"TOI VIKA ON BIG SLAY"
CODE-SWITCHING IN FINNISH TIKTOK COMMENTS

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Abstract

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää, miten koodinvaihto suomen ja englannin kielen välillä näkyy suomalaisissa TikTok-kommenteissa. Tutkimuksessa selvitettiin myös millaisia merkityksiä englannin kielen käyttö voi luoda. Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin yhden suomalaisen TikTok-käyttäjän saamista kommenteista. Kommenttien valintaperusteena oli englannin ja suomen kielen välisen koodinvaihdon toteutuminen jokaisessa kommentissa. Kommentteja kerättiin yhteensä 86 kappaletta.

Kommentit analysoitiin rakenteen ja merkityksen näkökulmasta. Analyysi jaettiin näiden kahden näkökulman mukaan, ja analyysissä hyödynnettiin Herringin (2004) viitekehystä tietokonevälitteisestä diskurssianalyysistä. Herringin (2004) viitekehyksen lisäksi analyysissä käytettiin myös apuna Leen (2014) käsitteitä koodinvaihdosta. Lee (2014) jakaa koodinvaihdon kahteen eri kategoriaan: koodinvaihto on joko insertionaalista (insertional code-switching), tai vuorottelevaa (alternational code-switching). Rakenteen analyysissä tarkasteltiin etenkin kommenttien syntaksia, eli missä vaiheessa lausetta englanninkielinen elementti useimmiten esiintyi. Rakenteen analyysissä tutkittiin myös koodinvaihdon kahta tyyppiä, ja pyrittiin selvittämään ovatko kommentit esimerkkejä insertionaalisesta koodinvaihdosta vai vuorottelevasta koodinvaihdosta. Merkityksen näkökulmasta tarkasteltiin jargonia sekä sisäryhmän kielenkäyttöä.

Tutkimuksen tulosten mukaan englannin kieltä käytetään hyvin monipuolisiin tarkoituksiin. Rakenteellisesti englantia käytettiin useimmiten lauseen lopussa, ja koodinvaihto koostui yleensä yhdestä sanasta. Kommentit olivat siis useimmiten esimerkkejä insertionaalisesta koodinvaihdosta. Merkityksellisesti koodinvaihtoa käytettiin työkaluna kohteliaisuuksia annettaessa, sekä ryhmäidentiteetin ilmaisemisessa. Koodinvaihtoa käytettiin myös sanastollisten erojen (lexical gap) korjaamiseen, sekä huumorin luomiseen. Usein koodinvaihdolle ei tosin löytynyt yhtä selkeää syytä, jolloin koodinvaihto oli todennäköisesti tyylivalinta.

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1   INTRODUCTION

Language use on the internet has been a subject of extensive research since the beginning stages of the internet. The research on language has mostly focused on the way that English is used on the internet, which is not surprising. English has been considered the lingua franca of the internet, with over 60% of all websites having English as their content language (Statista, 2022b). Thus, it can be said that English is the most used language on the internet. One of the most notable works in the area has been Crystal's (2001) book about language use on the internet. In his book, Crystal (2001) introduced the term "Netspeak", which was created to describe and explain linguistic features that characterised language use on the internet. The internet and its language use has changed rapidly since Crystal's publication, and now the research on the subject is mostly concerned with social media and the way language is used there.

Communication on social media is a significant part of all online interaction. The reach of social media is almost worldwide, and the way in which language is used on social media platforms is a reflection of that. Online communication allows language use to be more creative, for example through the merging of oral and written language modes (Friedrich & Figueiredo, 2016: 12). This makes language use on the internet unique. People can easily access and learn different languages, and they can read and produce texts from around the world. Because people have the access to a wide variety of languages, texts that they produce can contain multiple linguistic resources (Lee, 2017: 5). Being exposed to all these linguistic elements on a daily basis shapes language use. In addition, the development of social media technologies allows for online language practices to change with the surrounding world, with the creation of new words and phrases.

Through technological advances that have happened over the last decade, social media itself has also changed. What was seen as a social media platform during Crystal's (2001) research, is not as accurate now as it was then. Now, social media is mostly associated as being mostly mobile applications (with some exceptions) that one can use anytime, anywhere. Because of the accessibility of social media, it has further contributed to the use of English globally. Through social media, English has strengthened its position as a major worldwide lingua franca. Because of this position, the research on English and its use on social media is essential.

Language use on traditional social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) or Facebook, has been studied at length. TikTok, on the other hand, is a fairly new platform and has not been studied as much. Finnish and English are often mixed and blended in social media communication, and TikTok is no exception. It is important to investigate the ways in which language is used on TikTok, in order to understand how language develops through social media, as well as whether a social media platform can have any lasting impact on language use. Due to it being a newer social media platform, TikTok is still in a state of change and development, with new features added often. TikTok is known for its rapidly changing trends, which means that the language used within the app is also in a state of constant change. This makes consistent research on TikTok especially important, since research is most often already outdated when it is published. Consistent research, while not being entirely accurate, would document the possible language patterns and changes that can be seen in the app.

This study is focused on language use on TikTok, especially on how code-switching is present in Finnish TikTok comment sections. When using the app myself, I have found that Finnish commenters are very aware of the trends, specific phrases, or words that are actively circulating on the app, and thus reference them a lot in their comments. These references are almost always done via code-switching, and in that way keeping the reference in its original language. This tells us that the commenter assumes that there is shared knowledge between the commenter, the creator, as well as the outside viewer. Code-switching is thus, in this case, vital for the reference to be understood by every party. This is a very interesting phenomenon, and the present study aims to investigate the uses of code-switching in these comments, as well as the meanings behind the use of code-switching.

This thesis will first introduce computer-mediated communication in more detail, while also introducing the approach of computer-mediated discourse analysis. I will also introduce Tik-Tok as a platform and go over the functions of the app. After that, the thesis will move on to code-switching, as well as its functions. Then, in chapter four, I will present my research questions and describe the data collection, as well as discuss the collected data in depth. The analytic framework will be introduced as well. After that, the collected data will be analyzed in depth, first by investigating the structural elements of code-switching, and then going through the meaning-making elements of code-switching. To conclude the thesis, findings will be discussed briefly, along with suggestions for future research.

2   COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

2.1   Computer-mediated communication

"Computer-mediated communication" (CMC) is a broad term that refers to a variety of semi-otic and linguistic modes, along with technical interfaces and platforms (Squires, 2016: 2). Simply put, CMC refers to communication that is done via a mediating interface (Squires, 2016: 2). CMC studies have commonly identified two types of communication: synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication (Androutsopoulos, 2006). If the communication happens in real time, the communication is synchronous, and if the recipient of the message can read the message at any time, the communication is asynchronous (Baron, 2008: 14). For example, email and texting on mobile phones are asynchronous communication, and instant messaging is synchronous communication (Baron, 2008: 14). However, this notion has been challenged (e.g. Bieswanger, 2016), since only audio- or video-based communication can be truly synchronous, as they allow interruptions between the participants, as well as instant verbal feedback. Additionally, communicative modes such as instant messaging, which have traditionally been considered as synchronous, also allow for the messages to be stored on the server until the receiver logs in again (Bieswanger, 2016: 284). Thus, these modes of communication can also be used asynchronously (Bieswanger, 2016: 284).

Research that has been conducted on CMC has often focused on the different linguistic characteristics of CMC, as well as its technical aspects and allowances, such as previously

mentioned synchronicity and asynchronicity (Androutsopoulos, 2006). However, as CMC has become an ordinary aspect of the way in which people communicate with one another (Squires, 2016), the research on CMC has changed over time. For example, Androutsopoulos (2006: 3) states that rather than researching specific features of the language of CMC, research should instead focus on the context in which the communication happens, as well as what types of resources the context provides for that communication. What were previously considered as characteristics of the "language of CMC" should now be considered as tools that users might use when constructing different discourses in specific contexts (Androutsopoulos, 2006: 3). Because of this change, it should be noted that in addition to researching computer-mediated communication, research should also be conducted on computer-mediated *discourse* (Androutsopoulos, 2006: 3).

