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**Negotiating multilingual discourse in a Finland-based online football forum: metapragmatic reflexivity on intelligibility, expertise and 'nativeness'**

Samu Kytölä

Football (soccer) is a highly globalized and polycentric socio-cultural phenomenon, with significant centres in many nation-states on different continents. This is reflected in its transnational and multicultural character, one integral part of which is the often multilingual character of *football discourse* – text and talk *about* football. This makes football discourse a legitimate, yet so far almost completely neglected, target for sociolinguistic studies on multilingualism (Kytölä 2012b, 2013). An important role in the transnationality and mobility of football discourse(s) is played by *mediation* through various mediational means; in the recent decades, the internet has taken a key role in that.

The linguistic-semiotic-discoursal richness and complexity of computer-mediated communication (CMC) have, justifiably, gained increasing attention in sociolinguistic research (Androutsopoulos 2006, 2007, 2011, 2013; Danet & Herring 2007; Leppänen & Peuronen 2012; Leppänen *et al.* 2014). New types of digital discourse formats, genres, and communities have constantly developed in the past twenty years or so, as the required technologies have become available to a rapidly growing number of users. New kinds of sociolinguistic digitally mediated environments and contexts have emerged; they are often multisemiotic, multilingual, and transnational.

Within the broader domain of CMC and digital discourse (Thurlow & Mroczek 2011a, 2011b), this paper delves into a prolonged discourse event in an asynchronous, multi-authored web forum. Close study of web forums can offer us a window to the language use of various groups and communities of practice with multilingual practices. Web forums became a very popular CMC format around the turn of the century (Ternisien 2011; Androutsopoulos 2007; Kytölä 2012a); however, sociolinguistic studies of web forums remain relatively scarce (Androutsopoulos 2007; Sperlich 2005; Hinrichs 2006; McLellan 2005; Peuronen 2011;

cf. Paolillo 2011), and by now (2014), they are also surpassed by research that focuses on more recent CMC formats such as *YouTube* or *Facebook* (Seargeant & Tagg 2014; Androutsopoulos 2010, 2011). Web forums have, however, retained their popularity in the rapid change and hard competition of the field. I have elsewhere (Kytölä 2008, 2012b, 2013) analysed multilingual language use in the *Futisforums*, the two largest Finland-based internet football forums. While some of those works (Kytölä 2012b; Kytölä & Androutsopoulos 2012) focus on the discriminative and exclusive aspects of multilingual language use, particularly the circulation and mimicking use of non-Standard English for purposes of mockery and disparagement (cf. Hill 2008), here I aim to turn from such 'endangering' (Blommaert et al. 2012) multilingualism to a 'benevolent' one by documenting one long *Futisforum* discussion thread on the superstar Jari Litmanen's career turn in Malmö, Sweden. In that respect, this can be read as a 'sister paper' to the two abovementioned ones; reviewed together, these analyses portray an image of the *Futisforum* communities' 'yin and yang' (Kytölä 2013).

Finland-based internet football forums constitute a community of practice, 'a group of people who maintain regular interaction, sharing an interest or a passion for a particular set of phenomena' (Lave & Wenger 1991; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992; Bucholtz 1999). Communities of practice typically have a crafted, idiolectal discourse style, which can be based on standard language varieties but modified with (e.g. lexical) variation that is often exclusive to the community (Androutsopoulos 2006, 2007; Bucholtz 1999). The loose community of practice around *the Futisforums* is framed, by default, in relatively monoethnic, even monolingual terms ('Finnish'), but on the other, involves various types of multilingualism (Kytölä 2013). This constellation of multilingualism can be affected by factors ranging from participant frameworks, polycentric topics of discussion, embedding of 'media quotes' from elsewhere on the internet, as well as framing the writings and discussions for purposes of affiliation, identification, disidentification, joking and making fun, mockery, and (socio)linguistic 'performance' (Bell & Gibson 2011). The goal of this paper is to illustrate the ways in which multilingual individual and shared repertoires are negotiated, regulated and assessed in *Futisforum*. More specifically, I explore a discourse event where a constellation of multilingualism develops around one fandom 'niche':

fans of the ultimate Finnish football superstar Jari Litmanen embedded within a larger community of practice of Finland-based football enthusiasts online on *Futisforum*. Most of this discourse event alternates between uses of Finnish, Swedish, English, graphic emoticons and images.

## Theoretical anchoring points

The theoretical anchoring points of this analysis lie in the social-constructivist study of language as social action (Rampton 2006; Heller 2007; Jørgensen 2008) as well as the sociolinguistic study of code-switching (Gumperz 1982; Heller 1988; Myers-Scotton 1993; Auer 1995; Gardner-Chloros 2009; for more detailed accounts of code-switching in CMC, see Kytölä 2013; Androutsopoulos 2007, 2013). In these data, multilingual language use and variety alternation have the common functions of *situational* discourse organization, identifying between 'we' and 'they' and other acts of identification (see Auer (1995) on preference-related code choices; see also Lee & Barton (2011) for 'identity' in multilingual CMC) as well as metaphorically evoking connotations of 'the other', as for instance in Rampton's (2005) notion of *crossing*, or Sebba's (1993: 137) *animating*. In the 'Litmanen in Malmö' discussion thread analysed below, all of these functions can be noticed, although the interactional dynamics of asynchronous digital writing differ from language alternation in spoken language (see Hinrichs 2006; Androutsopoulos 2006, 2007, 2011; Kytölä 2012a).

Employing the paradigm of code-switching presupposes, to some extent, the existence of discrete 'codes' that can be 'switched' from and to. However, some of the recent developments in sociolinguistics radically contest the *a priori* separability and discreteness of 'codes' (languages or their varieties) in favour of concepts such as heteroglossia, hybridity and polylingualism (Pennycook 2007, 2010; Heller 2007; Jørgensen 2008; Blommaert 2010; Androutsopoulos 2011; Leppänen 2012). Written code alternation differs from spoken code-switching in two particular ways:

(1) it is a cognitively different process to alternate between varieties in speech than in writing. Importantly, not all speech should be regarded as spontaneous, nor is all writing careful or rhetorical (cf.

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Tannen 1982). Quite the contrary, spoken word can be prewritten with great rhetorical care, while written language can be very spontaneous, hasty. These are complicated matters of genre and register, not exclusively of mode or modality (cf. Hymes 1996: 25–46). However, it seems warranted to start from the tentative observation that web forum discourse (e.g. the *Futisforum* excerpts discussed here) can come about in rhetorically conceived, revised, asynchronously produced chunks – very different from everyday speech.

(2) A different variety of online affordances are available, for instance, copy-pasting, self-help language websites, *Wikipedia*, or machine translation; and due to the asynchronous nature of the format, time lapse between posts (turns) can be anything from a second to a very long hiatus in the discussion. For my current purposes, I draw on code-switching terminology to some extent where applicable, but the overall perspective I adopt here is rather on the negotiation of language choice, negotiation of meaning in multilingual language use, as well as attitudes voiced towards particular uses of language. This view has been informed by recent discussions by Rampton (2005) on *crossing*, Coupland (2007) and Rampton (2006) on *stylization*, Bell & Gibson (2011) on *performance*, Blommaert (2010) on *resources* and *repertoires*, Heller (2007) on 'bilingualism as social practice', Pennycook (2010) on 'language as a local practice' and Jørgensen (2008) on *polylingual languaging*.

For the purposes of the sociolinguistic analysis of computer-mediated discourse (CMD), Androutsopoulos has adopted and further applied this theoretical-methodological discussion; I draw here from his (Androutsopoulos 2007) concept of combining quantitative takes on language distribution and choice in web forum discourses with micro-level sequential dynamics of the actual discussions. Here the main focus is on the latter, but see Kytölä (forthcoming) for a more quantitatively configured analysis. Androutsopoulos (2013) further suggests a number of discourse functions for code alternation in CMD, of which applicable to the present analysis are: a) formulaic discourse purposes, b) performance of culturally specific genres, c) conveying reported speech (here: via writing), d) marking jocularity or seriousness, and, importantly, e) switching to address a particular interlocutor (below especially nickname 'billie'). Another development Androutsopoulos (2013) suggests is the analytical separation of multilingual online language use from online code-

switching, reserving the latter to cover only dialogical, sequential formats. This is a legitimate argument as the canonical code-switching epistemology and terminology arguably fit dialogical, 'conversation-like' communication best; however, we should note that web forums offer many affordances for language use that are non-sequential, or sequential in a very different way from the canonical view of 'conversations'.

