettamisen Perustele vastauksesi.	
24. Mitä mielestäsi on hyvä kielitaito?	

25.	Mitä mieltä olet omasta kielitaidostasi? Perustele vastauksesi.	
26.	Mitä ymmärrät jonkun asian osaamisella?	
27.	Mitä ymmärrät käsitteellä kieliasiantuntijuus?	

28. Millaisia tietoja ja taitoja kieliasiantuntijalla tulisi mielestäsi olla? Perustele vastauksesi.
29. Kenellä mielestäsi on kieliasiantuntijuutta?
30. Kuinka kieliasiantuntijuuden voi saavuttaa?
Kiitos vastauksestasi!