The study of computer-mediated discourse, or CMD, differs from CMC in that instead of focusing on finding different characteristics of computer-mediated communication, CMD focuses on language and language use, as well as applying discourse analysis to direct that focus (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015: 127). It is important to note that by nature, CMD varies in form and is extremely diverse due to the vastness of the internet, and it should not be considered as a single genre (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015). CMD is characterised by a variety of properties that are the sum of social and cultural factors, which have been due to the influence from other media communications or have been created internally in computer-mediated environments (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015: 127).

2.1.1   Compuer-mediated discourse analysis

Computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) is not a single method or theory, but instead it offers a methodological toolkit and a theoretical lens through which to interpret and analyze the data (Herring, 2004: 4). CMDA applies methods from a variety of different disciplines, such as linguistics, communication, and rhetoric (Herring, 2004). At its core, CMDA is the analysis of recorded instances of verbal interaction online, such as words, messages, and exchanges (Herring, 2004). More broadly defined, analysis of any online interaction that has been based on textual observations can be considered as CMDA (Herring, 2004). CMDA views online behaviour and interactions through the lens of language, and its interpretations are based on language and language use (Herring, 2004: 2). Thus, CMDA can be applied to a variety of

studies. CMDA is broadly based on linguistic discourse analysis, with the assumption that discourse exhibits recurrent patterns, and the assumption that discourse involves speaker choices (Herring, 2004: 4). CMDA also adds a third assumption, according to which computer-mediated discourse is shaped by those technological features that are presented in the computer-mediated communication system - so, the language in social media is shaped by its technological environment (Herring, 2004: 4).

Herring (2004) presents four different domains that CMDA can be applied to, which are structure, meaning, interaction, and social behaviour. In the domain of structure, Herring (2004: 18) has listed the following phenomena that can be present in a data set: typography, orthography, morphology, syntax, and discourse schemata. These structural elements can be relevant in analyzing issues such as genre characteristics, orality, efficiency, expressivity, and complexity (Herring, 2004: 18). In the domain of meaning, the phenomena were the meaning of words, utterances (speech acts), and macrosegments (Herring, 2004: 18). These elements might appear in the analysis of issues such as the intention of the speaker, and what they want to accomplish through language (Herring, 2004: 18).

CMDA has been used to research online groups and virtual communities, as seen in Li (2020). Her study examined the characteristics of virtual communities, and investigated how online groups become virtual communities, as well as why some groups never turn into communities (Li, 2020). Li (2020: 30) conducted her analysis based on a selection of discourse behaviours summarised by Herring (2004), which are indicators of virtual communities. These indicators were divided by the previously mentioned four domains: structure, meaning, interaction, and social behavior. Li (2020: 30) stated that because each domain has several issues that can be analyzed, it would be impossible to include them all in the analysis. Thus, Li (2020) mostly focused on the domain of interaction. In this domain, the issues that could be analyzed were reciprocity, extended (in-depth) threads, and core participants. Li (2020) concluded that Herring's (2004) indicators for virtual communities were useful in identifying and analyzing a virtual community.

Ishizaki et al. (2013), on the other hand, used CMDA to examine commenting behaviour on a music distribution website (Soundcloud). Their main goals were to investigate the most common communicative acts that the users engaged on, and also which of the site's features inspired the most interactions in regards to commenting (Ishizaki et al., 2013). Comments were

left either on a specific time stamp on the song (for example on the 5 second mark), or they were left on the song as a whole (Ishizaki et al., 2013). To analyse the data that was collected, speech act analysis and dynamic topic analysis were applied (Ishizaki et al., 2013). They found that the majority of the comments were short reactions to the songs, and on average they were only three words long (Ishizaki et al., 2013).

CMDA can thus be used to study a variety of issues. It is adaptable and can be used in several contexts, which is especially important because of the constant presence of CMC. Due to the spread of the internet and the accessibility of smartphones, CMC has become a part of everyday life, and is thus studied in a variety of ways. CMC also adapts with technology, which is why it is important for research to stay up to date with the newest technologies and their communication methods. These communication environments are always changing, and currently seem to be centered around social media.

2.2 Discourse analysis & social media

In order to conduct a discourse analytic study in the context of social media or other virtual environments, one must consider the changes that virtual spaces have made on language. For example, according to Friedrich and Figueiredo (2016: 92), spelling, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary have all changed due to the influence of the digital sphere. Spelling (especially in the context of texting) has changed to including more abbreviations, such as LOL (laugh out loud) or OMG (oh my god) (Friedrich & Figueiredo, 2016: 95). Grammar, now, has more similarities with spoken language practices, and punctuation is often left out entirely (Friedrich & Figueiredo, 2016: 93). In the case of vocabulary, new words are constantly invented to reflect the changing environment that produces new trends and technologies, and many languages take loanwords from English to do that (Friedrich & Figueiredo, 2016: 93). The current discursive and textual practices are also a reflection of the social practices of the moment, and at the same time those discursive practices have an influence on social practices (Friedrich & Figueiredo, 2016: 93). The new ways that language is used online have thus influenced the surrounding society and culture (Friedrich & Figueiredo, 2016: 94).

Discourse is a complex term to define, as most researchers have their own definition depending on their studies, and most often those definitions vary from one another. Fairclough (2003) sees discourse as representation, with different discourses representing different aspects of the world. On the other hand, discourse can be defined as the manner in which people construct and maintain their social environments by using different semiotic systems (Jones et al., 2015). Discourse analysis is often focused on four things: texts, contexts, actions and interactions, and power and ideology (Jones et al., 2015: 4). Different types of analyses focus on these different aspects of discourse with varying emphasis, but they are all present in the analysis (Jones et al., 2015: 4). However, digital media and communication has changed the ways in which these elements are thought about and defined, and one must take into consideration how much digital environments can change and shape the concepts of text, context, interaction, and power (Jones et al., 2015: 5).

Discourse analysis is a good tool for analysing social media and its language use. For example, Yaqup et al. (2017) researched political discourse on X during the 2016 US presidential elections. Similarly, Pavlova and Berkers (2020) also studied the discourse on X, specifically mental health discourse. Both studies researched the tone that was used in the tweets, with Yaqup et al. (2017) focusing on the tone of the campaign messages and whether they were positive or negative, and Pavlova and Berkers (2020) focusing on the tone that people used when talking about mental health. These topics are quite different from one another, but that in itself is a great example of the nature of discourse analysis and how diversely it can be applied when conducting research on online discourse, specifically discourse that happens within social media.

Social media has become an increasingly important and integral part of people's lives, and its popularity has changed the ways in which people can interact with each other (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014: 2). Social media sites have provided different communicative dynamics and structures, and they have impacted the linguistic practices that people engage in (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014: 2). Social media sites, for example, are most commonly microblogging sites - the communication on these sites is length-limited, thus often short (Zappavigna, 2012). Through the microposts posted on social media, these social media sites allow people to discover new possibilities for interaction (Barton & Lee, 2013: 60). Barton and Lee (2013: 56) also state that people who interact with others online know how to use their linguistic knowledge and

capabilities depending on the context. Their use of languages on social media depend on who the user is, who the viewer is, what the post is about, and how the medium is used (Barton & Lee, 2013: 56).

Georgakopoulou (2015) conducted a study on social media, and the role that rescripting plays in the communication in social media. Rescripting is defined as a practice enabled by social media that is concerned with the manipulation (either visually or verbally) of previously distributed stories in order to create new and different stories (Georgakopoulou, 2015). These new stories are often humorous, or satirical versions of the original story (Georgakopoulou, 2015). According to Georgakopoulou (2015), this phenomenon is common in YouTube videos that are, for example, spoofs, memes, or remixes but also appear in other social media sites in a less visual manner, such as in circulating verbal or written jokes. This type of rescripting and circulating jokes or trends is also very common on TikTok.