## Online football writing in *Futisforum* as sociolinguistic data

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The primary data for this article are taken from *Futisforum*[1], the largest Finnish football forum on the web of its time (ca. 1997–2006). *Futisforum* was the first Finland-based web discussion forum for football; its earliest version dates from 1997 (Kytölä 2013, Section 2). In the course of years, it became a space for football enthusiasts to negotiate and co-construct their individual and shared fandoms, both discursively across the internet and in embodied ways (football events and get-togethers). *Futisforum2* (*FF2*)[2] was launched independently by one activist in 2006 to complement and, later, to largely replace the badly managed and badly functioning original *Futisforum*. A distinctive new community in its own right, *FF2* carries on much of the functional, practical, discursive and linguistic heritage from the original *Futisforum*. My research projects on this topic (Kytölä 2012a, 2012b, 2013, forthcoming; Kytölä & Androutsopoulos 2012) deal with both of these forums as well as other football websites. In March 2007 – my closest checkpoint for the present stretch of data – the number of registered *Futisforum* members was 42,300, the number of topics 32,000, and the number of postings 1.6 million. These numbers have even been surpassed by *Futisforum2* in the subsequent years. Due to this sheer volume, any quantitative, qualitative or ethnographic study of such active forums is bound to be highly selective, and based on a period of orientating observation. Indeed, this article analyses in more detail just one discussion thread (approx. 530 posts), selected from a much larger mass of related online discussions.

The format of the web forum is technically public and freely available to any web user, although many forums require registration or other preliminaries for advanced use. From the ethical point of view, researching and reporting on web forum discourse is a grey

area; despite the technical and practical openness, many communities and users actually appropriate forum discussions for very personal matters, and this can raise ethical caveats (for more, see Sixsmith & Murray 2001, Brownlow & O'Dell 2002, Kralik *et al.* 2005, Hinrichs 2006, Kytölä 2013). Here I follow the overarching principle that everything I use as 'data' is, or was, openly available online, and the authors on the topic wrote their contributions openly, aware of the public nature of the forum. However, I have changed some of the nicknames (such as 'billie') for caution's sake, in absence of a more informed view on how the thousands of forumists themselves would like to be researched (a warranted topic for further research). As pointed out in Kytölä (2013), most feedback I have received from the forumists on these research topics has been positive. Moreover, I have been careful not to discuss very personal issues; the analysis mainly stays on the level of the multilingual performance. This does not, however, mean a total avoidance of analysing personal conflict; such a strict principle would arguably be superfluous.

The multilingual practices and outcomes on the Finnish *Futisforums* can be located in the nexus of three major socio-historical developments: the transformation of football fandom in Finland, the current trends in the macro-sociolinguistics of Finland, particularly the increase of English (Leppänen *et al.* 2009, 2011; Leppänen 2007; Leppänen & Nikula 2007), as well as the rapid explosion of internet use in less than a decade's time. The *Futisforums* are clearly targeted to Finnish-speaking Finns (cf. Androutsopoulos 2007; Peuronen 2011); this shows in the thematic division into Finnish-only named sub-forums, the general run of topics in any sub-forum, and the predominance of Finnish in the actual discussions. While many members self-portray as Swedish-speakers or bilinguals, the actual use of Swedish outside the framing elements (headings, usernames, slogans, signatures; Kytölä submitted) is relatively rare, mainly occurring in topics about the Swedish-speaking world. My years of observation also suggest an increase in *Futisforums* members with immigrant background, mostly second-generation, writing mainly in appropriate Finnish generally approved of by the peer members. Furthermore, permanent non-Finnish writers who do not know Finnish are relatively few, although there have been many temporary ones, triggering discussion threads that have actually become some of my richest research data. In addition to the explicitly and implicitly flagged default Finnish, Standard written English appears to be more or less accepted and understood by all contributing members, making it a communicative resource that has much currency and a range of possible uses. However, we should remember that most users of social

media platforms on the internet are 'lurkers'; i.e. they only read the online content but do not actively contribute to the discourse. In a study of multilingualism, we only get the active authors' multilingual outputs but can only guess how non-writing 'lurkers' understand, appreciate, or silently react to them.

While there is certainly visible use of other codes than Finnish and English, they mostly occupy specialized niches (e.g. German in discussion about German football) and are often discouraged in discussions as shown in negative metapragmatic reflexivity (Kytölä 2013). Standard English, in contrast, is mostly taken for granted, although based on the frequent meta-talk about its use, also certain criticism is targeted at it. Forms of 'appropriated' English (Kytölä 2013) range from smallest ingredients of language (morphemes in mixed lexemes, single lexemes, formulaic phrases) to extended pieces of discourse and the issue of language choice (e.g. English as the dominant language of discourse events).

Before I turn to the actual data analysis, a short note on my positioning *vis-à-vis Futisforum*, and the Finnish online football community at large, is in place. Although I have later found contacts among the football fans and online writers in addition to my previously existing networks in grassroots football activities (clubs, teams, juniors, fans), my own perspective at the time of collecting these particular data was not as much ethnographically grounded (cf. Thomsen et al. 1998; Hine 2000; Rutter & Smith 2005; Markham 2005; Androutsopoulos 2008) as in my later work (Kytölä & Androutsopoulos 2012; Kytölä 2013). In 2005–2006, I still considered that it was essential not to participate or interfere with the discussions in order to obtain 'more naturalistic' data; I was only partly an insider, as I had followed *Futisforum* from a non-researcher's perspective for a year or two. During the observation period (for this data excerpt: approx. 10 months), my role transformed from a casual follower to that of a tentative researcher on the topic. I did have a username on the forum at the time that the thread surfaced, but I mainly used it for discussing limited topics (e.g. Finnish lower divisions in my district). Thus, I was not a participant in the analysed texts myself; actually I only began to have the first budding research interests towards the topic when the present Litmanen thread was already in full swing. Towards the latter half of the thread, I was following the thread more 'in real time' (daily), already considering it a potential research topic (for more, see Kytölä & Androutsopoulos 2012; Kytölä 2013).

## Themes and motives

There are several motives for selecting this particular 'mundane' discourse event for a more detailed analysis from the massive body of online football sites I have observed and researched from a sociolinguist's perspective. First, I aim to balance the overall picture drawn in my research project on these football forums, where, at an early stage, I became interested precisely in the discriminative aspects (e.g. mockery, racism) of the use of multilingual writing resources online. This article attempts to fulfil its role in doing justice to the creative, 'benevolent' and collaborative aspects of the Finnish *Futisforumists'* linguistic-semiotic performance, which I value as highly as I regret the discrimination cases of the same forums and communities (Kytölä 2012b, 2013). While it has been at times striking and devastating to go through discussion topics where use of linguistic (or other) resources are the target or rude ridicule and exclusion (and heavily indexical of issues such as race, ethnicity and nationality), here I have been able to join the celebration of a magnificent player and his successes. I have shared the same supporter's joy several times when following Litmanen, other Finnish players, or Finland's national team via these forums or other social media.

Second, these data contain a fair share of Swedish, clearly the third largest language from which *Futisforumists* draw communicative resources. Swedish deserves a place here, even as the main empirical focus is on uses of English. It is illuminating to show alternatives to the polarized public debates; indeed, Swedish in Finland is often ascribed two contrasting positions (see Salo 2012; cf. also Leppänen & Pahta 2012 for English in Finland). It is, at one end, the esteemed language of long tradition, culture and heritage that should be cherished and cultivated, to the extent that it should be an obligatory object of study to everyone in the country. Or, at the other extreme, it is the cause of frustration and source of loud protests and hate talk. Unjustly, views and discourses falling between (or often outside) these two poles have been unnoticed or neglected, but investigating them in different contexts and domains would give a much more nuanced and truthful picture of the holistic phenomenology of the Swedish language for Finns. Indeed, as suggested by what the Litmanen fans

make out of bits of Swedish in the particular ‘microcosm’ depicted here, Swedish can be a tool of instrumental value in achieving shared or individual goals, keeping ‘the story going’, a language of utility in the pursue of everyday interests, a language of creative joking and mockery – while it can simultaneously be a language of frustration, bitterness and negative feelings.

Third, I wish to document and draw attention to recent manifestations and realizations of collaborative literacy events and collective meaning-making online within a distinctive format that has been around since the turn of the millennium. These tendencies are prone to rapid changes as readily available machine translation online improves over time, but so far (by 2014) the available online translation sites are arguably insufficient for nuanced meaning making. Thus, collaborative work for informational purposes is still highly valued.