2.3 TikTok

TikTok was originally launched in 2017 and became significantly more popular after the acquisition of the similar app Musical.ly in 2018 (Statista 2023c). Musical.ly was known for lip-syncing and dancing videos to popular songs or audios. After the merge, these types of videos (lip-syncing and dancing) became popular on TikTok as well. TikTok became a true worldwide phenomenon in early 2020, with the download count peaking at 313.5 million (Statista 2023b). The spike in popularity was most likely due to COVID-19 significantly altering people's everyday lives and habits, since people spent more time at home, as well as on their mobile phones and other devices. According to Statista (2022a) children and teens from the US doubled their screen time since the start of COVID-19, spending over 4 hours a day on electronic devices. By the end of 2022, TikTok had over 1.7 billion users worldwide (Statista 2023b), and it was the most downloaded application of the year (Statista 2023a). TikTok is one of the fastest growing social media platforms today, with over 1 billion monthly active users as of September 2021 (TikTok Newsroom 2021).

TikTok is based on creating, watching, and sharing short-form videos, ranging from three seconds to ten minutes long. Users can create their videos in-app, and the application itself

encourages users to do so. The application allows the users to film, edit, and share their content in a single place, and the editing programme offers a seemingly endless amount of audio clips, filters, and text options that can be added to their videos. The videos can be captioned, and creators can add popular hashtags to reach a wider audience, or to target a specific group of people.

Finding content on TikTok is a simple process - once an account has been created, the application takes the user on the 'main page' of the app, called the For You Page (FYP or fyp for short). The For You Page offers a practically infinite amount of content, with approximately 34 million videos uploaded every day (Signhouse 2023). TikTok's algorithm is extremely effective, and its recommendations are based on the interactions that the user has within the app, such as commenting or likings a video or following a creator (TikTok Newsroom 2020). Thus, these videos are curated to the user's interests, which makes every user's feed unique (TikTok Newsroom 2020). The user can also utilise the search function in the app to find more specific content, by searching with a keyword or a hashtag. If the user wants to view videos with a specific sound, they can tap on the sound under a video, and all the videos with that sound will be visible. The user can also make their own video with that sound through this function.

Due to the functional elements and features that TikTok has, there is significant potential for trends to develop and spread. Because the interface is relatively simple to use, viewing and creating videos is easy and accessible. This leads to more and more videos being created, and thus trends grow rapidly and can spread globally. TikTok has even been referred to as a "meme breeding ground" (Martin 2019, cited in Schellewald 2021). However, even though TikTok trends are born at an extremely rapid pace, they do not last long - a viral trend can be over in just a couple of weeks, after which the trend is replaced by a new one (Schellewald, 2021). It is also common that several trends circulate at the same time. Depending on the popularity of the trend, the language from them might stay alive on the platform, in spoken references or comments. Studying these trends and their impact is thus extremely difficult, since the trend is active for only a short amount of time.

Despite the fact that TikTok is a fairly new platform, it has already been a subject of research. For example, studies have been conducted on the communicative aspects of the app, as well as about different trends and communities, and on how TikTok can be a tool for language learning (See for example Cervi et al. 2023, Hiebert & Kortes-Miller 2023, Abdullah et al. 2023).

Furthermore, Schellewald (2021) studied the different ways of expression in the content that is posted on TikTok, and aimed to investigate the communicative practices that were present. Schellewald (2021) divided the different types of communicative forms into six different categories based on their purpose. The categories were comedic, documentary, communal, explanatory, interactive, and meta (Schellewald, 2021: 7). Schellewald (2021) thus found that TikTok is a diverse platform that can host a variety of communicative forms and practices, and that TikTok and its integration to everyday life should be studied at length.

However, a very minor part of that research has been focused on the discourse that happens between the creators and the viewers. Even less have been conducted on the Finnish side of TikTok. However, Kaipainen (2021) and Valtonen (2022) have both done research on TikTok. Kaipainen (2021) studied Finnish TikTok comments that contained gendered hate speech, and aimed to determine the type of hate speech that men and women receive in their TikToks. The study found that the comments received by women had more variety in them, and it was more common for them to receive comments that were emphasizing their gender (Kaipainen, 2021). Valtonen (2022), on the other hand, researched the way in which Finnishness is represented in TikTok in videos made by Americans. Valtonen (2022) found that Finnishness is presented in a mostly positive light, but the habits and traditions that Finnish people do are seen as curious or quirky.

3   CODE-SWITCHING

Code-switching is a broad area of research, which means that new studies are published constantly. Research on code-switching tends to focus on switching between different languages, as well as between language varieties. People might, for example, switch to a more formal way of speaking when talking to their grandparents, and then to a more informal form when talking to their friends. Code-switching serves a function in both spoken and online communication (Friedrich & Figueiredo, 2016: 61). The focus of this study is to investigate the practices and functions of code-switching in social media, specifically the code-switching between Finnish and English.

Although English has been in the majority when it comes to languages used on the internet, other languages have also started to claim their space - the amount of content in both major and minor languages is growing at an exceedingly fast pace (Pimienta, 2005; cited in Warschauer, Jacob & Maamuujav, 2020: 2). Due to smaller languages being used more widely on the internet, multilingual communication has become more common. This might be because social media sites are able to host a large number of people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and thus offer an opportunity for these different backgrounds to mix and develop (Warschauer et al., 2020: 3). Because social media is spread across the world, and is such a multicultural environment, it can generate its own form of language use (Warschauer et al., 2020: 2). People often code-switch when talking online, and online code-switching has been studied at length. Thus, code-switching is a very common phenomenon on the internet. When researching online code-switching, language choice is often studied as well (Lee, 2017: 37).

3.1 Code-switching and language choice

In the context of online communication, a broad definition of code-switching is the phenomenon of a writer drawing upon multiple linguistic resources in a single or several discourses (Lee, 2014: 40). In a more traditional sense, Gardner-Chloros (2009: 4) has defined code-switching as being the use of multiple languages in the same conversation by bilingual speakers. However, code-switching is not limited to only bilingual people, as a person does not need to be fluent in a language to use it (Barton & Lee, 2013: 60). Thus, this study will use the definition by Friedrich and Figueiredo (2016: 45), which states that code-switching is the phenomenon of "alternating between two or more languages or language varieties".

There are several ways in which code-switching can be done. For example, the most common way of code-switching is a single-word code-switch, which can also be referred to as a loan (Gardner-Chloros, 2009: 30). The reason for its common usage is that borrowing single words is relatively easy because the writer or speaker does not have to be fluent in the language they are borrowing from (Gardner-Chloros, 2009: 30). This single-word code-switching can also be referred to as code-*mixing* (Friedrich & Figueiredo, 2016: 46).

Code-switching can also be divided into two types, which are insertional code-switching and alternational code-switching (Lee, 2017: 40). Insertional code-switching happens when there is a clear base language, into which an embedded language is inserted (Auer, 1998, cited in Lee, 2017: 46). In alternational code-switching, two languages or codes alternate within one discourse, both in grammar and lexicon (Myusken, 1997, cited in Lee, 2017: 46). However, in some cases it is almost impossible to determine the base language in a discourse, or whether the language switches are insertions or alternations (Lee, 2017: 49).

There are several reasons for code-switching to happen in online communication. Online users are very aware of how to deploy their linguistic resources depending on the context, their purpose, and the people that they are talking to (Barton & Lee, 2013: 56). Code-switching might be triggered by a lexical gap, in which the speaker or writer cannot think of the correct term or word in one language and thus supplies the term from another language (Brunner & Diemer, 2018: 82). Additionally, the term that they are searching for might not have a direct translation,

and because of that they use the word in its original language (Brunner & Diemer, 2018: 82). People, thus, use code-switching to convey a specific meaning. Depending on how code-switching is used, it can perform different functions in speech or written texts.

3.2   Socio-pragmatic functions of code-switching

Depending on the context, code-switching can have a variety of functions. Code-switching can be used to change the addressee, to interact with a specific person, to convey agreement, or to invoke a position of authority (Alasmari, 2021: 134). Additionally, code-switching can be used for emphasizing a message, or conveying a specific emotion (Halim & Maros, 2014: 126). However, it is also important to mention that code-switching does not always have a specific function, and sometimes code-switching is done simply for stylistic reasons (Halim & Maros, 2014: 132).

When code-switching, people consider the expressiveness of a language, and thus might use a specific word from a specific language because it expresses their ideas better (Barton & Lee, 2013: 56). Using a word in its original language can also be seen as a shortcut, since a person might use a term in a different language because it simply came to their mind first (Friedrich & Figueiredo, 2016: 48). Using a word in its original language can also help to keep the phrase semantically accurate, as a translation might not be as precise in meaning as the original word is (Halim & Maros, 2014: 131). Speakers thus consider the given conversation, and determine which code is the best suited for that context (Alasmari, 2021: 135).

Deploying different languages or codes can be done in order to show creativity or playfulness, and often the goal is to be humorous (Lee, 2017: 64). A humorous effect can also be heightened by using code-switching (Daura & Olaofe, 2016: 83). Salem et al. (2020) studied humour and code-switching between English and Jordanian Arabic, and the different ways in which a humorous effect can be achieved via code-switching. Salem et al. (2020) found that humour was created by playing with different grammatical elements, such as unexpectedly switching the place of the interrogative, or adding an English prefix or suffix to an Arabic stem word. Humour was also achieved by exaggeratingly imitating English phonology in exclamations, or

directly translating Arabic phrases into English even though those phrases do not exist in English.

Code-switching can also be used as an identity marker, for example by indicating a group membership by using specific words or languages (Barton & Lee, 2013: 57). For example, Alasmari (2021: 141) found that switching from Arabic to English indicated that the speaker wanted to communicate with people who shared their bilingual identity. Alasmari (2021) used the Markedness Model to investigate how and when children switch from Arabic to English, and what are the social functions of code-switching. It was found that in most cases, the switch was done because the speaker wanted to increase or decrease social distance, or they wanted to show emotion through their speech (Alasmari, 2021: 138). Friedrich and Figueiredo (2016: 48) also found that teenagers especially use code-switching in order to signal membership to a specific speech community.

Code-switching, in some contexts, might also be for educational purposes. Alaiyed (2020) studied the structure and functions of code-switching between English and Standard Arabic in the tv-programme *Dora the Explorer*. It was found that in some instances, the translation from English to Arabic was not necessary, as in these cases Dora pointed at the things she was referencing, and thus the meaning of the word was clear to the viewer (Alaiyed, 2020: 14). Because *Dora the Explorer* is targeted towards children, code-switching can help them learn basic English vocabulary.

Code-switching, thus, has a variety of different functions that depend on the context in which code-switching is happening. Many of these functional elements of code-switching are found in the data of this study. The data will be presented next, along with the aims and research questions of this study.

4   METHODOLOGY

4.1   Aims & Research Questions

The overall purpose of this study is to investigate code-switching between English and Finnish in the comment sections of a Finnish content creator. The aim is to explore the different ways in which code-switching is done, as well as to find out if there are any clear functions that code-switching performs in this data. The data consists of a set of comments in which there are instances of code-switching between Finnish and English. The comments are categorized by their structural and meaning-making elements, as presented in Herring's (2004) framework.

First, the study examines the structural elements of the comments by analyzing the syntax of the sentences. The analysis, then, explores the similarities or differences in the placement of English within the sentences. The aim of this research is to explore patterns in the use of English and then analyze those patterns and their meanings. The structure section also investigates a fixed sentence structure that was found in the comments. Second, the study inspects the meaning-making elements in the comments. The analysis goes through how the use of English conveys different meanings. Context is essential in the analysis of meaning, so it is important to describe the type of video that the comment is responding to. I will also explain trends or jokes that are present in the comments, which can add to the meaning of the comment.

Because this study will mostly focus on finding meaning, as well as discussing contextual elements, this study will be qualitative rather than quantitative. The aims of this study can be summarised into the following two research questions:

1. How is English used in Finnish TikTok comments?
2. What functions does code-switching serve in those comments?

Next, I will describe the collected data in more detail, as well as explaining the reasoning behind choosing the comments. I will also illustrate the reasons behind choosing the account from which the comments were collected from.

4.2 Data

The data of this study consists of comments that were collected from TikTok videos, which were all posted by a singular TikTok account. The decision to only include videos from one account was based on a practical element of TikTok - the interface of the application is not ideal for collecting data, so choosing one account instead of several made the data collection process smoother. This account was also chosen because the creator used a mix of Finnish and English when they talked in their videos, which was very relevant to the topic of this thesis. Because the creator used this type of language in their videos, I assumed that the language of the comments might reflect that. It is important to mention this context, because the comments are replying to a specific part or aspect in the video. Thus, the meaning of the comments is connected to the videos themselves. The creator also used a significant amount of slang words in their speech.

The amount of content that the creator had posted was also a factor in the choice of the account. The creator posts videos several times a week, which would mean that there was plenty of material for the purposes of this study. The content of the account is casual, most often consisting of stories from their personal life and experiences, but also light-hearted content, such as short jokes and dancing videos. Dancing videos are the second most popular type of videos on the platform (Ceci, 2022), and thus are very typical for the platform. This was also reflected

in the comments of their videos, with the tone staying casual and very friendly. Videos such as the ones this creator posts are very typical for TikTok - a significant amount of videos on the platform are anecdotal, in which the creators share their life experiences and stories. Because the video type is very common on the platform, the results of this study can tell us about the code-switching practices on TikTok as a whole. Through this one example account, this study can help clarify a complex phenomenon that is code-switching, as well as give grounds for further research.

The data was collected by going through the chosen account. Starting from the newest video, I looked at the comment section of each video and chose all the comments that had a mix of English and Finnish, and thus were suitable for my research. I then wrote down the content from those comments. When collecting the content, I included both the textual elements as well as the possible emojis that were used. The emojis, however, are not included in the analysis, and the possible emojis that the comments had upon collection have been omitted from the examples. Emojis were left out because in this context, they are not a part of code-switching. In addition, this thesis would have become too extensive if emojis were analyzed as well.

The data of this study consists of 86 comments, which were collected from 36 different videos. The videos, as well as the collected comments, were all posted in the time period between July 2022 and December 2022. All the comments in the data are under 150 characters. All comments have examples of English used in an otherwise Finnish sentence. However, the amount of English and Finnish in the comments varied, and some of the comments had more English than Finnish in them. Most of the comments in this study were examples of insertional code-switching, thus being mostly in Finnish with one or two words in English. In some examples the case was the opposite, with English being the language into which Finnish was inserted. This aspect will also be discussed in the analysis of the data.

Usernames of the commenters were not saved in the collection of the data, as they are not relevant to the content of the comment or the analysis itself. In addition, in order to use TikTok, the user must be at least 13 years old or older (TikTok Terms of Service, 2022), so the majority of TikTok users will most likely be underage. Thus, it is important to protect the anonymity and privacy of the users. The username of the creator will not be shared either because their name or their account itself is not relevant to the study. It is also important to protect their

identity as well as I can, even if the account is public. In each category of analysis, I will briefly describe the content of the video. Context is important when studying meaning, which is why it must be included in the analysis. If the comment is more complex and includes references to a specific trend that is mentioned or implied in the video, a more detailed description will be provided.

TikTok is a public forum, which means that most of the videos, as well as the comments, on the platform are public and can be viewed by anyone. However, to access the comment section of a specific video, an account is needed. I used my own account in order to access these comments. This study will be handling personal information, but it is necessary to do so for this research to be completed. In order to protect the privacy of the commenters, the collected comments were compiled in a single document which could only be accessed with a password. The usernames of the commenters were not collected, and if the comments were replying to a specific account, the mentioned accounts were anonymized. The comment sections showcase how language is used within this social media platform, and also how people communicate with each other and with the creator of the video. Thus, these comments offer valuable information, and collecting them is vital in this analysis.

Because the data consists of two different languages, the Finnish elements of the comments will be translated into English. This decision was made so that the full meaning of each comment is accessible to more readers. The original comment, as well as the translated comment, will both be included. The English elements of the original comments will be clearly marked in the translations by writing them in italics. The example comments have been numbered, and they will be referenced in the analysis by that number.