Fourth, I want to illustrate how Finnish writers make *in situ* expertise claims on the acceptability and authenticity of English and Swedish which, in a more traditional applied linguistic view, would be regarded as ‘foreign language’ or ‘L2’ to the majority of them. This thread aptly illustrates the ‘expertise vs. nativeness’ issue that frequently surfaces in the metapragmatic discussion on the correctness and ownership of languages in the middle of ‘on-topic’ football discussions. This type of self-ascription and appropriation seems to me relatively common not only in the football forums examined for this research project, but also across Finnish participatory media. While the notions of ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speakers still prevail strong among language users – partly justifiably as the notions still have purchase – they seem by no means to constrain or prevent various kinds of language expertise claims. The ‘nativeness’ of the allegedly English participant is here contested in a way that deserves attention (cf. Rampton 1990, 1999, 2006, 2005: 320–326). The participation of nickname ‘billie’ makes this subset of data ‘intercultural’ in a more traditional, essentialist sense. However, the analysis suggests that as we pay close attention to the rich and dense fabrics of sequential interaction, there is more to the language alternation there than simply equating all uses of English with the presence of a non-Finnish interlocutor.

Finally, Jari Litmanen, the ultimate Finnish football superstar, has been one of the truly long-lasting, ‘hot’ discussion topics in the

entire history of the two *Futisforums*. It seems justified to devote one piece of analysis to a prominent topic where so many of the passions and expectations, disappointments, joys and sorrows of this community of practice can be observed.

In what follows is a micro-level interactional analysis of one discussion thread where several 'life-worlds' come to meet in a nexus (Scollon & Scollon 2004): Jari Litmanen's international superstardom (impeded by injuries), Finnish and international fandom of Litmanen, Swedish interest in and coverage of Litmanen's turns in Malmö, and the Finnish *Futisforum* as a nexus for the practice (Scollon & Scollon 2004) of performing and living that shared fandom. The discussion thread can be regarded in a more traditional perspective as 'trilingual', the discussion alternating between Finnish, Swedish and English, with rare switches into other languages. However, since the recent, more social-constructivist positioning to multilingualism has been central to my research, I emphatically wish to place a caveat on the utilization of terminology such as 'trilingual' or 'code-switching' (with the implication that there are always discrete 'codes' to switch from or into; see Gardner-Chloros 2009, Sebba *et al.* 2012, Blommaert 2010, Rampton 2005 [1995]). One can argue for a tentative overview that features from three languages – Finnish, English and Swedish – are utilised, but they are mixed, switched into, and crossed into in particular, situated ways (both patterned and idiosyncratic, both predictable and unpredictable). Yet, adopting an *emic* view based on my long-term observations of the *Futisforums*, it is valid to assume that the three separate languages make sense to the participants as three separate *sets of resources* that appear to have distinctive and discernible functions *most of the time*. These main functions can become blurred, fluid and contested in the course of the interaction chain. Moreover, perhaps unpredictable linguistic resources outside the three 'main languages' of interaction, as well as semiotic resources such as pictures or moving pictures, are drawn upon in meaning-making in the overall sequence, as will be shown in some of the examples below.

## "Litti Malmön riveihin" – a topic of interest in *Futisforum*

The core data discussed here, the discussion topic devoted to Litmanen's time in Sweden, date from 2005–2006 when Jari Litmanen had a contract with Malmö FF – a long (approx. 10 months) collective discourse and literacy event. Parallel discussions were going on in *Futisforum* (and later, *Futisforum2.org*) about Jari Litmanen in the national team, but this discussion is mainly about his career turns in Malmö. ("Litti" is Litmanen's common nickname, while "Malmön riveihin" means literally "to the ranks of Malmö". Appendix 1 contains meta-information on the dataset.) That particular historical and sociocultural moment – combined with the concurrent strong emergence of new forms of Finnish football fandom online – gave rise to a particular realization of multilingual discourse on the Finnish *Futisforum*, where nuances of largely (Standard) Swedish and English chunks of 'primary' information from various sources were discussed mainly in Standard and colloquial Finnish, between Finnish-speaking Finns. Like fandoms of all international superstars, this Litmanen fandom is by no means restricted to the confines of Finland, or speakers of Finnish, but is shared by football enthusiasts across ethno-linguistic or national borders, involving a community of Finnish-speaking fans, one ardent non-Finnish fan and the mediation of Swedish source texts across the Web. When an aspiring, allegedly non-Finnish discussant enters the discussion with inquiries in English about Litmanen, the micro-sociolinguistics of that discussion thread is transformed. The subsequent part of the discourse skein is the main focus of this paper: the interaction so far based largely upon the shared fandom of Litmanen and following his ups-and-downs career in Sweden (i.e. mainly staying 'on-topic') evolves into an arena of negotiation of linguistic resources (i.e. it starts to go 'off-topic'). The fandom of Jari Litmanen is shared by one non-Finnish participant, 'billie' (pseudonym changed here), along with news on Litmanen mediated through Swedish and Finnish media quotations, creating a benevolent spirit throughout the discourse event. Peer interpretation between Finnish, Swedish and English is provided – first upon 'billie's' request and later also without it. The multilingual resources-in-use appear to be regulated by certain Finnish forum members to an overall ethos of benevolence, inclusion and equality; however, particularly the non-Standard orthographic features of the alleged native speaker's English also become the subject of humour, mockery

and sarcastic meta-talk, to the point that the entire concept of 'nativeness' is at stake.

The allegedly English discussant 'billie' is rather warmly (yet jokingly) welcomed in the collective fandom of the Finnish superstar Jari Litmanen; she becomes one key participant in this *Futisforum* thread. Before her arrival (first posting), the topic went on for roughly 10 weeks (380 messages). As Litmanen was playing for Malmö FF, Sweden, the topic had already at that point been framed as multilingual, containing abundant information mediated through Swedish, mainly in the form of copy-pasted news items and articles, but also negotiations and speculations about the diverse nuances of the Swedish source texts. The thread had developed into collaborative work of making sense of the Swedish sources. This (2005) was a time when free online machine translation was used less frequently and less routinely, which also affects the negotiation of meaning of texts by members with varying competences and backgrounds. My observations and notes at the time (2005–2007) as well as purposeful retrospective searches show that *Babel Fish* was among the most used online translation software (it was used to translate from Dutch, Japanese, Russian and several other languages into the mediating language English, as Finnish was not available), while my more recent observations, notes and searches in *FF2.org* imply the growing popularity of *Google Translate*.

Part of this language alternation can be modelled in the overall framework of code-switching. First, the alternation of Swedish and Finnish is mainly motivated by the mediation, where source texts written by Swedish reporters are mediated through the technique of copy-pasting – often only a matter of a few seconds for the writer – to the forum. The Swedish elements that occur in the Finnish-writing discussants' posts are mainly drawn from the copy-pasted excerpts. This can be interpreted as an instance of situational code-switching; the Swedish source text travels from its earlier context and 'participates' in the discussion through mediation. Alternatively, we can view this phenomenon (very common in many types and formats of digital communication) through the concept of *entextualization* (Bauman & Briggs 1990; Blommaert 2005: 47; Kytölä 2013; Leppänen *et al.* 2014), which describes the travelling of chunks of discourse from a context to another, or the concept of *double-voicing* (or *multi-voicing*; Bakhtin 1984). Second, 'billie's' inclusion in the

scene is a relatively clear-cut case of situational code-switching, where a distinct change in the participant framework is the main motivating factor for uses of English. However, at this point *metapragmatic reflexivity* (Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 7–9; Kytölä 2013) within the discourse event is progressively heightened: issues that become at stake are different interpretation options, expertise debates in relation to expertise in English, and 'billie's' legitimacy and credibility as a participant. While these data operate on relatively clear-cut divisions of labour between the relatively bounded languages Finnish, Swedish and English, at certain points they become fuzzy and blurred. The entire range of heteroglossia and hybridity in this discourse sequence cannot be interpreted through traditional code-switching categories.

## "Litti Malmön riveihin" – a chronological overview of the thread

Below (Table 1) is a chronological overview of the node points in the thread analysed here.

Table 1. Chronological overview of the topic "Litti Malmön riveihin"

| **Date** | **Event** |
|---|---|
| 7 July 2005 | The topic is started with a copy-pasted news item from the online version of the Swedish newspaper *Sydsvenskan*; a flood of responses |
| 6 August 2005 | Litmanen makes his debut in Malmö FF; only a few responses; quotes from Swedish media texts |
| 23 August 2005 | Malmö FF are relegated from UEFA Champions League qualification; Litmanen is injured and does not play |
| 19 September 2005 | 'billie' enters the discussion, asking help in English (with smiley emoticons); English becomes the third main language of the thread |
| 17 October 2005 | First metapragmatic evaluation of the Finns' helpful translations for 'billie' |
| 8 November 2005 | First rude critiques of the helpful translations for 'billie' |
| 9 November 2005 | Overtly expressed suspicions about 'billie's' identity |
| 10 November 2005 | News about Litmanen's first child hit the forum |
| 14 November 2005 | Estonian is used for the first time: 'billie' asks for translation from Estonian into English |
| 22 November 2005 | Metapragmatic talk on the understandability of Swedish |

| Date | Event |
|---|---|
| | emerges again |
| 2 December 2005 | When asked directly, ‘billie’ states that she is from England |
| 3 December 2005 | Contestation of English people’s writing skills in English |
| 16 December 2005 | Mock-English is used as implicit metapragmatic commentary |
| 20 January 2006 | ‘billie’ receives a sarcastic, slightly malevolent reply to a translation request |
| 8 March 2006 | A friendly forumist offers ‘billie’ a Litmanen mouse mat, which arouses benevolently framed envy |
| 20 March 2006 | Metapragmatic discussion on the understandability of Swedish emerges again |
| 3 May 2006 | Litmanen makes a comeback from the injured list; the topic is on fire |
| 8 May 2006 | Malmö FF’s match broadcast on Swedish TV; the topic turns into a live following; forumists try to make sense of the commentators’ Swedish |
| 10 May 2006 | A link to an interview with Litmanen in Swedish; metacommentary on Litmanen’s Swedish skills |
| 11 May 2006 | Litmanen shines in a league match; very intense live following |
| 12 May 2006 | Interlocutors rejoice over Litmanen’s success; nonsensical Arabic text is copy-pasted in a jocular manner (along with an alleged Finnish paraphrase) |
| 12 May 2006 | Metapragmatic discussion on Litmanen’s language skills |
| 23 May 2006 | ‘billie’ posts an inquiry about Litmanen in the Finnish national team |
| […] | […] |
| 26 June 2006 | By this date the thread had disappeared due to the malfunctioning of *Futisforum* |

These node points were selected for the timeline to illustrate the overall anatomy of this thread; a closer sequential analysis can help us understand the organization of online discourse events. In these turning points, something significant happened that caused major changes in the tone or the pace of the discussion. Key points that were related to language alternation were specifically included in this timeline.

## "Litti Malmön riveihin" – a quantitative breakdown of the languages

In this quantitative overview, I will only deal with the messages in the thread between 'billie's' arrival (19 September 2005) and the last message (24 May 2006) that I managed to retrieve, when saving observed *Futisforum* data on 5 June 2006. I was able to retrieve earlier parts of this thread posthumously through *Google's* cache function once the thread had disappeared from the forum. However, I will exclude the messages posted prior to 19 September 2005, since the most relevant collaboration and negotiation sequences with our present foci in mind begin upon 'billie's' arrival. Prior to that, most of the language alternation was between Finnish and Swedish, and Swedish occurred mainly in copy-pasted excerpts and their paraphrasing. All messages posted to this thread during that period are counted in the figures, with the exception of cases where exactly the same message was accidentally posted two or more times.

Table 2 is another chronological overview of the discussion thread, showing that the amount of activity varied considerably, being particularly busy in May 2006 upon Litmanen's comeback from the injury list. Despite Litmanen's immense popularity, this thread is not particularly active in *Futisforum's* standards; I would argue that this is mostly due to Litmanen's persistent injury at the time; moreover, he was simultaneously being discussed under other topics.

Table 2. The number of posts per month

| **Month** | **The number of posts** | **To note** |
|---|---|---|
| 19–30 Sep 2005 | 16 | Litmanen injured |
| Oct 2005 | 11 | Litmanen injured |
| Nov 2005 | 44 | end of season 2005 in Sweden |
| Dec 2005 | 31 | off-season |
| Jan 2006 | 26 | off-season |
| Feb 2006 | 11 | off-season |
| Mar 2006 | 76 | off-season |
| Apr 2006 | 34 | beginning of season 2006 in Sweden; Litmanen injured |
| 1–24 May 2006 | 281 | Litmanen's comeback |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Total** | **530** | (divided into 14 subpages (max. 40 postings per subpage) |

Table 3 below, in turn, shows a general quantitative breakdown of the languages used in the thread "Litti Malmön riveihin". One post was chosen as one unit of analysis here; and the code-switched posts are categorised according to the language combination therein. Graphic emoticons (see Appendix 2) and pictures are analysed as categories of their own only when they occur on their own, without an accompanying text in some 'language'. For the purposes of this rough analysis, pictures and graphic emoticons within otherwise 'languaged' messages are ignored.

Table 3. The languages used in the 530 posts in the thread "Litti Malmön riveihin"

| **Language(s)** | **The number of posts** | **% of the posts in the entire sequence** |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| Finnish | 277 | 52.3 % |
| English | 103 | 19.4 % |
| Finnish + English | 44 | 8.3 % |
| Finnish + Swedish | 55 | 10.4 % |
| Swedish | 16 | 3.0 % |
| Finnish + English + Swedish | 2 | 0.4 % |
| English + Estonian | 2 | 0.4 % |
| Finnish + Arabic | 2 | 0.4 % |
| 'Forumese' | 3 | 0.6 % |
| pictures only | 4 | 0.8 % |
| graphic emoticons only | 18 | 3.4 % |
| URL hyperlink without a distinguishable language | 3 | 0.6 % |
| letters but no language | 1 | 0.2 % |
| **Total** | **530** | **100 %** |

This table shows the general distribution of languages in this microcosm of Finland-based, transnational online Litmanen fandom within a particular time frame. During this time, the allegedly English member 'billie' posted 61 messages, of which the majority are contained in the 103 English-only posts. In some of her messages,

there was Finnish as well, as she often posted Finnish quotes, asking for their English translations. These are included in the 'Finnish + English' category. Finnish is the dominant language of the thread, but for a Finnish forum, 52 % is relatively low figure. In addition, Finnish is found in 103 code-switched posts (19.4 % of all). Most of the English usages (also 19.4 % of all) are by 'billie' or in response to her, but there are also English posts motivated by other factors. 28.5 % of the posts contain some form of English. 3 % of the posts are 'Swedish only', but Swedish combined with Finnish (and English) occurs in a further 10.8 %. The posts in no particular language (pictures, emoticons, hyperlinks) constitute 4.9 % of the posts.

This breakdown should be read as a tentative overview using a post as a unit of analysis. In the social reality of the lived experience (or retrospective reading of the thread), different posts are uneven in their length, informational value or impressiveness. Moreover, in discourse such as this, the categories are imprecise and do not give a nuanced picture of the items that were counted in them. Nevertheless, this quantitative breakdown helps us notice that the discussion in focus is, in fact, highly multilingual, even if allegedly every participant except 'billie' is a native or proficient speaker of Finnish, and even if *Futisforum* is in many ways framed as Finnish. Due to her real forum pseudonym, I take 'billie' as a female, and she certainly creates a female impression in many ways; however, this becomes an issue only sporadically. Strangely enough, 'billie's' gender does not appear to be a salient factor for the participants who actively discuss Jari Litmanen. This is in stark contrast with other *Futisforum* writers identified as female: their gender is frequently made a 'big issue' even under serious topics. It could even be that a major part of the discussants in these Jari Litmanen related topics do not realize that 'billie's' real (nick)name has a strong female connotation (even for me, this was ambiguous in the beginning due to the surrounding context, where most writers are and are assumed to be males). For the purposes of this article, where it is practical to distinguish between 'billie' and the Finnish participants, I use the generic 'he/him/his' for all other discussants that are referred to, although some of them might also be female – or prefer any gender identification not strictly male or female.

Next, let us have a look at eight different examples from the same thread; each of them illustrates different facets of the negotiation of multilingual resources and expertise.

### "Litti Malmön riveihin" – qualitative analyses of node points

Nickname 'billie' had actually made her entry earlier in *Futisforum*, joining in a discussion on Litmanen's time in his previous club, Hansa Rostock (2005). That earlier Litmanen topic, however, runs dry and is collectively discontinued in June 2005 as Litmanen's contract in Rostock ends. On 7 July 2005, the new topic is opened, titled "Litti Malmön riveihin", as indicated in the headings of these subsections. This is done by the very prolific forum member 'shots' (this nickname not changed), who posts a verbatim quote from the online edition of the Swedish daily *Sydsvenskan*, stating in standard written Swedish that Jari Litmanen is moving from Hansa Rostock to Malmö, Sweden (the contract eventually lasted from July 2005 to August 2007). There are no further comments by the poster: neither a summary in Finnish nor any opinion or response related to the news. The first message 'sets the scene' for the new thread about Jari Litmanen's career in Malmö (see Example 1).