4.3 Analytic framework

This analysis was conducted by drawing on Herring's (2004) approach of computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA), (as presented in chapter 2.2.1.), and combining that framework with the analysis of code-switching. The data is analyzed according to the type of code-switching that can be found from them, as well as considering the syntactic elements of code-switching. The analysis examines the data and deducts whether the data is insertional or alternational

code-switching, or if the type cannot be identified. Examples are given from each category to illustrate the results. CMDA is used for this study because it has elements from language-focused disciplines such as linguistics, communication, and rhetoric (Herring, 2004: 4), and combining those elements with the terms from code-switching allows the analysis to be comprehensive and thorough.

Herring (2004) introduced several studies which have used CMDA in their analysis, which further prove how adaptable her toolkit is to a diverse range of issues. For example, CMDA has been used in Cherny (1999) to provide evidence that participants use non-standard typography to convey their "insider" status (Herring, 2004: 2). CMDA can also be used when studying sentence structure (Herring, 1998; in Herring 2004), as well as language switching among bilingual speakers (Paolillo, 1996; cited in Herring, 2004).

Herring's (2004) research focused on how CMDA can be applied when investigating a possible virtual community, and what the indicators of a virtual community are. According to Herring (2004: 19), there are different types of discourse behaviours that indicate a virtual community. These discourse behaviors are categorized in the same manner as described before, with the categories being structure, meaning, interaction, social behavior (Herring, 2004: 19). However, Herring (2004: 19) has also added the category of participation. In the context of this study, the categories of structure and meaning are the most useful in finding the answers to the present research questions. According to Herring (2004: 19), the structural elements that are indicators of a virtual community are jargon, references to a specific group, and language that signifies in-group or out-group behavior. Meaning-making elements, on the other hand, are the exchange of knowledge, and speech acts (Herring, 2004: 19).

While the earlier described four domains of language are useful for analysing language use on the internet, analysing them all here is not sustainable or realistic for the purposes of this research. Thus, this analysis will take elements from the overall domains of structure and meaning, and combine them with some of the elements from discourse behaviors that are indicators of virtual community. Although this study is not focused on finding a specific virtual community, the listed elements are excellent tools for analysing this data set. Thus, a modified version of Herring's (2004) toolkit will be used in the analysis of this study. The analysis will be divided into two sections, which are structure and meaning. In CMDA, these two categories and

their content overlap significantly, and for the purposes of this study, some of those contents will be assigned to another category. Thus, some issues that were originally in the category of *structure*, will be included in the category of *meaning*, and vice versa. This means that in the structure section, the analysis will mostly focus on typography and syntax. The meaning section, on the other hand, will analyse jargon and in-group language.

5 ANALYSIS

5.1 Structure

The first half of the analysis explores the structure of the comments, with the focus being on the syntax. The analysis will begin with an overview of the comments, in which I will describe the placement of English in the comments. I will also investigate the common patterns that can be seen in the use of English. This overview will be illustrated with a table. The most common findings and patterns found from the syntax will then be analyzed further, with a specific example from each category. After that the analysis will focus on a fixed sentence structure (the phrase "made me do it") that was found in the data. The analysis intends to find out how the sentence structure is used and why, along with discussing the implications that it has on language use on TikTok as a whole.

One of the most important findings of this chapter was that English is most often used to end a sentence or a comment. This tells us about the possible connotations that the use of English has, as it is seen as a good way to end a sentence. Another finding was that on average, single-word code-switches were more common than code-switches that consisted of several words. This is consistent with Gardner-Chloros (2009: 30), who stated that single-word code-switches are the most common type of code-switching.

5.1.1 Syntax overview

Most often, English was used in the ending of the sentence, which happened in 61 comments. The number of comments that had English in the beginning or in the middle of the sentence was similar, with English being in the beginning in 19 cases, and in the middle of the sentence in 16 cases. In 8 instances, the comment both started and ended with an English element. The amount of English also varied from one word to several words. It was clear that if the English element was in the middle of the sentence, most often that element would only consist of a single word. In the largest category, where the word or words were in the end of the sentence, in more than a half of the comments the English element was several words long. These numbers are further illustrated in Table 1.

TABLE 1   The placement of English within a sentence

	One word	Several words	In total
Beginning	12	9	21
Middle	11	3	14
End	23	38	61
Beginning *and* Ending	6	1	7

In the data, the placement of English varied depending on the comment. In the majority of the comments, there was a distinct placement for English, and it could easily be identified. The English element was either in the beginning, in the middle, or in the end of the sentence. In some cases, there was an English element in both the beginning and ending of the sentence. Although the placement was clear in most cases, determining the code-switching type was not as simple. As was described in Lee (2017), determining the base language was impossible in some cases. Because of that, it was not possible to define whether the comment was an example of insertional or alternational code-switching.

As can be seen from Table 1, the English element was in the beginning of the sentence a total of 21 times. In the majority of those cases, the English element consisted of only one word. This can be seen from example (1).

(1)　　Omg oon viikon miettiny paplarien ostoa tää oli merkki
　　　　Omg I've been thinking about buying rollers for a week this was a sign

In this example, the English element was the abbreviation *Omg* (oh my god). Only one word in this sentence is in English, and thus (1) is a clear example of insertional code-switching. Interestingly, this specific abbreviation was used to begin a sentence for a total of 4 times in the collected comments. It is also worth mentioning that overall, abbreviations were a common occurrence, as they appeared for a total of 14 times. Abbreviations started a sentence in 7 cases, ended a sentence in 5 cases, and appeared in the middle of a sentence in 2 cases. When English was used to begin a sentence, one-word code-switches were in the majority, with 12 out of 21 examples. Of those 12 examples, 7 were abbreviations. Thus, abbreviations were the most common way to begin a sentence.

In the next category, the English element was in the middle of the sentence. This category had a total of 14 comments. There was a clear difference in the length of the code-switch, with the majority of the sentences being single-word code-switches. Example (2) is a great illustration of this phenomenon.

(2)　　kolmas outfit ehdoton lemppari
　　　　third *outfit* is definitely my favorite

Similarly with the case (1), example (2) also has just one word of English in it. Thus, (2) is also a case of insertional code-switching. This category had more single-word code-switches rather than switches that were several words long, as only 3 examples had longer code-switches. In example (2), as well as in most of the other single-word switches in this category, the switch has been done for no apparent or clear reason. For example, the word *outfit* has a translation in Finnish, *asu*, which has the same meaning as the English word. In the single-word code-switches from this category, the translated word was most often a noun which had the same meaning in both languages, as was the case in (2) as well. These types of switches, in which the word is translated without any clear reason or purpose, the switch has most likely been done

for stylistic reasons. The commenter might have also wanted to showcase their linguistic abilities in both languages.

Next, the analysis will focus on the largest category, in which the English element was at the end of the sentence. This category consisted of 61 comments in total. In this category, 23 examples were single-word code-switches, and 38 were switches that had several words (Table 1). Therefore, this category differs from the first two, in which one-word code-switches were in the majority. Because most of the code-switches in this category were longer than one word, example (3) was chosen to illustrate this phenomenon.

> (3) jos niiku leikkaisit otsatukan nii en niiku ois ees mad about it?
> if you like cut bangs I wouldn't like even be *mad about it*?

Determining whether (3) is an example of insertional or alternational code-switching is a complex issue. There is a clear base language into which English is inserted, which would indicate insertional code-switching. However, the English element is several words long, and has its own grammatical elements that are not present in Finnish. This, in turn, indicates that this would be an example of alternational code-switching, because both language and grammar changed in the middle of a sentence. Therefore, this example has elements of both code-switching types, and it cannot be determined exactly which of the two types it is.

As previously stated, the majority of this category's comments had code-switches that were longer than one word. In a few cases the code-switch consisted of an adjective-noun combo, but mostly the code-switches were common phrases or expressions. Interestingly, these phrases often had an accurate Finnish translation, but the commenter had chosen to write the phrase in English instead. Thus, the switch has most likely been done for stylistic reasons, which was the case in the previous category as well.

The last category for discussion was the smallest, with a total of 7 comments. In this category, there were English words or phrases both at the beginning and the end of the sentence. As can be seen from Table 1, there were 6 cases with one word at the beginning and the end, and 1 case in which there were several words both at the beginning and the end. Because the comments were so short, most of the examples had the same amount of Finnish and English in

them, with 2 words from both languages. There were, however, cases where the sentence had more English than Finnish in it. This phenomenon is illustrated in example (4).

(4)   Say it louder for the nyhveröt in the back
        Say it louder for the wimps *in the back*

There are several interesting aspects about example (4). As previously mentioned, this comment only has one word of Finnish in it, "nyhveröt" (wimps). This suggests that English is the base language, into which Finnish has been inserted. The comment is most likely referencing the phrase "say it louder for the *people* in the back", which is often used when agreeing with somebody, and wanting to emphasize their statement. This further supports the notion that (4) would be an example of insertional code-switching, with English being the base language. This is interesting, especially in the context that the creator makes their videos in Finnish. Of course, it is impossible to know the exact demographic of this creator's audience, but it can be assumed that the audience can understand Finnish. Using an English phrase with the addition of a single word in Finnish is certainly surprising, since it could be assumed that the opposite would be more likely.

It is interesting to see how varied the use of English is in the collected comments. The placement of English within a sentence varied significantly, as did the length of the English section. The length varied from one word to several words, the longer instances being whole phrases. There was also an interesting structural phenomenon present in the data, the *made me do it* - sentence structure, which will be presented and analyzed next.

5.1.2   Made me do it

This phenomenon was shown three (3) times. The structure is the same in every example - the English element was always the same, with one word in Finnish in front of it. Thus, this sentence structure is fixed, as it always stays the same. This is interesting, since structures and phrases often change depending on the context. In the rest of the data, there was no other structure that stayed the same. The structures or phrases were often modified in some way. Even singular words were often modified in some way across the collected comments. The structure

that can be seen in examples (5), (6), and (7), however, was the same every time it appeared in the data.

(5)   sydänkohtaus made me do it
       heart attack *made me do it*

(6)   Ovi made me do it
       The door *made me do it*

(7)   kela made me do it
       kela *made me do it*

This structure offers insight into how language can be used in the app itself, since I have not seen this phenomenon anywhere else. Even when referencing other trends, the form of the sentence or phrase might still undergo a change in form. This phrase, however, is fixed and is always used in the same manner, at least in the comments that were collected for this study. The fact that this type of sentence structure is so common on the platform can indicate that this type of language use on social media can become even more common. On the other hand, this example might just be an exception, since it seems that modifying words and phrases is the most popular way of communicating or making references to certain trends.

In addition to its structural elements, this phrase is also intriguing from a meaning-making perspective. This phrase seems to have evolved from a song called "Gangsta Rap Made Me Do It" by Ice Cube. In the context of Finnish TikTok, the trend surrounding this song included the creator doing something socially mildly inappropriate or frowned upon, and posting the video with the caption or text "Gangsta rap made me do it". This creates a humorous effect by exaggeration, as the action in the video is not as serious as the song would suggest. For example, the video might have a person throwing a small rock in the lake, with the caption "gangsta rap made me do it". It is a clear exaggeration, which is meant to create humor.

In the cases of (5), (6), and (7), however, this phrase is not used in the same way as in the trend. These comments seem to be referencing the trend, but in a way that does not mean anything in particular, or at least the humorous effect is not created in the same way as in the trend. The comments do not add any additional meaning to the video such as memes or trends often do, and there is no clear "punchline" to the joke. Instead, they merely state exactly what is

happening in the video. This is interesting, since referencing other trends is rarely done in this way. Referencing trends, and in that way creating additional meanings to the videos, was very common in the data, and the next chapter of the analysis will explore those instances.

5.2   Meaning

The second half of the analysis is concentrated on social functions of code-switching. In this section, the comments and their analysis have been divided into two main categories, under which specific phenomena will be analysed in more detail. Those two main categories are jargon and in-group language. The category of jargon will discuss three terms: slay, she ate, and fierce. The category of in-group language will discuss the usages of the word girl. In both of those categories, examples will be given to support the analysis.

One of the most important findings from this chapter has been that often, the English version of a certain phrase or word has been used because the word or phrase cannot convey the same meaning when translated into Finnish. It was also found that, especially in terms of jargon, English is very often used to give a compliment to the creator. Another notable finding has been that a significant amount of the comments contain slang words or phrases which have origins in queer culture and vocabulary, as well as in African American Vernacular English (AAVE). This was especially true in the category of complimentary language, since all the presented complimentary words or phrases originated from AAVE.

5.2.1   Jargon

There were three categories of jargon words or phrases in the data, which were the words "slay", "she ate", and "fierce". First, the analysis will introduce the word "slay", and discuss its meaning and background. After that, examples of the use of this word will be presented, and the ways in which it has been used in the comments will be analyzed.

The word "slay" has been traditionally defined as "to kill" (Merriam-Webster, 2023). However, the word has later on acquired a new meaning in this discourse, and the meaning has been born

in a specific cultural context. The clear origins are difficult to pinpoint, but the general consensus has been that the term and concept of "slaying" originated from the queer ballroom culture in the 1980s New York City (Kehrer, 2019: 89). Saying that something "slays" or is "slay" has both been a signal of kinship, and a compliment for an amazing outfit or overall appearance (Kehrer, 2019: 89). The term is often used in popular culture as well, such as in the reality television series *RuPaul's Drag Race.* For example, in season 14 episode 15, the word *slay* is used for a total of seven times. The series first aired in 2009, and has since then gained a large following during its 15-year history. This following has most likely had a positive impact on the popularity and spread of *slay*. Because of the word's overall popularity, it is also used often in social media. It is also important to note that a significant amount of the discussed terms, such as the word slay, come from African American Vernacular English (AAVE), and many words that are considered queer slang also originate from AAVE (Ilbury, 2020: 250). Thus, although *Drag Race* along with social media have been important in the spread of the word *slay*, the origins of the word, and especially the community around it, cannot be overlooked.

The reason why *slay* is regarded here as a jargon word is because it requires the reader or the receiver of the comment to understand the context of the word, its meaning and its connotations. In order to understand the word, one must be familiar with either the history of the word, or the language that is used in TikTok. *Slay* is also a somewhat unknown word, and it is not used or known as widely as some other words or phrases might be, especially in Finland. However, it is still known in certain age groups, such as within generation Z or younger millennials, who might have encountered the word on the internet or social media. Nevertheless, *slay* is still more likely to be more widely known in English-speaking countries. English is taught in Finland from a very young age, but that does not guarantee that people would know the meaning of this word. The use of *slay* in the data was very similar, as can be seen from the next examples.

     (8)   toi vika on big slay
             that last one is a *big slay*

     (9)   SLAYY alota mallin työt
             SLAYY start working as a model

     (10)   ok mut oot kirjaimellisesti definition of slay
             ok but you're literally the *definition of slay*

(11) omg toi vika slayeddd
      omg that last one *slayeddd*

All of these four comments were posted under the same video, in which the creator is showing clothes that they have bought, as well as showing different outfits that they have assembled from those clothes. In the video, they were presenting those outfits as if being a model on a runway. In these examples, the word *slay* has been used in the way that the definition would suggest. The word has been used in order to give a compliment to the creator. In examples (8), (9), and (10), the word *slay* has been used in a variety of ways. In (8) and (10), the writer has used a type of amplification to emphasize their compliment. In (8), the commenter used the word *big*, and in (10) the commenter used the structure *the definition of*. In examples (9) and (11), the writer has also emphasized their comment by playing with the structure of the word itself. In (9), the writer has written the word *slay* in all capital letters, as well as added an extra letter in the end. This was also done in example (11), in which the writer has added two extra letters to the ending of the word. Modifying the word this way adds emphasis to the compliment.

In these examples, an English word has been used most likely because the word does not exist in Finnish, or at least any Finnish word does not have the exact same meaning and connotation. This phenomenon is a common function of code-switching - a writer switches to another language to convey a message that is not available in the language that they are using at that moment. By modifying the English word in different ways to emphasize its meaning, the writer also shows playfulness and creativity, and showcases their competence and abilities in both languages.