**Litti Malmön riveihin**

Goto page 1, 2, 3 ... 14, 15, 16 Next

new topic | post reply | FutisForum Forum Index -> Suomalaiset pelaajat sekä joukkueet ulkomailla

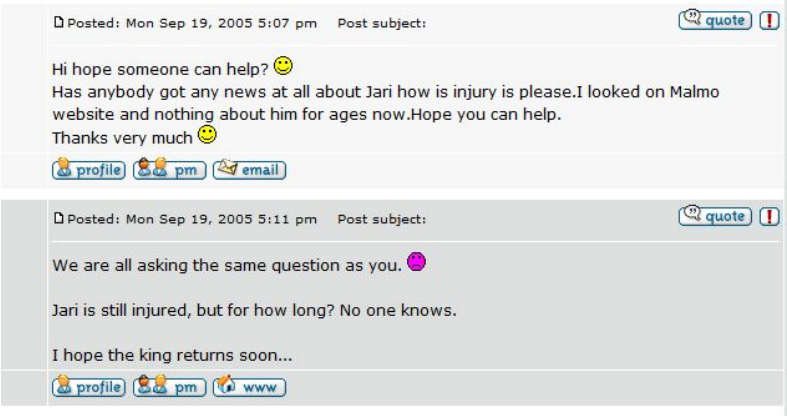
View previous topic :: View next topic

| Author | Message |
|---|---|
| **Shots**<br><br>Joined: 30 Nov 2003<br>Posts: 4691<br>Location: Pääkaupunkiseutu | Posted: Thu Jul 07, 2005 1:42 pm  Post subject: Litti Malmön riveihin  quote<br><br>Finsk fotbollsstjärna klar för MFF<br>Av Kent Jönsson<br>Senast uppdaterad 7 juli 2005 12:35<br><br>Finlands första internationella fotbollsstjärna ska hjälpa Malmö FF ut i Europa. Enligt vad Sydsvenskan erfar är Jari Litmanen klar för klubben. 34-åringen och MFF är överens om ett kontrakt på sex månader.<br><br>MALMÖ. Jari Litmanen har tonvis med internationell rutin. Han har spelat cirka 70 landskamper för Finland.<br><br>Moderklubben är Lathi. 1992 tog han steget över till Ajax och utvecklades snabbt till en betydelsefull spelare för Amsterdamklubben. 1999 skrev han på för Barcelona.<br><br>Därefter har han även haft kortare nedslag i Liverpool, Ajax igen, och Lathis. I vintras flyttade han till Hansa Rostock.<br>Kontraktet med den tyska klubben gick ut i juni.<br><br>Jari Litmanen är användbar både som mittfältare och anfallare - men framförallt: han har rutin från stora sammanhang och kan hjälpa MFF i kvalet till Champions League.<br><br>http://sydsvenskan.se/sport/article111445.ece |
| Back to top | profile \| pm |

Example 1. The opening message of the topic “Litti Malmön riveihin”.

In the quoted news, Litmanen’s Finnish home city, Lahti (in Finnish Swedish ‘Lahtis’) is misspelled (‘Lathi’), which becomes a target of meta-commentary. A dialogue emerges between the Swedish news items that continue to be posted in this topic and the forum’s ‘base language’ Finnish. Together, the interlocutors try to make sense of what is going on with Litmanen in Malmö. Also metapragmatic reflexivity about the use of Swedish, and certain forumists’ knowledge of it, begins early in this thread. For the purposes of the present analysis, however, let us move to 19 September 2005, the point where nickname ‘billie’ enters the participant framework (Herring 2007). This is approximately ten weeks and 380 messages into the discussion thread. While ‘billie’ had registered on the forum earlier (perhaps already in 2002), it is here that she makes her ‘big debut’ to the others. Her first message is, as with most entrés to the two *Futisforums* by

non-Finns, a request for information on a Finland-related topic. ‘billie’ does not introduce herself explicitly, but she frames her message with a greeting, a polite ending and two positively oriented emoticons (smiling faces, ‘smileys’).




Example 2. Nickname ‘billie’s’ arrival in the discussion thread (nicknames are cropped out from screenshots from this point onwards).

In the next couple of weeks, ‘billie’s’ frequent interest in this discussion appears to be what Swedish first-hand sources write about Litmanen’s career start in Sweden; her numerous explicit requests to forumists to interpret for her are often spiced up by positive, laughing emoticons. The other forumists provide translations, both at request and without request. ‘billie’ is thus introduced to the fan community in a relatively friendly way, although much of the discussion continues to go on in Finnish. There is occasional suspicion and contestation of ‘billie’s’ identity as well as metapragmatic reflexivity on the acceptability of the Finns’ English translations.

On 9 November 2005, ‘billie’ phatically states “People are so kind here.”, which triggers further suspicion about her online identity. There are allegations of heavy-user forumists of keeping six ‘side nicks’, multiple pseudonyms by the same real-life person; ‘billie’ is indeed regarded by some forumists to be one more jocular ‘side nick’. Both the common practice of *Futisforum’s* ‘side nicks’ and these allegations can be regarded as humorous, playful performance. Such

jocular performance can be seen in Example 3 below, with the added allegation of “Mr. Ye”, the Chinese businessman who was accused of a big tangle of betting fraud in Finland (and elsewhere) in 2005.

Posted: Wed Nov 09, 2005 11:29 pm Post subject: quote !

[redacted] wonders whose sixth nick [redacted] is (which is ironic at least, if I may add) and [redacted] thinks it´s his own.

You can ignore it anyway, these allegations are VERY typical on this Forum. That´s because there has been several cases before, and everyone´s a bit paranoid about these multinick-writers. 😀

profile pm email

Posted: Wed Nov 09, 2005 11:50 pm Post subject: quote !

Mr. Ye, is that you?

profile pm www AIM

Posted: Wed Nov 09, 2005 11:58 pm Post subject: quote !

Hey [redacted], you can fool [redacted], but not me. I happen to know that You're just another nick sent by the evil powers of the UG to pester and provoke the simple minds of FutisForum. I've been told this by my sources within the UG.

And if you really are a foreigner, there's an easy way to prove it: Just list the adjectives used by your local newspaper to describe Nico Rosberg.

Just kidding 😈

P.S. Have you heard about Tomi Saarelma?

Example 3. Discussion and suspicion about ‘billie’s identity’.

Nickname ‘billie’ takes a playful, unoffended stance towards the accusations and suspicions voiced towards her identity, attempting to answer the ‘shibboleth’ questions addressed to her (Example 3). Moreover, she specifies – for the first time in this thread – her home country, England.

Four days later, the tripartite constellation of Finnish, Swedish and English in this topic becomes, if only temporarily, more complicated as ‘billie’ quotes an Estonian piece of news about the

birth of Litmanen's first son and requests for a translation (see Example 4).

Posted: Mon Nov 14, 2005 3:48 am Post subject: quote

I know i,m being cheeky here i,m sorry about that but can anybody on here speak Estonian and maybe can translate this please,thanks very much

Sal-Salleri ekskallim sai Soome vutiässaga poja
Soome kõmupiltnikud jahtisid maailmakuulsa jalgpalluri Jari Litmaneni elukaaslase, Eesti modelli Ly Jürgensoni suurt kõhtu kevadest saati. Aga ei saanudki Hendrik Sal-Salleri rasedat ekskaasat pildile. Ja ei saagi, sest tita tuli neljapäeval juba ilmale.

Example 4. Member 'billie' asks for translation from Estonian (into English).

As with Swedish and Finnish quotes earlier, even this Estonian one is benevolently translated into Standard English by one member, although he omits and heavily paraphrases the details of the Estonian quote. In the overall activity here, the main pursue of which is to follow Litmanen's career turns, even less likely and less well-known linguistic resources can thus become mobilized, and collaborative meaning-making can rely on a range of interpreters: native speakers, near-natives, second language speakers, and also 'competence' based on related languages (e.g. Finnish and Estonian; Swedish and Norwegian). In this example, Estonian can be temporarily salient for an (allegedly) English member of the forum, for whom Estonian and Finnish source texts are equally incomprehensible. However, due to the local social history of Litmanen fandom, she can more easily find collaborative partners on this Finland-based forum than an Estonian one. Moreover, as Litmanen's wife is an Estonian model, the Estonian news concerning Litmanen perhaps tend to be more filtered through his wife's life-story than that of himself.

After a week's hiatus in the thread (a rare case of temporary inactivity in a *Futisforum* discussion about Litmanen), another member quotes a 300-word news item from the Swedish evening paper, *Expressen*, with the heading "Litmanen stannar i Malmö FF" ("Litmanen stays in Malmö FF"). This triggers a sequence of seven messages that comment both the 'on-topic' of Litmanen's future and the intelligibility of Swedish. For a while, 'billie' is absent from that sequence, but she reactivates the thread nine days later by inquiring

whether there have been more news about Jari lately. Member ‘billie’ becomes a salient factor again in the participant framework; the discussion goes on about her identity and nuances of Finnish and English. There is no news from Litmanen’s recovery (or family); no contributions in Finnish or Swedish appear in that month. This is another node point in the anatomy of the thread, and this phase is characterized by an increased suspicion about ‘billie’s’ identity and ‘Englishness’ (see Example 5).