Now, I will move on to the next example, which is the phrase *she ate*. This phrase, as was the case with *slay*, has the same type of connection to drag culture, and originally has been used commonly in queer discourses and contexts. This phrase, too, has spread from the use of a smaller community to a larger audience. One of the examples is in English, in the original form *she ate*, and the other is a translated version of the same phrase.

(12) she ate ja vetäs koko pöydän mukana
      she ate and had the whole table too

30

(13)   Girllll sä söit tän trendin
       Girllll you ate this trend

Example (12) was posted on a video in which the creator was dancing to Lady Gaga's song Bad Romance. The comment in example (13) was posted on a video in which the creator was lip syncing and dancing to an audio clip that was trending at the time. The audio clip was from the Finnish artist Evelina's song "Miau". These comments have thus been left on two very similar videos. The phrase "she/he/they ate" is often used in the same context as "slay", which is when someone performs or does something particularly well or perfectly (Urban Dictionary, 2019). The phrase is also mostly used in past tense, referring to an action that has already happened. In this case, the creator has already made the video and thus the action is in the past.

Interestingly, while in (12) the phrase is presented in its original English form, in (13) it appears as a translation. This is noteworthy because although the compliment itself is in Finnish, the phrase is commonly used in English. This is why (12) has also been taken to consideration in this analysis. The conveyed meaning is the same, and the purpose of these two examples is the same. Both comments have been written to give a compliment to the creator, as was the case with *slay*. However, by changing the language of the phrase, the tone shifts slightly into a more humorous one. This is because the phrase only carries a specific meaning in English, and the term "to eat" is not used in Finnish in the same manner as it is in English. This creates a humorous effect. Using an English phrase in this manner, by directly translating it even though the tone changes slightly, can also be described as linguistic recycling (Haapanen & Perrin, 2020). Linguistic recycling in this context can mean taking linguistic elements from another language and using them to add additional meaning to the sentence (Haapanen & Perrin, 2020: 4). This has definitely been achieved, since a humorous effect was created.

Sometimes, the phrase also includes an ending "and left no crumbs", giving the phrase a stronger meaning, as if to say that they "ate it all" and left nothing for anyone else (Urban Dictionary, 2020). This type of language use is seen in (12), in which the commenter implies that the creator not only "ate", but also had the whole table as well, therefore having the same meaning as "leaving no crumbs". Thus, the commenter implies that the creator has performed the action exceptionally well.

In the next part of this analysis, I will be examining the word *fierce*. In the data, there was one example of the usage of this word. Still, it is necessary to include it in this analysis, as the background and meaning of the word are very similar to *slay* and *she ate*.

> (14)   Oot nii fierce en kestä
>   You're so *fierce* I can't handle it

The comment in example (14) was posted on the same video as (13). Similarly to the word *slay*, the usage of the word *fierce* in (14) is also connected to queer and drag cultures and communities. Similarly with *slay, fierce* is also used frequently in *RuPaul's Drag Race.* For example, in season 12, episode 1, the word *fierce* is used for a total of 7 times. To describe something or someone as *fierce* in this context, is to say that the creator is expressing bold confidence or style (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Similarly, *fierce* can also be used to describe something that is so stylish or impressive that it draws attention (Barrett, 2017: 33).

Using English instead of Finnish when complimenting someone, especially by writing the adjective in English, might be a way to distance oneself from that specific compliment. Complimenting someone in one's native language carries more meaning than doing so in one's second language. In the comment section of a person one does not actually know, the weight of using one's native language might be too much, and thus one results in using a second language - the commenter wants to compliment the creator, but in a way that is casual enough for this context. In addition, the word *fierce* does not have a direct equivalent in Finnish, or at least not one that would carry the same semantic meaning. The Finnish translation for *fierce* is *raju*, or *hurja*, both of which mean that something is violent or severe. *Fierce* does carry that negative connotation in English as well, but depending on the context the word can also have a positive meaning.

The next part of the analysis is focused on in-group language. In-group language presented in the data mostly by the usage of the word *girl* and its stylizations. In-group language was also present in the form of specific intertextual references to a trend.

5.2.2 In-group language

In eight pieces of the data, English was used in the form of the word *girl*. The word was used in its original form, as well as in a stylized form. The word *girl*, traditionally referring to a young woman, in this context has other meanings and connotations associated with it. As well as words such as *slay* and *fierce*, *girl* also plays a significant role in the vocabulary of queer people and in the context of queer culture. Similarly with the words *slay* and *fierce*, *girl* is also used a significant number of times in *Rupaul's Drag Race.* In the context of the show, the contestants use *girl* as a nickname when referring to each other directly (Elle Australia, 2018). The way in which *girl* is used in these comments is very similar with the way it is used in *Rupaul's Drag Race.*

Stylizing the word by adding or changing letters is one example of changing the meaning of the word and thus giving it a different connotation. Stylization such as this was very common in other words as well, but in other parts of the data there were not as many different versions of the same exact word. It is important to note that overall, the reason why *girl* was stylized in this data was to mimic the way that the word can be said out loud, and how the word can be stylized to mimic the vocal form.

    (15)   girl toi vika?!?? damn
            girl that last one?!?? *damn*

    (16)   you go girl!!!! t. hh matkailunliikkeenjohto drop out yolo
            you go girl!!!! br: hh hospitality management *drop out yolo*

The comment from example (15) was posted on the same video as examples (8) through (11), in which the creator is showing their outfits. In examples (15) and (16), the commenter has used the word *girl* in its original form. In both (15) and (16), *girl* is referring to the creator of the video. In (15), *girl* is used in a very familiar manner, as if the commenter and the creator were friends or at least acquaintances. Thus, the commenter might have used this specific word in order to appear friendly. Similarly with the case of *slay*, the translation of the word *girl* (tyttö) does not have the same meaning or connotation as the English word does. In English, the word can convey a sense of familiarity or friendliness, whereas the Finnish word does not have the same connotations. The decision to use the word *girl* might have been made because

the commenter considers English to be the better language to use in this situation, and that Finnish does not have the exact term that the commenter is looking for (Hakuta, 1999; in Nguyen, 2015: 18).

Girl can also be used quite gender-neutrally in some contexts, especially in the context of slang. *Girl* can be used to refer to anyone, especially in queer circles, such as in *Rupaul's Drag Race*. The translated word *tyttö*, however, is linked to gender in a very significant way, and even in a slang context does not work the way that *girl* does. Thus, in the context of internet slang, there is a semantic gap between the words *girl* and *tyttö*. A semantic gap refers to the discrepancy between two linguistic representations of the same object (Hein, 2010: 57), so in this case, the difference in meaning between two different languages. Interestingly, in the traditional context, the gap does not exist between the English word and its translation. This gap in meaning thus only exists in the context of slang.

The phrase "you go girl" is a commonly used expression that means to encourage the receiver of the message, who usually is a girl or a woman. In the video that comment (16) is from, the creator is sharing a story of how they stopped going to school and ultimately quit their studies in college. In (16), the commenter is creating common ground between the creator and the commenter, by sharing a similar story of quitting their studies. The commenter is telling the creator that they are also a "drop out", meaning that they, too, have quit their studies. The commenter is also praising the creator by using the phrase *you go girl*, which in this context is meant to convey a compliment. This might be because the commenter is able to relate to the creator because of a shared experience, and wants to communicate that the experience has been a positive one, and that the creator should be proud of making the decision of quitting college. The commenter is experiencing kinship and feels understood by the creator, and the commenter wants to express that.

Next, I will be analyzing a set of comments in which the base word *girl* has been stylized by repeating the same letters several times in the ending of the word, thus making the word longer and creating a tonal difference. There were 3 examples of this phenomenon in the data.