Posted: Fri Dec 02, 2005 1:32 pm Post subject: quote

So, where are you from [ ] ?

profile pm www

Posted: Fri Dec 02, 2005 3:57 pm Post subject: quote

I,m from England

Why did you use this smily when you asked ???

profile pm email

Posted: Fri Dec 02, 2005 4:28 pm Post subject: quote

Oh, that´s just a normal expression on my face on a friday morning. Nothing serious, don´t worry.

profile pm www

Posted: Fri Dec 02, 2005 7:25 pm Post subject: quote

Ah ok haha

profile pm email

Posted: Sat Dec 03, 2005 8:45 pm Post subject: quote

How come English people can't write their own language?

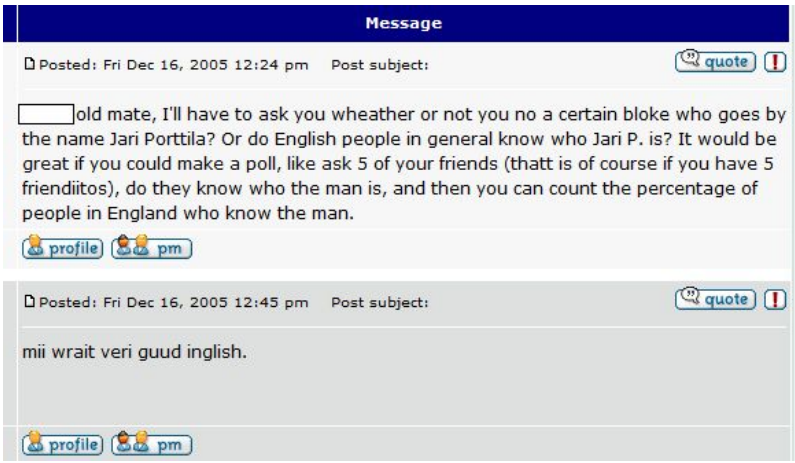
profile pm

Example 5. Contestation of ‘billie’s’ Englishness.

This part of the sequence, as well as my observations and analyses on other *Futisforum* threads (cf. Kytölä 2012b; Kytölä & Androutsopoulos 2012) clearly suggest that newcomers or outsiders to the forum community are ‘tested’ and teased to create inside, in-group humour. In ‘billie’s’ case, if compared to many other new nicknames, the teasing is rather moderate and well-intended, but at the phase

depicted in Example 5 it develops in a more face-threatening direction, with an almost explicit statement about ‘English people’s’ literacy. A point of sociolinguistic interest in that post is the ascription of the ownership (cf. Rampton 1990, 1999, 2005; Hill 2008) of English for the native speakers, in this case people from England. If one reviews ‘billie’s’ contributions to the thread until this point, the claims of her inability to write English can be interpreted to stem from her non-Standard punctuation, particularly her idiosyncrasy of substituting the comma for the apostrophe, but perhaps also for the lack of commas or the empty space after the full stop in sentences. Otherwise ‘billie’s’ contributions seem perfectly appropriate and ‘correctly’ spelled English, albeit colloquial and ‘chatty’ in terms of style and register. Apart from the lack of apostrophes, there is hardly anything in her ways of writing that deviates from ‘average’ writing in web forums in English (a rough generalization, since styles and practices differ greatly across sites).

The next micro-sequence of this discussion surfaces a couple of weeks later, once again initiated by ‘billie’ (as there was still not new information concerning Litmanen’s persistent injury at the time). This time she inquires if anyone knows the name of Litmanen’s new-born son; once again she receives two jocular and two more serious replies. We move to the fifth reply here (Example 6).


Message

Posted: Fri Dec 16, 2005 12:24 pm Post subject: quote

old mate, I'll have to ask you wheather or not you no a certain bloke who goes by the name Jari Porttila? Or do English people in general know who Jari P. is? It would be great if you could make a poll, like ask 5 of your friends (thatt is of course if you have 5 friendiitos), do they know who the man is, and then you can count the percentage of people in England who know the man.

profile pm

Posted: Fri Dec 16, 2005 12:45 pm Post subject: quote

mii wrait veri guud inglish.

profile pm

Example 6. Playing fun with mock-English and ‘billie’s’ English identity.

This is one more goof by a Finnish member directed at ‘billie’ and making fun of her alleged non-Finnishness. The Finnish sports reporter Jari Porttila’s appearances on television had already at that time become a ubiquitous source of shared ‘bad English humour’, and it is no surprise that the use of English here triggers the mention of Porttila here as well (for the sources of shared ‘bad’ English, see also Kytölä 2012b, 2013; Kytölä & Androutsopoulos 2012). While ‘billie’s’ gender has hardly become an issue at all so far, here one can note the rather masculine way of addressing ‘billie’: “old mate”. The tone of this message is jocular: on the discourse level, the overall idea of creating a statistically valid poll with five answers giving a reliable result about ‘people in England’ is absurd, and so is the contestation whether ‘billie’ even has as many as five friends (“friendiitos”); this jocularity is further enhanced by the syntax, non-Standard spelling and word choices of the message. The entire message is more or less in English, although ‘friendiitos’ can be interpreted as a code-switch into ‘mock-Spanish’ (Hill 2008, cf. mock-English in Kytölä 2012b) spiced up with the Finnishized spelling of the long vowel /-ii-/. As was the case earlier with the name-dropping of Finnish sportspersons (Example 3), Jari Porttila is used here as a shibboleth, a test for ‘billie’ on whether she is a legitimate insider or not, as most Finnish people who follow any sports would know reporter Porttila from some context.

This message invokes a quick comment in a rather hybrid code, non-Standard English with highly Finnishized orthographic choices: “mii wrait veri guud inglish.” The metapragmatic reflexivity in this very short reply works at four levels: each of the five words includes a Finnishized modification of the corresponding Standard English word, the personal pronoun subject (‘mii’ ~ ‘me’ ~ ‘I’) is in the object form, the initial letter of the sentence is not capitalized, and finally, the referential meaning of the sentence is meant to be ironically reversed (“veri guud” ~ ‘not good at all’). All of these nuanced resources drawn from English(es) and Finnish(es), thus, appear to be available to these *Futisforumists*.

Next, as the year 2005 turns into 2006, there is a hiatus in the activity of this thread. Most other participants (who are not only interested in Litmanen but in other topics too) write more or less actively under the numerous other topics in *Futisforum*, but ‘billie’ is

absent for a while. Litmanen returns to Malmö FF's training and to the Finland national team squad. The next node point in the thread occurs when a Finnish member makes an initiative to send 'billie' a mouse mat with an image of Litmanen; this triggers a meta-discussion on the mouse mat and the question who are eligible to get one for free (like 'billie'). Another topic of discussion is Litmanen's hairstyle, his haircut often being close to a mullet. These points are omitted from this article, however. At this point (March 2006) *Futisforum2* is founded by an activist with the aim of replacing the badly functioning *Futisforum*. There is a rapid 'mass migration' to *FF2*, although many forumists are doubtful about the new forum and remain faithful to the original one. A discussion topic for Jari Litmanen in Malmö FF is started on 30 April 2006 in *FF2*, and it is likely that some of the active participants of this corresponding *Futisforum* thread moved there at the point. 'billie' does not seem to jump the forum; so, this paper concentrates on the last stages of the original, still more active, *Futisforum* thread (although the newer one is also very interesting in its alternation between resources and nuances drawn from Swedish, Finnish and English).

On May 2, 2006, one particularly prolific writer quotes Malmö FF's website, listing the squad that the coach has chosen for the upcoming match. After a long injury, Litmanen's name is included, which elicits a quick happy comment from 'billie', too. As can be seen from Tables 1 and 2, this is a node point where the action gets in full swing as Litti fans rejoice over his long-awaited comeback. Example 7 shows some of the hybridity and heteroglossia of expression in that wave of rejoice. Some of the participants were, at the same time, following a live television broadcast with Swedish commentary.

Example 7. Litmanen is back in business and his fans rejoice.

The message at 6:32 pm employs English (without capitalization) and a positive emoticon. The next one is in colloquial Finnish, a prototype keyboard smiley (?) and a graphic emoticon. (The noun 'avaus' generally means 'opening', here 'starting lineup'. "Avaukses!" is a colloquial inessive form, indicating that Litmanen is *in* the starting lineup.) The third one (8:09 pm) has an exclamation in Swedish and a mini-preview of the match in Finnish (the Swedish part means "The King is back!"; the Finnish part means "Attacking midfielder number 10. Ingenious passes to be expected"). The last one in this screenshot

uses a ‘Forumism’, an acronym which would not be wholly intelligible to a Finnish non-Forumist (‘EOM’ is an acronym for “Eteenpäin on menty”, which translates roughly into: “We/you/they have gone forward”). All in all, this example shows the switches and turns between linguistic resources which are not only identifiable as ‘Finnish’, ‘English’ and ‘Swedish’, as small resources drawn from these ‘big languages’ carry tacit social meanings.

And for the purposes of this analysis, the last node point in the thread, before it disappears in May or June 2006 from the malfunctioning *Futisforum*, has to do with a specific usage of Arabic. It comes from the same wave of joy over Litmanen’s resurgence. Indeed, even more unexpected multilingual resources are drawn upon: in praise of Litmanen’s recent shape, one discussant copy-pastes (in all likelihood from somewhere in the Web) a text in Arabic and gives a jocular, short pseudo-translation of it in Finnish. The writer frames his message with a Finnish paraphrase, which is ostensibly summarizing the content of the Arabic excerpt.

Posted: Fri May 12, 2006 11:15 am Post subject: quote

Nyt on Litin suuruus herättänyt kohua jo Saudi-Arabiassakin asti! Hurjaa!

Kieltä ymmärtämättömille suomennettakoon sen verran, että tekstissä hahmotellaan Jarzan ura pääpiireittäin ja ylistetään muutenkin suomalaisia rehellisenä ja työtätekevänä kansana.

عضو اللجنة التنفيذية لمنظمة التحرير الفلسطينية الخميس، أن الجامعة العربية أبلغت السلطة الفلسطينية بعدم قدرتها على تحويل الاموال التى لديها.
وقال عميرة فى تصريحات خاصة لوكالة الانباء الالمانية "اتصل الامين العام للجامعة العربية عمرو موسى "..." مع رئيس السلطة الفلسطينية محمود عباس، وابلغه ان الجامعة غير قادرة على تحويل الاموال التى تم جمعها من دول عربية الى السلطة الفلسطينية".
وأضاف "ان عدم القدرة على تحويل الاموال بسبب عدم قدرة البنوك على تحويلها بسبب الضغوط الامريكية والدولية".
وأوضح عميرة "أن عمرو موسى قال للرئيس ابو مازن إننا بانتظار الالية التى اقرتها اللجنة الرباعية الدولية من اجل تحويل الاموال وفق الالية الدولية التى ستقر من قبل خبراء الرباعية".
وفى سياق متصل، قال فاروق القدومى رئيس الدائرة السياسية فى منظمة التحرير أمس الخميس إن المنظمة سبق أن اعترفت بإسرائيل فلماذا يطالبون اليوم الحكومة الفلسطينية بالاعتراف، مضيفا أن المسألة الأهم اليوم بالنسبة للمنظمة هو الانسحاب الاسرائيلى الشامل.
وقال القدومى عقب لقاء مطول مع وزير الخارجية السورية وليد المعلم إن "المسألة الأولى التى تشغلنا هى الانسحاب"، مضيفا "لا نريد أن يشغلونا فى مسائل أخرى وإن كانت هامة".
وأضاف إذا كان المجتمع الدولى "صادقا فليضغط على إسرائيل فمنظمة التحرير الفلسطينية هى التى اعترفت بالدولة العبرية، لماذا إذا يطالبون الحكومة الفلسطينية الحالية بالاعتراف بإسرائيل فى وقت لم تنفذ إسرائيل كل اتفاقاتها المعقودة مع الجانب الفلسطينى".
وقال القدومى "نحن جمدنا حتى فى المنظمة الاعتراف بإسرائيل لأنها لم تنفذ جميع ما التزمت به فهى تريد أن نقدم لها شيئا فى وقت لا نستطيع أن نقدم لها هذه الورقة بدون مقابل وهو الانسحاب الشامل الأمر الذى شرحناه للأوروبيين".
وعن محادثاته مع المعلم قال القدومى "أخبرنا من زرناهم بصحة الحديث عن مجاعة فى فلسطين ولكن الشعب الفلسطينى يصر على الانسحاب لأن الأسباب التى أدت إلى نقص الدعم المادى وغيره هى إسرائيل التى وضعت الحصار والإغلاق ودمرت جميع وسائل العيش لذلك إذا أردنا أن نعالج هذه المشكلة فيكون الأمر بالانسحاب الإسرائيلى أولا".

profile pm

Posted: Fri May 12, 2006 11:39 am Post subject: quote

**Quote:**

> "وأضاف "ان عدم القدرة على تحويل الاموال بسبب عدم قدرة البنوك على تحويلها بسبب الضغوط الامريكية والدولية".
> وأوضح عميرة "أن عمرو موسى قال للرئيس ابو مازن إننا بانتظار الالية التى اقرتها اللجنة الرباعية الدولية من اجل تحويل الاموال وفق الالية الدولية التى ستقر من قبل خبراء الرباعية".

Ei mennyt kulmalipulle suojaamaan palloa, haista vittu Febi Marjamaa phethethethethet

profile pm email www

Example 8. Jocular Arabic, a Finnish paraphrase and a humorous reply.

In reality, the excerpt is a copy-pasted piece of news about the Palestinian conflict. Here is a rough English translation of the Finnish

paraphrase: "Now Litti's greatness has caused a sensation in Saudi Arabia! Terrific! For those who don't understand the language, let me say that the text summarizes Jarza's career so far and acclaims Finns as an honest and hard-working people."

The humour in this turn is further enhanced with more in-group humour in one quick response. Plausibly assuming that this commenter does not know Arabic or run the text through any automatic translator (there were not so many available in 2006), he takes an apparently random extract and gives it a jocular Finnish equivalent, referring to two inside jokes within the forum. (One of them is the noun "kulmalipulle", which means 'to the corner flag', while Timo 'Febi' Marjamaa was a Finnish cult player of that time. "Haista vittu", in turn, is the Finnish equivalent of the exclamation 'fuck you'.) However, the third part in this comment is taken from *The Fast Show*, where the recurring sketch "Chanel 9" utilized a corresponding string of sounds ('phethethe…') to index 'foreign', unintelligible language. Here a parallel is drawn to the unpredictable use of Arabic; in *Futisforum* (the original one), off-topic messages such as this were almost never deleted or moderated. Thus, the Arabic joke was tolerated and remained in the forum until the lifespan of the thread. After this Arabic piece, moreover, to take the metapragmatically reflexive discourse a step further, the linguistic and communicative abilities of Jari Litmanen himself are discussed again. It is in these jocular, positive and benevolent terms – characteristic of this entire discussion sequence despite certain ambiguous and face-threatening turns – that I conclude the sequential, micro-level analysis of this thread and turn to my final discussion.

## Discussion

Part of the multilingualism in this ten-month discourse event is clearly due to the embedding of 'media quotes' from elsewhere in the World Wide Web; another part is clearly due to changes in the participant framework. Uses of Swedish create a context where the competence to deal with the usages varies from reader to another, from one *Futisforum* member to another. Between the fluent reader of Swedish and the one who does not know it, there are various possible 'intermediate' competences in Swedish: we see diversity in the ability

to cope with discourse in Swedish. This, in turn, results in instances of metapragmatic reflexivity and expressions of attitudes towards Swedish. There is neither one bounded Swedish or English nor one competence in them, but rather, the demands and needs arise in particular situations where collective digital literacy and co-interpretation of salient texts are needed to achieve common and individual goals.

Resources from English, integrated with uses of graphic ('quasi-universal') emoticons and pictures, are deployed to benevolently include nickname 'billie' in the interaction – while simultaneously constructing and negotiating the ambiguous discourse of suspicion about her identity. Concrete linguistic and semiotic resources are in use in a situated online context where geographical boundaries and distances are blurred and diminished. Indeed, each contributor to online social media always writes from some position, an amalgam (intersectionality) of a geographical location and other aspects of identity; as male, as a fan, a neutral reporter, a provocative troll, an expert, and so forth. All in all, this dataset shows the more celebratory sides of the *Futisforums'* multilingualism, but the creative language use here also contains aspects of mockery and negatively framed reflexivity on the peers' language use. These facets often seem to go hand in hand, not completely separate ways.

One way of looking at this kind of digital discourse is through the lens of *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin 1981; Androutsopoulos 2011; Lähteenmäki *et al.* 2011; Leppänen 2012). This notion refers to the ways in which linguistic forms and features (either from different languages or from within 'one language') are combined and mixed (Kytölä 2013, Section 4.4), and it also includes the co-presence of several styles, registers and voices. This seems suitable for capturing the hybrid nature of contemporary communication and discourse, and indeed, in the Litmanen thread analysed here, there are several heteroglossic elements (see Examples 6 and 8, in particular).