> (17) Oot upee girll
>   You're gorgeous *girll*

(18)   joo mut girll näytät silti hyvält
        yeah but *girll* you still look good

(19)   Girllll sä söit tän trendin
        Girllll you ate this trend

In (17), (18) and (19), the word *girl* has been stylized by adding extra letters to the end of the word. This has been done to mimic the way that this word is said out loud. However, although the letters are added to the ending of the word, the vocal form does not follow that pattern. Thus, rather than lengthening the last l-sound ([ˈɡɜːlː]), the i-sound is lengthened instead ([ˈɡɜːːl]). This is the case even in (19), which has more l-letters than (17) and (18). Despite there being more l-letters, the assumption is that the commenter wants to emphasize the i-sound, as is the case in (17) and (18). It is common to stylize words in this way, as words are often lengthened by adding letters to the end of the word. This happens even when adding extra letters would make the word difficult or even impossible to pronounce, such as adding consonants that cannot be pronounced repeatedly (see example (11)). The reason for lengthening words in this manner is to emphasize the meaning of the word.

Next, I will analyze the way in which the word *girl* has been stylized into the form *gurl*. This phenomenon happened in two instances in the collected comments.

(20)   samaa mieltä kaikista!! gurl u have a good taste
        I agree with everything!! *gurl u have a good taste*

(21)   Gurl sameee! Kela tarvii multa kans jeesii #kelatakasjaloillee22
        Gurl sameee! Kela needs my help too #kelabacktoitsfeet22

In all of the examples (17) through (21), the word *girl* has most likely been stylized with the purpose of mimicking the way that the word is said out loud. The emphasis on the comments differs slightly. In these cases, it is important to note the role that tone plays in these examples. It is, however, difficult to exactly determine the purpose of the style choice, as the comments are in written form instead of audio form. People might also have different perceptions of how a certain style choice should sound. Two people might have entirely different opinions on how

the word *gurl* (as in examples (20) and (21)) sounds out loud. Thus, the exact meanings of these comments are difficult to define.

As the last example from this category, and the last part of this analysis, I will be analyzing a comment which has all the previous stylization elements combined in one comment. In addition to that, this example is also a reference to a specific TikTok trend that circulated in the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022, with its popularity peaking in 2021.

> (22)   Kela on material gurllll
>   Kela is a *material girllll*

In (22), the word *girl* has been stylized by using both of the already discussed methods, meaning that the commenter has both added letters to the end of the word, as well as changing the *i* into *u*. The base word is the same but the way in which this form would be pronounced is quite different from the standard version.

Before addressing the reference in this comment, it is important to note that there has been two very different trends on TikTok that have used the phrase "material girl". The newer trend, which was at the height of its popularity in early 2022, used the original song by Madonna. The purpose of this trend was to create a makeup look and outfit that were inspired by the 1980s fashion, and then film a video to show the transformation from the creator's everyday look to the 80s look. While this trend uses the song "Material girl", it is not the trend that has been referenced in this specific comment.

In the context of this specific TikTok comment, the reference is to a TikTok trend that was created around the song called "Material Girl", by the artist Saucy Santana. Even though the song and trend are different from the previously described, the song by Saucy Santana has most likely gotten its inspiration from the Madonna song. In this trend, the purpose is to show one's material possessions that could be considered "luxurious", such as jewellery, fine clothes and shoes. This reference is made because in the video that the comment has been left on, the creator tells a story of how Kela (the social insurance institution of Finland) has requested that they pay back some of their allowances, thus inferring that Kela is requesting the money back in order to "show it off" and thus being a "material girl". It is interesting how the commenter

has chosen to stylize the phrase "material girl" into "material gurllll", since in the original written lyrics this stylization has not been made. The reason for this is most likely that the commenter wanted to properly emphasize which trend they are referring to by exaggerating the pronunciation that the trend has. Thus, once again, the stylization choice has been made in order to put an emphasis on a specific word so that the reader or the receiver of the comment is aware of the tone of the comment. The stylization choice might also be done because the commenter wanted to make the reference clearer.

Despite there being three different stylizations of *girl*, the way that those stylizations are used is essentially the same. Despite the different modifications of the word, it still conveys the same meaning, even when the imitated intonation is different from the base word. The desired effect or meaning in all versions of the word is to invoke kinship, as well as to signify group membership - the purpose is to show that by commenting this on a video, one aligns themselves with the creator. The word *girl* functions as a group signifier because it conveys familiarity and friendliness, and in some contexts even friendship. By referring to someone as *girl* or any of the modifications of the word, both the sender and the receiver are assumed to have a mutual understanding of what the word means and what meanings it conveys.

6 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to find the different ways in which code-switching is used in Finnish TikTok comments, with the focus being in *how* English is used in these comments, and the *meaning* that the use of English conveys. The analysis looked at both structural elements and meaning-making elements. Both categories presented clear patterns in the way that English was used, and those findings will be summarised next.

Structurally, English was mostly used in ending a sentence, and in this case the English element was several words long. However, across all the collected comments, the most common type of code-switching was a one-word code-switch. This means that most of the comments were examples of insertional code-switching. This is consistent with previous research, as Gardner-Chloros (2009) also found single-word code-switching to be the most common type of code-switching. In the context of meaning-making, it was found that English words or phrases were often used if there was no direct translation for them in Finnish. Even if there was a suitable translation, most often it would have a semantic difference to the original word or phrase. Interestingly, in some cases English was used even when the translation was semantically correct. In these cases, the reason for code-switching was most likely a stylistic choice. These findings align with Barton and Lee (2013), who stated that code-switching is used often for stylistic or creative reasons. English is certainly used in a very creative manner in the data of this study, and one can assume that because of the growing popularity of social media, this type of creative language use will continue in the future.

There can be several reasons as to why a person chooses to use English instead of Finnish. As previously stated, the reason might be stylistic, semantic, or even structural. It also might be that English has certain tonal differences that Finnish does not possess, for example English might not seem as formal as Finnish in some contexts. The exact reason, however, is extremely difficult to determine, as the writer may not be aware of it themselves. This could also be studied further, for example by conducting a questionnaire or interviewing people who code-switch in this manner. For example, one could study attitudes towards code-switching or investigate the reasons behind code-switching that is done for stylistic reasons.

This study offers valuable insight to language use on Finnish TikTok, as well as gives insight on how languages can be used on Finnish social media overall. Of course, this study was conducted from the comments of only one account, but it can be said that these trends and phrases are most likely present on other popular social media platforms as well. However, TikTok is one the most popular social media platforms at the moment, and new content is produced at a very fast pace. New trends, and with them new words and phrases, are born at an equally fast pace. This speed makes TikTok perhaps the most adaptable in terms of language, since new trends are picked up quickly, as is the language in them. This, then, often leads to code-switching as words from English trends are added to other languages in their original form. Thus, language use in TikTok and its comment sections deserves to be studied, as it can depict the ways in which people use language online, and how different trends or viral memes affect that language use.

This research also offers a possibility to inspect language use as it is at this specific point in time, in this specific community. Language use on social media changes constantly, so to document it in this way is a way to preserve different ways of using language. This is why researching social media is and continues to be extremely important. Consistent research can reveal language patterns and changes that might otherwise be missed. Additionally, social media users are often young, and they use various social media platforms on a daily basis. They are more likely to be exposed to the different ways in which languages are used on social media, and as such they are more likely to adopt those language uses. Thus, they can have an active part of how languages change and adapt.

This study has its limitations because it only investigated the comment section of a singular creator. Including several accounts would have given a wider picture of code-switching in Finnish TikTok, and the results would have been more generalisable. However, if the data for this study was collected from several different accounts, it would not have been possible to analyze the data in enough depth. Collecting comments from several account would have also meant that the variety of comments would have most likely been smaller. Despite limitations, this study is a valuable addition to the already existing research on code-switching on social media. Additionally, this study gives the unique perspective of social media language use in the context of a Finnish social media community.

The combination of code-switching with the use of emojis could be studied, as this research would have become too extensive if it was to consider them as well. TikTok videos themselves are also a valuable resource for researchers interested in language change and social media language use. In the context of code-switching, other language pairs could also be studied. It would also be interesting to study trends in other languages than English, to see whether phrases or words in other languages are used in the same manner. This study is a valuable addition to the research that has been done on social media and language use, and continuing this research is extremely important.

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