The Swedish input is mainly drawn from online text sources, while 'billie's' arrival from her native England arguably makes the immediate context 'intercultural'. However, football culture at large, and the fandom of a specific idol, is shared by all participants, lowering (if not totally erasing) intercultural differences and challenges stemming from language barriers and nationalities. Due to the visual-discursive framing of *Futisforum*, Finnish can plausibly be

regarded as the base language of the discussion, which is frequently and abundantly reworked with media quotes (in code-switching terminology, 'reported speech') in Standard Swedish, along with their translations, interpretations, paraphrasings, and contestations. It is the new user 'billie's' arrival in the thread that triggers the abundant use of English, as 'billie' identifies herself as English (which becomes contested too). Reactions range from suspicious to jocular, even at times mildly threatening, but there is a gradual affiliation, acceptance, and inclusion of 'billie' in the subcommunity of Litmanen fans.

Despite the recent advances in our understanding of language as more heteroglossic and hybrid than before, or in the code-switching paradigm in general, we can argue that discreteness of 'codes' still seems to fit this particular dataset relatively well (see the discussions in Gardner-Chloros 2009: 165–177 and Sebba *et al.* 2012). Resources from Finnish, Swedish and English alternate in relatively patterned ways, often distinct from each other. All of these three languages play their roles (comparable to functions established in code-switching research (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2013), but also fuzzy and contested as seen above) in the dynamics of this discussion thread that lasts about ten months, accumulating approx. 910 messages. Varieties, particularly specific Standard and non-Standard features and nuances of those three languages, alternate along with single occurrences of Estonian (informative, 'human interest' function) and Arabic (completely jocular, emblematic function). In contrast, German, a significant ingredient in the earlier *Futisforum* discussion topic about Litmanen's time in Hansa Rostock, does not surface at all during the sequence analysed here. This comparative finding points to the strong aspect of situational, context-bound language alternation.

In sum, the major themes in the thread analysed here from the point of view of multilingual resources were the following:

1) Swedish source texts, reactions to them, whether and when they become translated or paraphrased,
2) English translations for 'billie', upon or without request, and the ways in which they are accomplished and negotiated on the axes of correct – incorrect, or Standard – non-Standard,
3) the negotiation, assessment and evaluation of English used by 'billie' and by the Finnish forumists,
4) the contestation of 'nativeness' and expertise in a language, and

5) the jocular functions of multilingualism (word-play, puns, performance, etc.), which surface very frequently. In this thread, such jocular functions are linked to all the three 'main languages' used, but briefly also to a burst of (copy-pasted) Arabic.

'Authentic' Swedish is regarded here as a shared but contested resource. At times Swedish text extracts are translated, at other times they are not. Swedish, like Finnish, is clearly not part of 'billie's' repertoire, but unlike Finnish most of the time, Swedish requires collaborative translation work also between the Finnish participants. And there is a big motivating factor for such voluntary meaning-making work: Litmanen's career is an extremely legitimate topic on the forum and Swedish sources of information (particularly Malmö FF's website and Swedish newspapers) seemed to be first-hand, better positioned to report on Litmanen than the then-existing Finnish (or English) ones. Apart from spreading information, another motivating factor could be the forumists' willingness to build rapport, social network and good reputation among each other, although as discussed in Kytölä (2012b), the Finnish *Futisforums* can sometimes also be very antagonistic and hostile in spirit.

It is by no means spectacular or exceptional *per se* that Finnish participants in a setting framed as Finnish should alternate between Finnish, Swedish and English, or that a non-Finnish enthusiast joins a discussion framed as Finnish, or that language choice and nuances related to the use of different languages are discussed or negotiated (*metapragmatic reflexivity*; Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 8–10; Kytölä 2013). On the contrary, these are extremely common phenomena, to date documented and analysed in sociolinguistic literature on other genres of mainly spoken language (e.g. Gardner-Chloros 2009; Androutsopoulos 2007). However, there were several reasons for carrying out a detailed, micro-sociolinguistic analysis of this long thread. First, I wished to do justice to the creative, celebratory sides of the *Futisforumists'* multilingualism (as opposed to the discriminative cases of mockery documented in Kytölä 2012b). Second, I felt that this case study was ideal for focusing on the multilingualism of the *Futisforums* from the point of view of collaborative literacy, i.e. how linguistic and textual resources are collectively translated and interpreted for purposes of common good, as it had the salient 'Swedish connection' as well as an allegedly

English participant. This is not to suggest that collaborativity involving translation or interpretation of languages would decrease or disappear as computer translation develops; rather, its nature might change towards different layers and scales of meaning-making. Third, my aim was to present a nuanced alternative to the highly polarized discussions about attitudes to Swedish, Finland's official second domestic language as well as the main language of Finland's perhaps most important neighbour nation. Several phases in the analysis point indexically to a multi-faceted and controversial position of Swedish as a useful but problematic resource. Finally, I wished to illustrate how Finnish football enthusiasts make *in situ* expertise claims regarding authenticity and acceptability of not only specific usages of Finnish but also of English and Swedish; i.e. they adopt and appropriate the (partial) ownership (cf. Rampton 1999, 2006; Pennycook 2007; Blommaert 2010) of these languages in a context where they feel 'at home', the world of football culture(s).

Indeed, the world of football is highly polycentric (cf. Giulianotti 1999; Kytölä 2013), perhaps more so than any other sport or cultural activity, with targets of interest in many continents and countries, which makes football discourses potentially (and actually) highly multilingual. Since the interests of football fans reach most corners of the world, and the websites (and many other kinds of media) that Finnish fans use for reference contain several languages and varieties, elements of that broader constellation of multilingualism 'leak into' spaces such as the *Futisforum* discussion threads. In this case, Finnish football fans eagerly utilize first-hand sources in Swedish, partly because Jari Litmanen's career development is such a salient topic for the community that first-hand news 'from the spot' should not be missed. The same happened with German with Litmanen's time in Hansa Rostock, Germany, preceding the discourse event analysed here, and the same happens with other loci of interest and other languages.

The history of speakers (and here, importantly, writers) of Finnish is inextricably tied up with the history of speakers of Swedish, and the English language, and so is the present and the future. It is important that we understand the mosaic, the multi-faceted aspects related to the friction and symbiosis between and across the languages and their users in a fuller way. It is not only the non-Finnish Litmanen fan, 'billie', here who is navigating across sites, semiotic and social

environments involving different ('non-native') languages; it is also the Finnish *Futisforumists* who resort to Swedish and English media sources, mainly websites, as they navigate between and across sites and nexuses of practice, performing their fandom, supportership and special interest in their big football superstar. At another vantage point in time and space, the micro-sociolinguistic constellation of such fandom would have been different. In the 1990s Litmanen played in the Netherlands (Ajax) and Spain/Catalunya (Barcelona), in the first decade of the 2000s he played in England (Liverpool, Fulham), Germany (Hansa Rostock), Sweden (Malmö), and Finland (Lahti, Helsinki). Moreover, as an international point of interest, his ups and downs were constantly covered in different media in different languages, in different countries, e.g. Estonia, Russia, or Germany. The fandom of a superstar can thus take very different sociolinguistic forms; for instance, Dutch media sources stemming from Litmanen's time in Ajax Amsterdam (particularly 1992–1999) become frequently quoted, circulated, and re-echoed in discussions about Litmanen in Finnish/Finland.

In sum, discourses that circulate via the affordances brought by advances in technology will presumably be ever more transcultural and multilingual for some decades to come, not least so with such highly globalized domains of life as football.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: The primary data

The primary data used for this paper was the discussion thread "Litti Malmön riveihin". The URL of this topic was http://home.suomifutis.net/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=53304. The last time I accessed it online was August 2006, via the search engine *Google's* cache function that had saved versions from several points in the year 2006. The thread has not been online since the summer of 2006 due to malfunctions and insufficient backup copying and administration of the forum. It probably never will again.

### Appendix 2: The emoticons

The emoticons available for use in *Futisforum* in February 2007 are seen in the image below. It is uncertain whether this selection completely matches the selection available at the time 2005–2006, as I did not make exact fieldnotes about the emoticons then. However, judging from their occurrence in discussions that were carried out in those years and are still more or less intact in the forum, this selection seems to match the actual uses in 2005–2006.

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[1] *Futisforum* is now, after several moves, located at http://suomifutisnet.adv1.nebula.fi/phpBB2/ (last accessed 9 June 2014).
[2] *Futisforum2* is located at http://futisforum2.org/ (last accessed 9 June 2014).